

The Canterbury Tales

Topic Suggestions

1. What does *The Canterbury Tales* say about leadership? You may examine the “Prologue” or one of the tales to answer this question.
2. Discuss persuasive techniques used by Nicholas in “The Miller’s Tale.” Think of Classical Rhetoric.
3. Compare/contrast any of the tales. Consider, for example, literary forms, characterizations, attitudes toward male/female relationships, social classes, general themes, and moral lessons. Focus on only one of these options.
4. Analyze the differences or similarities in the attitudes toward love expressed in “The Miller’s Tale,” “The Knight’s Tale” and “The Wife of Bath’s Tale.”
5. Apply comic theory to one of the tales or to the “Prologue.” You might focus on one aspect of comic theory -- relief theory, superiority theory, or incongruity theory.
6. Much of the humor of “The Prologue” is based on irony, the discrepancy between what appears to be true and what is actually true. Explain the irony in each of the following character portraits – the Nun’s Priest, the Merchant, the Skipper, and the Doctor.
7. Identify and discuss what you think Chaucer suggests concerning the spiritual condition of his pilgrims. You might list three or more spiritual categories and discuss which pilgrims fall under these headings. You may focus on the characters in the “Prologue” to answer this question.
8. Discuss the nature of evil. You will need to define what this evil is according to the Prologue or to one of the tales we have read.
9. Using the “Prologue,” analyze criticisms Chaucer has of the Medieval Church. Use a variety of pilgrims to illustrate each criticism, i.e. exploitation of the poor, etc.
10. Discuss how *The Canterbury Tales* depicts characters that demonstrate the virtues and vices that still exist in our world today. Illustrate how *The Canterbury Tales* provides examples; then provide contemporary examples juxtaposed with the pilgrims.
11. Your own topic. Please have this approved in advance.