

The Canterbury Tales – Midterm SG

Latin phrases

- Amor vincit amnia – love conquers all
 - Nun had a pin
- Questio quid juris – “The question is : what is the law?”
 - Summoner - didn't know what he was talking about
 - This is a lawyer's phrase which the Summoner heard often in the court of the archdeacon, the church official who could bring charges against public sinners and impose fines on them.
- Radix malorum est Cupiditas – “ Greed is the root of all evil”
 - Pardoner's Tale
- Mulier est hominis confusio - "Woman is man's ruin/downfall". Thought it meant women is a man's delight.
 - By Chanticleer the rooster in the Nun's Priest Tale – he mixed up the meaning of it.
- Alma redemptoris – An anthem used especially during Christmas season
 - Sung by the Catholic boy killed in the Prioress' Tale.

Story itself

General Information on the Period

- **Middle Ages – 1066-1485**
 - **1066** – The Norman Invasion – the French language became the dominant societal norm and they brought feudalism with them to England
 - Henry was of Norman decent and Thomas Becket was Anglo Saxon
 - The Catholic Church was the biggest thing.
 - Mobility caused by plague.
 - A new class, the middle class was created
- It was considered very holy to go to the shrine of Thomas Becket
- Pilgrimages were very popular during this time period. People went on them to show wealth and for physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Some went for secular reasons.
- Middle English – due to the influx of French words, English was morphed into Middle English

General Prologue

- **A satire of only the middle class** – no aristocrats or peasants in Canterbury Tales. The middle class came out of the bubonic plague.

- A group of 29 pilgrims, all Christians going to the Shrine of Thomas Becket where he was killed in Canterbury at the altar.
 - King Henry was his friend and later enemy (Becket, an Anglo Saxon, was killed by Henry's henchmen)
- Pilgrims met at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, London in April to leave for their pilgrimage
- Host of Inn was Harry Bailey (an ideal character)- he suggests you win a dinner if you tell the best story
- We meet the 29 pilgrims in the general prologue

6 Ideal Characters

- **Knight**
- **Squire – son of knight**
- **Yeomen – traveled with knight and squire**
- **Parson**
- **Plowman –brother of parson**
- **Host – Harry Bailey**
- **Many of the characters were described by clothing, accessories and/or facial features except the ideal characters (specifically the religious ones – parson) who were strictly religious and their physical features were not important.**

Satire – the Church

A lot of the satire centered around the Catholic Church b/c it had a lot of excess – **people use (abused) their position in the Church to enrich themselves rather than help others, who they should be helping.**

5 members of church satired – used to satirize various aspects of the Catholic Church

- Nun/Prioress– (Nun's priest traveled with nun)
- Monk
- Friar
- Pardoner
- Summoner

The Knight

- Modest as a maid, Christian, admirable
- Followed code of chivalry – truth, honesty, generosity, and courtesy
- Well respected – fought in 15 battles
- Modest in his clothing - Fustian tunic - showed he was very sober and honest
- Went on pilgrimage to give thanks to God for him being successful
- Was admired by people all over the world - given the 1st seat at dinners
- Traveled with his son the Squire

The Squire

- Blond hair, was agile
- A knight in training

- He liked the ladies
- Tunic with leggings underneath, flowers on clothes
- Serviceable
- Proved himself in 1 or 2 battles
- Renaissance man before the Renaissance

The Knight and Squire travel with the Yeomen

The Yeoman

- Free man (paid servant)
- Proper forester
- Was religious (St. Christopher's metal)
- Was well prepared like a boy scout
- Kept everything in mint condition – took a lot of pride in self

The 3 ideal characters above represented what an ideal person of that time should be.

Nun

- Clothing was of finest wool
- Saint of jewelry
- Very affective - spoke French to seem more wealthy
- Wore broach “Amor vincit amnia” – love conquers all
- Carries dog around and gives it white bread and expensive meats rather than the poor.
- Beads are gold instead of blood red – shows wealth
- Not undergrown

- Name Madame Eglantine – means flower with thorns showing her dual nature.

Monk

- Fine grey furs, trimmed
- Wanted to be monk
- Beautifully dressed, ate well, portly gentlemen
- Supposed to live away at cloister - till soil, copy books, pray but he liked to be member of the world. He liked to hunt.

****Chaucer is saying the Nun and Monk have broken their vows. They have used the church to better themselves**

Friar – worst of the 3

- Dressed well
- Begged for money, used for self rather than give it to the poor
- Spent a lot of time with the upper class to make more money and paid women he slept with to not say anything – **was a pimp**
- People paid him for indulgences – forgive them of their sins
- Went to bars
- Supposed to be with people from slums, but thought he was above that. He was not concerned he was taking money from poor as long as he had money for himself.

Merchant

- In debt, but looked okay – fur hat, boots
- Flaw – didn't handle money as should have

Oxford Cleric

- Went to Oxford, was theologian
- Studied books - book smart, not street smart
- Thin as a rake, clothes thread bare, horse thin
- Borrowed money for books, paid back by learning
- No job in church
- Aristotle was his favorite author

Sergeant at Law (Lawyer)

- Met his clients at city hall
- Knew 300 years of law (since King William) – discrete about knowledge
- Was less busy than he seemed to be - appeared prosperous and busy, but wasn't (ironic). He did not have a lot of clients.

The Franklin

- Looks like Santa Claus
- Owed size to being son of Epicurus (God of Worldly Pleasure)
- Meat and drink
- Had everything grown in season
- Always open for company
- Satire – a temper, wanted everything to be perfect

The Guildsmen

- Up until this time in the middle ages, men form trade unions and get rich
- Wives want them to show wealth – nouveau riche

- Carried silver knives and livery
- Satire - nouveau riche and how want to be associated with (French) upper class

The Cook – followed the guildsmen

- Excellent cook
- Can taste beer, know where is from
- Flaw – knee has pussy running sore and was a cook

The Skipper

- Captain of the ship
- Great skipper – knew moons and tides
- Rode horse as best he could – not adept
- Good at trade but flaw - made enemies walk plank and stole wine

The Doctor

- Clothing – red and bluish grey like blood and veins
- Really good doctor
- Knew astronomy, 4 humors
- Tricked people they were sick so he could get money
- Deal with apothecary
- Special love of gold

Worthy Wife/Women of Bath

- Married 5 times, social
- Enjoyed men
- Abortioneer
- Deaf, gapped teeth – sign of sexuality
- Was weaver with fine cloth

- Been to Jerusalem 3 times, shows has a lot of \$.
- Only 2 women in Gen. Prologue – Prioress/Nun and Wife of Bath – if there is quote with she = one of them**

Parson

- **No physical description because most spiritual of all characters**
- Gave to poor
- Described him as shepherd – preached and lived the life of Christ
- **Holy example for all – exemplary character**

The Plowman – Parson's brother

- Honest, religious, pays tithes
- Hard worker, good and true
- Spiritual – thanked God

The Miller

- Red hair, beard, wart on nose, short and broad
- Went to bars and fought with others, told stories
- Bad breath
- His outward story shows his inward corruption
- **A thumb of gold – why he's dishonest – cheats customers**

The Manciple

- Satirizing lawyer
- No formal education
- Caterer for lawyers

The Reeve

- The Franklin hired him
- Fine man of large estate

- Knew about farming
- Feared plague
- Took money from and paid some back to Franklin

The Summoner

- Found people that had to go to church courts
- Took bribes including wine
- Scabby eyebrows

*****Worst of the Worst – The Pardoner*****

- Sold fake relics
- Wasn't a man in any sense

The Host

- Manly man

5 Tales and their type

Miller's Tale – Fabliaux

- Vulgar and inappropriate like himself
- Allison, 18 year old, is married to carpenter John. Nicholas, an Oxford astrology student, comes to live with them and Nicholas and Allison flirt.
- Absolon, a clerk also likes her, but Allison loves Nicholas. He comes by and thinks he's kissing her lips but was kissing her butt.

Pardoner's Tale - Exemplum – sets an example/moral about how to live life (Allegory)

- Friend of 3 people killed by death. Try to find it.
- Find gold under a tree – all want gold for self

- Drink poison and in the end all find death and end up dying
- Radix malorum est Cupiditas – “ Greed is the root of all evil” – **Contradictory because the Pardoner is greedy himself selling fake items and caring about money.**

Wife of Bath’s Tale - Breton Lai (Romance and chivalry from France)

- Each of husbands mentioned in prologue
- In story there is a knight that raped a women.
- The queen presents the knight with the following challenge: **if, within one year, he can discover what women want most in the world** and report his findings back to the court, he will keep his life. If he cannot find the answer to the queen’s question, or if his answer is wrong, he will lose his head
- He found an ugly old women who would tell him the answer as long as they married.
- **Says what women want most is a dominant part in a relationship**
- At the end, the ugly woman turns beautiful.

Prioress’ Tale - Religious Allegory

- At Christmas boy sings *Alma redemptoris* (Song of Virgin Mary) in a Jewish ghetto, so the Jews kill him.
- He could still sing after death even though his throat was slit with help of the Virgin Mary.

- Shows strong Cult of Virgin Mary and anti-Semitism at this time
- Prioress is very religious yet strongly anti-Semitic.

Nun's Priest's Tale - Beast Fable

- Chanticleer dreamed of fox trying to kill him, wife told him not to acknowledge it, dream became true.
- The fox takes him away and when he opens his mouth, Chanticleer flies away.
- Mulier est hominis confusio - "Woman is man's ruin/downfall". Chanticleer thought it meant women is a man's delight.
- Told ideas in Middle Ages – dreams, relationship between men and women and what they were like.
- **Allegory – don't be vain, listen to your wife and never trust a flatterer**