

## "The Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

Please do NOT write on this exam.

**Directions for True / False Questions** On your answer sheet, mark A for True or B for False.

1. At the Tabard Inn in South London, the narrator stops for the night and meets a band of 29 travelers who are making a spring pilgrimage to Canterbury.
2. At Canterbury Cathedral the pilgrims hope to receive the blessing of the renowned Archbishop Thomas à Becket.
3. The pilgrims come from all walks of life, but the narrator is most impressed by a knight who has had a distinguished career.
4. Dainty Madame Maudelayne is a young noblewoman who feeds her pet dogs roasted flesh and white bread.
5. Hubert is a jolly Friar with a talent for singing and playing the hurdy-gurdy.
6. The bearded Merchant wearing a beaver hat and dainty buckled boots is eager to share his expert opinions on commerce.
7. From Bath comes a handsome, toothy widow who reveals that she has married and buried six husbands.
8. The Reeve from Norfolk has been cautiously embezzling from his master's estate for many years.
9. The narrator pokes light-hearted fun at the health and cleanliness of the Cook.
10. The Doctor's talents include surgery, astronomy, magic, and a thorough understanding of the humours.

**Directions for Multiple Choice Questions** Mark the letter of the best choice on your answer sheet.

11. The goal of the Canterbury pilgrims was
  - A. a holy shrine
  - B. a resort area
  - C. a ruined abbey
  - D. a convention
12. Every level of society in medieval England is represented among the pilgrims with one exception. The exception is
  - A. the merchant class
  - B. the clergy
  - C. royalty
  - D. the peasantry
13. According to the Host's plan, each pilgrim would tell
  - A. two tales
  - B. four tales
  - C. six tales
  - D. as many tales as he or she wished

14. The Miller was very clever at all of the following *except*
- A. stealing from his customers.
  - B. telling bawdy stories.
  - C. winning wrestling matches.
  - D. courting women.
15. The Prioress was distinguished, among other things, by the fact that she
- A. spoke perfect Parisian French.
  - B. ate almost nothing.
  - C. dressed very plainly.
  - D. could not stand cruelty to animals.
16. The youngest pilgrim, one who slept very little at night, was the
- A. Reeve.
  - B. Miller.
  - C. Summoner.
  - D. Squire.
17. The pilgrim who perhaps knew love remedies was the
- A. Parson.
  - B. Friar.
  - C. Miller.
  - D. Wife of Bath.
18. The pilgrim who did a brisk business in fake holy relics was the
- A. Parson.
  - B. Merchant.
  - C. Pardoner.
  - D. Summoner.
19. Of the following pilgrims, the most deeply and sincerely religious one is
- A. the Monk.
  - B. the Friar.
  - C. the Nun.
  - D. the Parson.
20. If the Knight represents the highest strata of society, who represents the humblest?
- A. the Clerk
  - B. the Miller
  - C. the Plowman
  - D. the Franklin
21. The Parson and the Plowman share a common characteristic in which one of the following?
- A. Charity toward other people.
  - B. Their love of ale.
  - C. Their education.
  - D. Kindness toward animals.
22. The Reeve and the Pardoner are both
- A. scholarly.
  - B. interested in business.
  - C. interested in hunting.
  - D. avaricious.
23. The Monk and the Franklin share
- A. a love of good food.
  - B. an interest in the New Testament.
  - C. a desire for great wealth.
  - D. an appetite for practical jokes.

24. Both the Miller and the Wife of Bath
- A. are long-experienced travelers.
  - B. like to satisfy their appetites.
  - C. have an interest in marriage.
  - D. consider themselves superior to others.
25. Certain of the pilgrims can be paired, to serve as foils or opposites. All of the following can be so paired, and in the manner indicated, *except*
- A. the Monk (worldly) -- the Parson (simple)
  - B. the Miller (genteel) -- the Plowman (crude)
  - C. the Prioress (elegant) -- the Wife of Bath (earthy)
  - D. the Franklin (epicurean) -- the Cleric (ascetic)
26. The pilgrims very early make what sort of an agreement?
- A. To share expenses
  - B. to defend one another
  - C. to walk on foot
  - D. to entertain one another
27. These excerpts from "The Prologue" suggest mainly that Chaucer had a great
- A. sympathy for rascals.
  - B. understanding of human nature.
  - C. distaste for religion.
  - D. weakness for women.
28. Chaucer's choice of a pilgrimage to Canterbury as a frame for his ambitious work permitted something unusual. What?
- A. Bitter social criticism
  - B. A mingling of different levels of medieval society
  - C. Descriptions of his family
  - D. Frequent discussions on ancient history, philosophy, and theology
29. As a writer, Chaucer was all of the following *except*
- A. bilingual.
  - B. popular.
  - C. prolific.
  - D. mainly a prose writer.
30. *The Canterbury Tales* is all of the following *except*
- A. mainly short stories.
  - B. written chiefly in rhymed couplets.
  - C. unfinished and incomplete.
  - D. mainly translations from French and Latin.
31. Chaucer uses the pilgrimage primarily as a device to
- A. emphasize the characters' religious aspirations.
  - B. frame the stories told by individual characters.
  - C. describe the rigors of medieval life.
  - D. create a vivid and realistic setting.
32. In the role of narrator, Chaucer portrays himself as
- A. stern and judgmental.
  - B. sophisticated and worldly.
  - C. robust and merry.
  - D. naive and simple-minded.
33. One of the central ideas of "The Prologue" is that
- A. intellectual detachment is the best philosophy.
  - B. religion is often exploited for personal gain.
  - C. spring brings a desire for sensual pleasure.
  - D. feudalism is a decadent system of government.

34. Which best describes Chaucer's attitude toward the Nun?
- A. amused tolerance
  - B. polite detachment
  - C. marked scorn
  - D. weary reproachfulness
35. What can the reader infer about the Friar from the lines "But anywhere a profit might accrue / Courteous he was and lowly of service too"?
- A. He helps others make money.
  - B. He is humble and servile.
  - C. He has aspirations to be a merchant.
  - D. He will use people for money.
36. Chaucer describes the Pardoner's hair as "rat-tails" primarily to
- A. furnish realistic detail.
  - B. provide comic relief.
  - C. suggest slovenly habits.
  - D. imply moral corruption.
37. What do the following lines suggest about the Woman from Bath: "In all the parish not a dame dared stir / Towards the altar steps in front of her"?
- A. She is a religious fanatic.
  - B. She abhors the Christian church.
  - C. She is selfish and arrogant.
  - D. She disdains the company of women.
38. Chaucer calls the Franklin's girdle "white as morning milk" to
- A. reiterate the Franklin's obsession with food.
  - B. emphasize the Franklin's personal cleanliness.
  - C. symbolize the Franklin's purity of heart.
  - D. show the Franklin's weakness for fancy clothes.
39. Which of the following is an example of direct characterization?
- A. "Children were afraid when he appeared."
  - B. "...His mighty mouth was like a furnace door."
  - C. "He was an honest worker, good and true..."
  - D. "He wore a fustian tunic stained and dark..."
40. What theme does Chaucer convey in "The Prologue" from *The Canterbury Tales*?
- A. the conflicts inherent in society
  - B. the basic evil of mankind
  - C. the infinite variety of human nature
  - D. the pitfalls of sensual pleasure

**Directions for Characterization Questions** For each of the following quotations, identify Chaucer's probable purpose in writing each of them, according to the list below. Mark the letter of the best choice on your answer sheet.

- A. Purely pictorial details giving neither a favorable nor an unfavorable impression
- B. A description that makes us smile at some human foible or frailty by no means serious
- C. A description that arouses disapproval of a character's fault, or distaste for a repulsive appearance
- D. A description that makes us admire worthy traits of character

**Directions for Identification Questions** Mark the number of the character from "The Prologue" who is the correct subject of each statement. Each will be used once.

- |           |             |             |              |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Squire | 5. Friar    | 9. Franklin | 13. Manciple |
| 2. Yeoman | 6. Merchant | 10. Cook    | 14. Summoner |
| 3. Doctor | 7. Clerk    | 11. Miller  | 15. Pardoner |
| 4. Monk   | 8. Plowman  | 12. Reeve   |              |

51. "he would gladly learn and gladly teach"
52. a gelding or a mare
53. "choleric"
54. a thumb of gold
55. would help the poor and never take a penny
56. pretended to speak Latin when drunk, but made no sense
57. illiterate but a frugal manager
58. Epicurus' very son
59. wore a motley dress
60. St. Christopher's medal
61. "blood-red garment"
62. "embroidered like a meadow bright"
63. blancmange
64. a pin fashioned into a lover's knot
65. "lisped a little"

**Directions for Composition** Like any other Master of his trade, Chaucer has submitted his "masterpiece" to prove his worthiness to his guild. That work is "The Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*. In the space provided on the answer sheet for an essay question, let him know whether he has been accepted or denied. Tell him why, explaining the criteria you used to judge his writing and refer specifically to his work. (Please write in two columns -- not one very wide one.)

**Directions for Take-home Assignment** Imagine that you are a modern Chaucer. Think about representative characters for our society. Select one and write a character "sketch" in the space provided on the answer sheet for an essay question. Show that you have understood Chaucer's skill as a writer by emulating him. Select appropriate telling details. (Hint: I might evaluate your worthiness based on the criteria YOU used to judge Chaucer.)