**English IV Honors- Canterbury Tales Study Guide**

**Geoffrey Chaucer**

Born- 1340

* Jobs he held
* Types of people he met in his life
* Author of
* Three great Italian authors
* Languages he spoke

**Canterbury Tales**

* Written in what language and why was this important?
* What did he write about?
* Character descriptors (9)
* Chaucer’s plan for the Tales
* What was Canterbury and why did people go there?
* Importance of religion in the Middle Ages
* Pilgrimages
* St. Thomas a` Becket ( who was he and what happened to him?)
* Reading versus Oral tradition
* According to Chaucer, in what season does the pilgrimage take place?
* Why do you think “people long to go on pilgrimages” (line 12) during Spring?
* Where do the pilgrims meet before their trip?
* How does Chaucer describe the group of pilgrims as a whole?

**Nature of the Tales**

* commonly told stories
* stories were interactive with others’ tales
	+ Friar told a tale to insult the Monk and vice versa
	+ Reeve told a tale to insult the Miller, etc.

**Satire**

What is it?

What are the differences between Satire and Comedy?

* Two types
	+ Formal ( Direct)
	+ Indirect

**Devices of Satire**

* Irony
	+ Dramatic Irony
	+ Situational Irony
	+ Verbal Irony
* Parody
* Caricature
* Juxtaposition
* Sarcasm
* Innuendo
* Understatement

**Analyzing Satire- 5 steps**

1. Tone- ( grim, cheerful, sardonic, mock serious, optimistic, etc.)
2. Type- ( direct vs. indirect)
3. What is the writer satirizing- ( what aspect of society are they trying to criticize?)
4. Writer’s purpose- (what do they want to change?)
5. Literary techniques- ( hyperbole, understatement, irony, humor, etc.)

**Characters of the Canterbury Tales**

Satire in Chaucer’s “Prologue” to The Canterbury Tales

**Knight ( not satirized- why?)**

* Distinguished
* followed chivalry
* truthful, honorable
* ridden into battle
* honored for his graces
* fought in many battles
* modest, not boorish
* a true, perfect knight
* He represents all that is good about knighthood and nobility.
* Good example from the nobility.

**Squire ( Satirized for?)**

* lover
* curly locks
* fought in nearby battles so he could get home to see the ladies
* sang, danced, wrote poetry
* could **“joust and dance”**
* “loved so hotly that till dawn grew pale/He slept as little as a nightingale”
* was courteous and serviceable when father was around

**Yeoman ( Not Satirized)**

* wore coat & hood of green
* was servant to knight, yet a freeman
* feathers were perfectly made in arrows
* knew his business as an archer and did it well
* showed proper religious respect by wearing St. Christopher medal
* was a “proper forester”
* NOT satirized.
* Good example from the middle class

**Prioress (Nun) ( is satirized)**

* coy (falsely modest, flirtatious)
* known as Madam Eglantyne (common heroine for romance novels of the Middle Ages)
* tried to exude grace, manners, and sophistication, but spoke a very poor quality of French
* owned hunting dogs (not proper for her) yet was overly upset when a mouse died
* fed dogs roasted flesh and fine food while people were starving
* Prioress (Nun)
* glass-gray eyes (deceptive)
* forehead was “fair of spread” (but a span from brow to brow--very large woman)
* cloak had a graceful charm (another reference to large features)
* jewelry with “Amor vincit omnia” (Love conquers all) which may have meant romantic love, not God’s

**Monk ( Is satirized)**

* riding a horse, which he was not to do
* ignored rules of his order
* was “progressive” but supposed to be poor
* lazy
* owned dogs, which he was not to do
* expensive clothing (fur on sleeve) when monk is to be poor
* fat (opposite of his vows)
* glittering, bulging eyes (physiognomy)

**Friar (IS satirized strongly)**

* “fixed up” marriages
* “intimate” with city dames
* claimed to have licence from Pope to hear confessions--charged money as penance
* gifts to girls
* knew taverns and barmaids well
* white neck, lisp (physiog.)
* wanton (lecherous)
* would butt down doors with his head
* begged money even from poorest, whom he was to help
* charged money on “settling days”

**Merchant ( Is satirized)**

* forking beard (physiognomy)
* gave many opinions
* dabbled in exchanges
* seemed stately but...
* was in debt and no one knew it from the way he talked
* Note that the satire here is not as strong as it was for Monk, Friar, and Prioress. Why was the satire so light for the middle class and the nobility, yet so harsh for religious?

**Oxford Cleric (Student)**

* hollow look
* threadbare clothing
* could not find a job in the church
* was too unworldly for secular employment
* borrowed money from friends, never repaid
* was “book smart” but “life dumb”
* This demonstrates the patronage of church positions, which often were bought and sold.

**Sergeant at the Law ( Is Satirized)**

* one of 20 “traveling judges” in Chaucer’s day
* was an experienced lawyer
* expert on real estate law
* all was “fee-simple” to his strong digestion
* found loopholes in law to deprive heirs of their land
* could argue cases either way with impunity
* IS satirized
* Franklin
* wealthy landowner
* lived for pleasure, particularly “Epicurean” delights
* Enjoyed his food, had a table prepared all day long
* Again, note how light the satire is of this wealthy man compared to others

**Haberdasher, Dyer, Carpenter, Weaver, and Carpet-Maker ( they ARE satirized)**

* treat all of these as a single character
* the key to under-standing them is their wives
* they LOOK great (new looking gear which was bought used)
* their wives “declared it was their due” whether the men believed it or not
* wives wanted to be called “Madam” and to be “seen” -- like a queen

**Cook ( IS satirized)**

* Could distinguish London ale by flavor (which was quite cheap -- like being able to distinguish Coca Cola from Food Lion cola, etc.)
* had ulcer on his knee (probably from cooking at open pot)
* Cook
* made good thick soup
* made good blancmange (yellow-white, thick, creamy chicken soup--much the color of what might be in the ulcer)

**Skipper ( IS Satirized)**

* rode a farmer’s horse well (an insult)
* skin was tanned (a mark of low breeding)
* stole wine while the trader slept
* ignored conscience
* made his prisoners “walk home”

**Doctor ( IS satirized)**

* grounded in astronomy, as most doctors in the Middle Ages were
* “All his apothecaries in a tribe...”
* “...each made money from the other’s guile.” did not read the Bible
* kept the gold he won in pestilences

**Wife of Bath (woman from Bath) IS satirized)**

* tight, red clothing
* had five husbands, all at the church door
* gap-teeth
* large hips
* heels spurred
* “knew the remedies for love’s mischances
* had a unique interpretation of Scriptures which gave her control in her marriages

**Parson ( Is not Satirized)**

* holy-minded
* poor
* learned
* devout
* patient
* noble
* a shepherd
* virtuous rich in holy thought
* served the poor
* gave own money
* practiced what he preached

**Plowman ( Is not Satirized)**

* honest worker, good and true
* followed the Gospel
* steadily went about his work
* helped poor from love
* always paid his tithes in full when due
* rode a mare

**Miller (Is Satirized)**

* great stout fellow
* boasted he could heave any door off the hinge or break it with his head
* red beard
* wart on end of nose
* weighed 224 pounds
* told filthy tavern stories
* “stole” grain with his “thumb of gold”
* played bagpipes
* led procession
* hated the Reeve

**Manciple ( Is Satirized)**

* buyer of food for the 30 Knights of the Temple (lawyers)
* got to market early to get best values
* was illiterate
* wise in practical matters, though
* lived debt free on what he “saved”

**Reeve( Is Satirized)**

* supervisor of the serfs
* calfless legs
* no one ever caught him in arrears
* knew the serfs’ dodges, so they feared him
* better at bargains than his lord
* was a carpenter
* rode at back of procession
* hated the Miller

**Summoner ( Is Satirized)**

* face like a cherubin
* carbuncles and pimples
* black scabby brows, thin beard
* frightened the children
* ate garlic, onions, leeks
* drank wine ‘til all was hazy
* took bribes: quart of wine or “favors” from women
* threatened excommunication

***Pardoner ( Is Satirized)***

* from Charing Cross
* hair yellow, long
* bulging eyeballs
* carried pardons from Rome, he said
* goat-like voice
* could not grow a beard

**Host ( Is Satirized)**

* served finest victuals
* bright eyes, wide girth
* suggested the tale-telling contest
* prize would be a meal for the winner paid for by the others
* everyone stayed at inn
* return trip would mean another round of meals and lodging
* he would be sole judge of the tales
* accompanied the pilgrims to Canterbury