



**SRINIVASAN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Trichy)**



(Recognized Institution of 2 (f) and 12 (B) Status under UGC Act, 1956 by UGC, New Delhi)

PERAMBALUR – 621 212

**Subject code : 16AACEN3 HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE-I
Title/ Unit : PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES / UNIT-I
II BA ENGLISH**

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THE CANTERBURY TALES BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER



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THE PROLOGUE

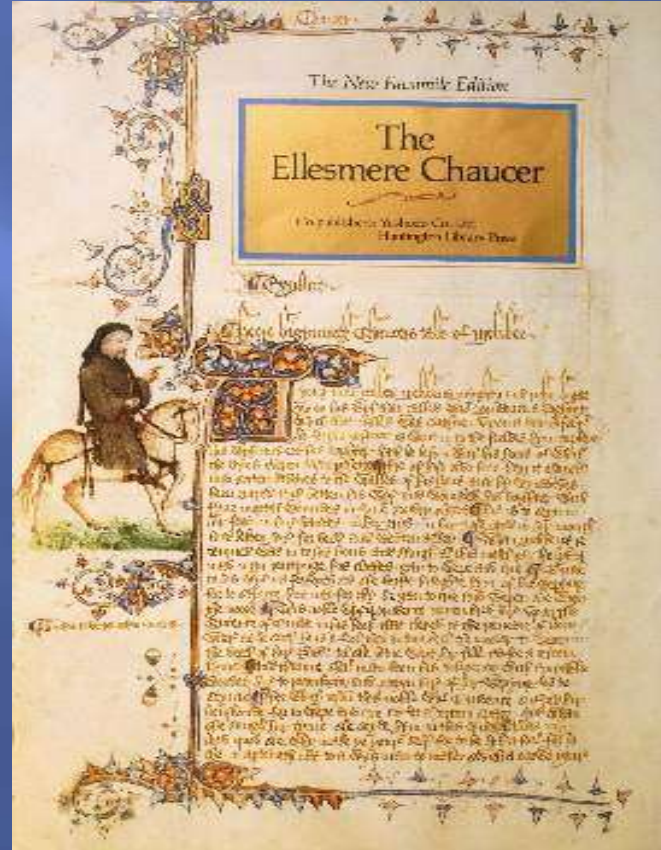
Thirty pilgrims are on their way to Canterbury to pay homage at Becket's tomb.

Each agrees to tell two tales on the way to the shrine and two tales back.

The winner will receive a supper paid for by all.



Chaucer Images



PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES

CHAUCER (1342 – 1400)

Morning star of Renaissance

Father of English (George Puttenham)

Father of English poetry (Dryden , preface to fables)

Chaucer lived during the reign. Of Edward III , Richard II , Henry
IV

No University education

POETIC CAREER

The French period – 1372

The Italian period (1373 – 1385)

The English period (1386 – 1400)





SOURCE OF THE PLAY

Source : BOCCACCIO'S DECEMERON

Poetic technique : Prosody

Rhyme Royal : 7 lines – Decasyllabic – ab abb acc

Total lines of the book – 17000 lines

Incomplete work (Chaucer died)

William Caxton published – 1470

From : Tabard inn (a tavern in southwark near London)

To : The shrine of the Martyr st. Thomas Becket (Canterbury)

Season : Spring

Month : April



DETAILS OF THE PILGRIMS

In this prologue Chaucer describes about the pilgrims whom he met

He explains the social status , physical appearance , dress and character of all the pilgrims

He describes 27 characters

He missed to explain two pilgrims

i. The second Nun ii. The Nun's Priest

1. KNIGHT

He loves chivalry , Truth , honour , freedom and courtesy

In the Great sea battle with Lord of Balat

Involved 15 battles , 3 tournaments

Edward III – reign

Head of Table in pilgrims

Behaves as meek as maid (shy)

Dress : strained with rust and soil of armour



2. SQUIRE

Son of Knight

Lusty Bachelor

Humble and modest

Entertainer , singer , dancer , flutist

Fight for lady love in battle

AS FRESH AS MAY

He sleeps short like a Nightingale

3. YEOMAN (ARCHER)

Servant to Knight

Well versed in wood craft

Brown face – short cut hair

Image of st. Christopher in his chest

Bow in hand – arrows with peacock feather

Bright armguard – sharp dagger

4 . THE PRIORESS (MADAM EGLANTINE)

Nasal voice – 9 inches broad fore head

Taken oath – St. Loy

Speak French of stratford at bow – French of Paris unknown

Luxurious life – serve dog with roasted meat

Latin phrase – amor vincit omnia – Love conquers all

Good in Table manners

5. THE MONK (MANLY MAN)

Loves hunting , grey hunts

Glutton – favorite (fat swan)

Modern man , He is compared to Austin Bird

Bored routine life – prayer , study , fasting

Bald head – shines like any glasses

6. THE FRAIR

Worst of all religious character

Confession of rich women

Many marriages at his own cost

Bag full of pins and knives

Singer , fiddle player

Dressed like a pope

Neck as white s lilly

Instead of weeping pay silver to the poor

7. THE MERCHANT

Folk beard , beaver hat , neatly fastened boot

Sells French corn

Says – sea routs

Knew foreign currencies

No one new he was in debt

Chaucer did not know his name

8. THE CLERK

Oxford scholar

Most modest in behaviour

Earn and spend in books – 20 books of Aristotle as pillow

Happy to teach

Prays for his friends

Talks about Peasant's Revolt

9. THE SERGEANT OF LAW

High rank attorney

Always present in porch of St.Paulis

Vigilant and wise

Multicolored coat

Make document flawlessly

Judge in a country (Deals cases from king William's period)

10. FRANKLIN

Served as Sheriff and auditor
He is a st. Julian in the country
Easy Temper
Dagger and silk bag
Beard as white as dairy

11. HAABERDASHER

12. CARPENTER

13. WEAVER

14. DYER

15. TAPESTRY MAKER

Dressed uniformly

Never separated

Had knife in silver

All the five has good understanding with each other

16. THE COOK

Came with those five guildsman

Knows to cook chicken well

Big sore in shine (lower leg)

There's nothing mentioned about him (the cook)

17. THE SHIPMAN

West country – Dart mouth
Steals wine – Cargo from Bordeaux
Guess tide – natural disaster
Knew many harbours
Beard shaken by many stroms
His ship - medlanic

18 . THE DOCTOR OF MEDICINE (LOVER OF GOLD)

Blood red cloth

Well versed in astronomy

Share money with chemist (supply medicine)

Earn more in Plague

Little knowledge in Bible (no knowledge about Bible)

19. THE WIFE OF BATH (ALLISON)

Deaf – gap-tooth

Bath – where good house wife found

Five husbands at church doors – many lovers being young

Three times visited Jerusalem

Cloth maker

Livelist of all character

Wimple 10 pounds

20 . POOR PARSON

Shepard

Kind and patience

Practice and preach

Walks – no horse

If Gold get rush what can iron do ? – favorite verse

21 . PLOWMAN

Brother of Parson

Most humble of all men

Sleevless coat

Rides mare

22 . THE MILLER

Strong , good at wrestling

Red beard

Excellent thief – knows how to steal corn and take payment
3 times

Plays bagpipe (instrument)

White coat

23 . MANIPLE OF TEMPLE

School of law – meaning

Worked 30 masters



26. THE PARDONER

Sings “ come here to love me “

Yellow hair as wax

Pillow – Lady immaculate , Cloth – St. Peter

Worst of all

Earn in a day which earn in two month by Parson

I Believe he was a Eunuch – Chaucer

27. HOST (HAIRY BAILY)

Qualified to be a master of Ceremonies in a hall

Impressive man

One should tell two stories $2 + 2 = 4$

Total – 120 tales

Best tale – Free supper

THE MIDDLE AGES BACKGROUND



Nobility/Ruling Class - Knight and Squire

Clergy - Monk , Frair

Middle class - Student , Doctor , Wife of Bath

Peasants - Miller , Plowman

LIST OF 30 PILGRIMS

- Knight – line 43
- Squire – line 81
- Yeoman – line 103
- Prioress (+ 3) – line 122
 - Monk – line 169
 - Friar – line 212
- Merchant – line 280
- Oxford Cleric – line 295
- Serjeant at Law – line 319
 - Franklin – line 341
- Guildsmen – (Haberdasher, Dyer, Carpenter, Weaver, Carpet-Maker) - line 371
 - Wife of Bath – line 455
 - Parson – line 488
 - Plowman – line 539
 - Manciple – line 585
 - Reeve – line 605
 - Summoner - line 641
 - Pardoner – line 689

SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Gluttony

Avarice / Greed

Sloth

Lust

Vanity

Pride

Anger



MORAL VIRTUES (OPPOSITE OF SINS)

Moderation

Generosity

Diligence

Love

Modesty

Humility

Forgiveness



FAQ'S

- ▣ What language is the Canterbury Tales written ?
- ▣ Who wins the story telling contest ?
- ▣ How are the stories organized ?
- ▣ What is Prologue ?
- ▣ Who visited three time Jerusalem ?
- ▣ “ Love conquers all “ who said this ?
- ▣ Who is “ As fresh as May “ ?
- ▣ Where especially do English people want to go ?

IMPORTANT LINKS/WORKS CONSULTED

- ▣ TRB Study material
- ▣ Routledge Outline History of English Literature
- ▣ Englishlanguage-litblogspot.com