

READ[®]

The Canterbury Tales Electronic Issue

Teacher's Guide

This is your guide to *READ*'s online-only electronic issue celebrating Geoffrey Chaucer's

The Canterbury Tales

SPECIAL
ELECTRONIC ISSUE
PREVIEW AND GUIDE

www.weeklyreader.com/canterbury

This guide provides a sneak peek at the full contents of our electronic issue, celebrating *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer. This comprehensive e-issue includes *READ* retellings of several stories from the famous work, translated into modern English. The Pardoner's Tale gets our signature Center Stage play treatment. Read "The Knight's Tale," our adapted short story. Follow Chaucer's characters on their journey to Canterbury Cathedral, and discover the customs and lifestyles of medieval England. Ten stories from *The Canterbury Tales* are summarized and rated in "The Tales as Movies." And no examination of Chaucer would be complete without a lesson on language. See a section of the prologue translated into modern English, and listen to a reading of the original.

We hope that you find our *Canterbury Tales* issue educational and entertaining. As always, if you have any questions or comments, you can contact us at read@weeklyreader.com.

Inside This Teacher's Guide

- **Pages 2–3 A Look Inside the Web Site**
View a "screen grab" of the Web site's main menu page with an explanation of each of our features and additional discussion content and activities.
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Inside the *Canterbury Tales* Web Site

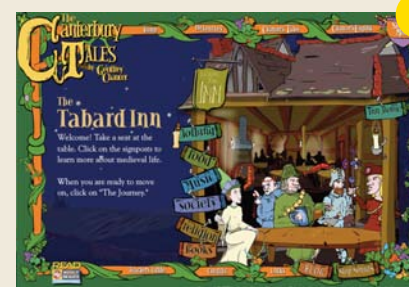
Introduction



Take some time to familiarize yourself with our *Canterbury Tales* Web site. Our Welcome page sets the scene for Chaucer's great tales. Click the inn sign to step into the Tabard Inn, where you will learn about medieval life. Then, follow the links at the top of the

screen to discover Chaucer's characters and their pilgrimage to the Canterbury Cathedral. "The Journey" sets the context of the story, "Chaucer's Tales" links to *READ*'s treatment of his work, and "Chaucer's English" offers lessons on reading Middle English.

Main Menu Page



1 Visit the Inn

The pilgrims seated around the table are the Wife of Bath, the Monk, the Miller, the Knight, and the Pardoner. To find out more about life in the Middle Ages, click on the signposts at the inn. Here you will find informational articles about each of the following aspects of medieval life: clothing, food, music, society, religion, books.

Extension Activity: Have your students write about one aspect of medieval life. How has life changed or remained the same over time?



2 The Journey

View a map of the pilgrims' journey to the Canterbury Cathedral. To discover more about the author, download our PDF "The Tale of Geoffrey Chaucer."

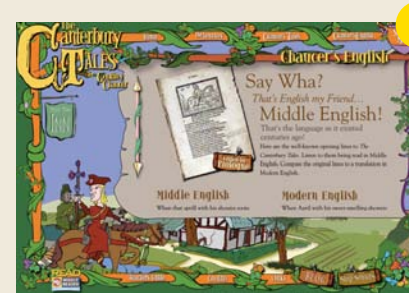
Discussion Question: After reading "The Tale of Geoffrey Chaucer," discuss with your students what may have led him to write *The Canterbury Tales*. What were his influences?



3 Chaucer's Tales

- **Tales as Movies** Chaucer's tales were as entertaining as any modern movie. We look at 10 stories and consider what those tales would be rated if they appeared on the big screen today.
- **Center Stage** Find a PDF of *The Pardoner's Tale* read-aloud play.
- **Fiction** Read a modern translation of *The Knight's Tale*.

Extension Activity: Which character do your students identify with most? Have each student write an essay explaining which character he or she favors and why.



4 Chaucer's English

- **Audio** Listen to the prologue read in its original Middle English.
- **Translation** Read the prologue in its original Middle English, and compare it side by side with a modern translation.
- **PDF** Read some tips on pronouncing Middle English words.

Extension Activity: Ask your students to imagine what it would have been like to be one of the pilgrims on the journey to Canterbury. Have them write a journal entry about the trip, mentioning their traveling companions and what tale they would share with them to help pass the time.

Reading Comprehension

TRUE, FALSE, OR OPINION?

Directions: Based on the story “The Knight’s Tale,” write *T* if a statement is true. Write *F* if a statement is false. Write *O* if a statement is an opinion.

- ___ 1. Theseus is the governor of Athens.
- ___ 2. Athens sends an army to conquer Thebes.
- ___ 3. Arcite and Palamon are soldiers in Theseus’s army.
- ___ 4. Theseus sentences Arcite and Palamon to life imprisonment in Athens.
- ___ 5. The beautiful Emily is the wife of Theseus.
- ___ 6. Arcite and Palamon are fools for falling in love with Emily.
- ___ 7. Theseus is a cruel man.
- ___ 8. Pirithous arranges for Arcite to be released from prison.
- ___ 9. Palamon escapes jail by killing a guard.
- ___ 10. Having the cousins duel for the right to marry Emily is a good way to judge which man will be the better husband.

VOCABULARY WORKOUT

Directions: Circle the correct definition for the **boldfaced** word.

- 1. During the meteor shower, Gary observed the night sky **intently**; he didn’t want to miss a thing.
(*The Pardoner’s Tale*)
a. casually b. closely c. wearily
- 2. With an ace of spades up his sleeve, the **swindler** displayed an air of confidence.
(*The Pardoner’s Tale*)
a. swine b. clown c. cheater
- 3. Sheila’s only **vice** was that she was lazy. (*The Pardoner’s Tale*)
a. wickedness, sin b. attribute c. crime
- 4. “**Blasphemy!**” yelled the priest when the altar boy cursed in Latin. (*The Pardoner’s Tale*)
a. profanity b. shame c. outrage
- 5. The dying man turned to the priest and spoke softly. “Please **absolve** me of my sins, Father.”
(*The Pardoner’s Tale*)
a. forget b. remind c. forgive
- 6. “What a **shrewd** boy he is!” Leroy’s teacher proclaimed. “He won the class election by promising to fight for less homework!” (“The Tale of Geoffrey Chaucer”)
a. lazy b. handsome c. clever
- 7. Dolores was **dolorous** when her dog, Doris, died. (“The Knight’s Tale”)
a. relieved b. sad c. angry
- 8. Zachary’s **pallor** made him look like a ghost. (“The Knight’s Tale”)
a. costume b. paleness c. expression

Reading Comprehension: *The Pardoner's Tale*

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Directions: Circle the correct answer.

1. The Pardoner can best be described as
 - a. a pious clergyman on a mission to save souls.
 - b. a swindler who sells fake religious trinkets.
 - c. a drunkard who enjoys insulting others.
2. The Pardoner takes great pleasure in
 - a. exposing hypocrisy.
 - b. forgiving sins.
 - c. capturing villains.
3. In *The Pardoner's Tale*, why do the three revelers set out to find Death?
 - a. They believe he will lead them to riches.
 - b. They think they can trick him into giving them everlasting life.
 - c. They want to take revenge on him for slaying their friend.
4. What is the lead reveler's plan for dividing the gold?
 - a. He and one reveler will kill the third and split the gold between themselves.
 - b. The three revelers will split the gold evenly.
 - c. He plans to kill both other men and keep it all for himself.
5. After the Pardoner finishes his tale, what does he do?
 - a. He treats the other pilgrims to dinner at the inn.
 - b. He tries to sell pardons to his audience.
 - c. He walks out the inn door and is never seen again.
6. What is the central lesson to be learned from the Pardoner's tale?
 - a. You can never trust anyone but yourself.
 - b. A friend in need is a friend indeed.
 - c. Money and greed are the roots of evil.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Directions: Answer the following questions, using a separate piece of paper if necessary.

1. If you were the 30th pilgrim going to Canterbury, who would you be? What would your tale be?

2. Chaucer never wrote about the return trip. Make up a story about the trip from Canterbury to Southwark using Chaucer's characters.

3. In "Writer's Notebook," author Wim Coleman says, "It's interesting that Death himself never appears in 'The Pardoner's Tale.' Or does Death actually appear?" What do you think? Explain your thoughts using examples from the play.

4. Do you think the Pardoner is an honest man or a dishonest man? Use examples from the play to support your argument.

Literary Elements

(Middle) English as a Second Language

At first glance, Middle English might look like a foreign language. But it's not as hard to figure out as you might think. In fact, it can be like deciphering a code. Take this example from Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale."

Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see
 Noees flood come walwyng as the see
 To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.

Look at the first line. The first word, *hym*, is obviously *him*, right? *Thynketh* must be *thinketh*. However, *thinketh* is an outdated word, so let's change it to the past tense of *think*, which is *thought*. Next we have the word *verrailly*. Today it is spelled *verily*, and it's just a fancy way of saying *in truth* or *truly*. And now all you have left is the end of the line, *that he may see*. No explanation needed there!

Now put it all together. *Him thought, in truth, that he may see.*
 Now clean it up a bit. *He thought, truly, that he could see.*

Translate the following passage and rewrite it in modern English on the lines below. We provide some hints in the column to the right.

1. Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see
He thought, truly, that he could see

2. Noees flood come walwyng as the see

3. To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.

4. He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere;

5. He siketh with ful many a sory swogh;

6. He gooth and geteth hym a knedyng-trogh,

7. And after that a tubbe and a kymelyn,

8. And pryvely he sente hem to his in,

9. And heng hem in the roof in pryvetee.

How to Decode Unfamiliar Words

- Consider alternate spellings.
- Say the word or phrase aloud. What does it sound like?
- Look for a familiar root word.
- Use context clues. What word would make sense in the phrase or sentence?

HINTS

2. a. *Noe* is a name. Sound it out, consider an alternate spelling, and use context to figure out who it is.
 b. sound it out: *walwyng*
5. *swogh*—groan or sob
6. *knedyng-trogh*—kneading-trough; a large trough for kneading dough
7. *kymelyn*—a tub used to brew beer
8. *hem*—them

Wrap-Up: *The Canterbury Tales*

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Directions: Now that you've taken *READ's* online *Canterbury* journey, answer the questions below.

1. List five things about medieval life that you didn't know before you read this issue.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

2. List three things about Geoffrey Chaucer that you didn't know before you read this issue.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

3. List two reasons why *The Canterbury Tales* is an important book.

- a. _____

- b. _____

4. List two things that surprised you about Middle English.

- a. _____

- b. _____

How to Teach the *Canterbury Tales* Web Site

Sample Lesson

Preparation: We suggest projecting the site onto an interactive whiteboard. The site format is horizontal. Scroll bars for the text are on the left and resemble vine-covered spears. Easy directions for how to move through the site are written into the text areas.

When presenting the site to your students, it makes the most sense to begin at the beginning and follow the journey. Stop and explore the extra content along the way, or return to those materials later.

Visit the Inn: Each short, engaging tidbit can be read aloud by a different student. Be sure to turn on your audio. These passages contain links to fascinating

materials on outside sites, which can be investigated in more depth at a later time if you wish. Time spent at the inn: approx. 5–10 minutes.

The Journey: This section includes a downloadable PDF of Chaucer's life story. This handout can be given to students to read as homework. Time spent on the journey: 1–2 minutes.

Chaucer's Tales: First read the intro, "Let the Storytelling Begin!" Then, if you wish, give students a taste of the tales with the amusing "The Tales as Movies." Set aside a full class session for the read-aloud play, *The Pardoner's Tale*, which can be

downloaded and reproduced or projected onto a whiteboard. "The Knight's Tale" may be given out as homework, along with the corresponding reproducible found in this Teacher's Guide. Time at Chaucer's Tales: approx. 10 minutes, not counting the performance of the play.

Chaucer's English: Side-by-side versions of the prologue to the *Tales* allow students to compare Middle English with modern. Click *Listen to Prologue* (turn up the volume), listen, and follow along. (Approx. 1 minute, but allow for repeats and discussion.) A PDF about Middle English is included here.

ANSWER KEY

Page 4 Reading Comprehension

True, False, or Opinion?

1. T, 2. T, 3. F, 4. T, 5. F, 6. O, 7. O, 8. T, 9. F, 10. O

Vocabulary Workout

1. b, 2. c, 3. a, 4. a, 5. c, 6. c, 7. b, 8. b

Page 5 Reading Comprehension

Multiple Choice

1. b, 2. b, 3. c, 4. a, 5. b, 6. c

Discussion Questions

Answers will vary.

Page 6 Literary Elements

1. He thought, truly, that he could see
2. Noah's flood came rolling as the sea
3. to drown Allison, his honey dear.
4. He wept, wailed, and made sorry cries;
5. He sighed with many sorry sobs;
6. He went to get a kneading-trough,
7. And after that a brewing tub,
8. And privately he brought them to his inn,
9. And he hung them from the roof in private.

Page 7 Wrap-Up: *The Canterbury Tales*

Answers will vary.