

THE CANTERBURY TALES

Lesson plans written by Lisa A. Reynolds, a high school English teacher in Glendale, Arizona.

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The Canterbury Tales begins with the introduction of each of the pilgrims making their journey to Canterbury to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket. Note Chaucer's descriptions of their horses. The following are lesson plans written by Lisa A. Reynolds, a high school English teacher in Glendale, Arizona.

Chaucer Lesson Plans "The Prologue"

Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be introduced to Geoffrey Chaucer, Medieval England, Middle English, and the background to The Canterbury Tales.

- Students will analyze characters from 'The Prologue' to The Canterbury Tales.
- Students will write a character sketch and draw their interpretations of characters from The Canterbury Tales.
- Students will make a short oral presentation to the class in which they will share their character sketches and drawings.
- Students will compile their character sketches and drawings into the class' version of an illuminated manuscript.

LESSON 1

This should take one class period. Worksheet included.

Introduce The Canterbury Tales by discussing Chaucer, his influence on the use of English in literature, and Chaucer's plan for The Canterbury Tales. Have students take notes on the major points of each.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London about 1340. His father was a prominent wine merchant, a member of the newly developing middle class. As a young man, Chaucer would have worked and played around his father's business which would have introduced him to a variety of people from all walks of life. His father's successful business also brought Chaucer the opportunity for a good education. Along with speaking English, Chaucer was fluent in Latin, French, and Italian. His education was furthered when, as a teenager, he became a page in the household of a son of King Edward III. This gave him an entrance into the world of the aristocracy with which he would be associated all of his life. Throughout his lifetime, Chaucer was a high-level public servant, serving as a soldier, diplomat, and civil administrator. His involvement with the government led to travels and the opportunity to meet all types of people, good experience for any writer.

In addition to his government work, Chaucer was also a poet. Early in his career, he translated the works of other, then began composing his own poetry. About 1370, he completed his first major work, Book of the Duchess. His longest poem, Troilus and Creseide, was completed in 1385. He began The Canterbury Tales about 1386 and continued to work on it until his death in 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the area that is today known as Poets' Corner.

The Canterbury Tales is written in Middle English, a language seldom used for literature during Chaucer's time as it was considered a peasant language. (From 1150-1500, the language spoken is considered Middle English.) When William the Conqueror and the Normans conquered England in 1066, French became the language of the King's court and the upper class. The language of the Church was Latin, and English was spoken only by the common people who were largely uneducated and could neither read nor write. Consequently, the literature produced was in French, the language of the upper class.

Although fluent in French, Chaucer chose to write in English, the language of the common people and the middle class which was rising in prominence. By using English, Chaucer raised the prestige of the English language, made literature more accessible to the common man, and made the use of English in literature more acceptable. Chaucer is second only to Shakespeare in his prominence in English literature.

Chaucer's plan for The Canterbury Tales

Chaucer wrote The Canterbury Tales in an heroic couplet form. An heroic couplet is two consecutive iambic pentameter lines that rhyme. In other words, the entire story was to be written in pairs of rhyming lines, each line containing ten syllables with the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth words receiving the emphasis, or stress.

Chaucer's plan was to use a framework story, a story within a story. Chaucer's framework for The Canterbury Tales is the journey of a group of pilgrims to Canterbury, a shrine 56 miles, or about a four-day ride, from London. Within this

framework, he would have each of his pilgrims tell stories, two on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back to London. Chaucer, however, died before he could complete his story, so we have only 22 completed tales.

During the Middle Ages, pilgrimages to religious shrines were made by all classes. The wealthier pilgrim could travel to Jerusalem or to shrines in France or Italy while those of lesser means could make pilgrimages within their own country. Canterbury and the shrine of St. Thomas Becket was an important shrine to which English pilgrims flocked. Becket was killed as he prayed on December 29, 1170, by four knights of King Henry II. Soon after his death, miracles attributed to Becket began to occur. He was canonized in 1173, and his tomb in Canterbury's cathedral became a popular destination for pilgrims to come to pray for forgiveness and ask for healing. Chaucer's pilgrims are going to Becket's shrine. (For more on the murder of Becket, check these web sites: www.ibiscom.com/becket.htm, www.cin.org/saints/becketm.html, or www.digiserve.com/peter/becket.htm.)

Chaucer wanted to represent all of society in his work so he included characters from the three most prominent groups of his day. The knight, squire, yeoman, franklin, reeve, miller, and plowman are members of the disappearing feudal system, a system based on the land. The parson, summoner, monk, prioress, friar, pardoner, and Oxford cleric are all members of the Catholic Church, the most dominant institution of the Middle Ages. The rising urban middle class is represented by the doctor, lawyer, maniple, merchant, shipman, tradesmen, cook, wife of Bath, and the host.

LESSON 2

This should take at least four class periods, perhaps more depending on class length. Questions included.

1. The teacher should read the opening of "The Prologue," lines 1-40 or to the beginning of the knight's description, to the students, stopping every few lines to make sure students are understanding the story.
2. Together, answer questions 1-6.
3. Put students with a partner. Assign each pair characters, the number of characters for each pair depending upon class size. "The Prologue" contains 23 sections for character sketches.
4. Each pair should read the section dealing with their characters several times. Answer the questions for the characters.
5. Using the question/answers for each character, each pair should write character sketches of their characters, covering all aspects of the character presented by Chaucer.
6. Once the written sketch is completed, each pair should draw a picture of each of their characters in the top two-thirds of their paper. Colored pencils on legal-size, unlined paper work well for this assignment. In the bottom third of the paper, students should write their character sketches, using an illuminated manuscript form for the first line.
7. Going in order through "The Prologue," have students present the manuscript page containing the picture and character sketch to the class. Students could read Chaucer's words first or just read their sketches for each character.
8. The teacher or a student volunteer can make a cover page and illustrate the first 40 lines of "The Prologue." Put the student pages together in order. Staple or bind together and show the class their illuminated manuscript!

SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Read one of the tales and discuss how the tale fits with the character Chaucer has presented in "The Prologue."
"The Pardoner's Tale" is one suggestion.
 - In heroic couplet form, have students compose their own ten-line sketches of someone they know.
 - Discuss how Chaucer uses satire in "The Prologue." Have students write a satiric essay about a well-known person.
 - Research and discuss modern-day pilgrimages, where people go and why.

SOURCES

The text used here is a commonly used secondary school text: *Adventures in English Literature*, Athena Edition, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston (1996). Some questions suggested by that text have been adapted for this lesson.

The 3rd Edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Major Authors Edition (1975), and the 2nd Edition of Albert C. Baugh's *A History of the English Language* were also consulted.

Also see: www.classicnote.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/canterbury/shortsumm.html

LESSON 1 WORKSHEET

Geoffrey Chaucer - The Canterbury Tales

Identify each of the following:

1. Geoffrey Chaucer

2. Middle English

3. Chaucer's influence on the use of English in literature

4. heroic couplet

5. framework story

6. pilgrimages

7. St. Thomas Becket

8. Three most prominent groups in medieval society represented in The Canterbury Tales.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

LESSON 2 QUESTIONS

THE CANTERBURY TALES - "The Prologue"

1. What is the most popular time of year for pilgrimages?
2. Where do most pilgrims in England choose to go on pilgrimages?
3. Where does Chaucer, the narrator, meet the pilgrims?
4. Why is Chaucer there?
5. How many people does he meet?
6. What shall Chaucer discuss before the journey begins?

KNIGHT

7. What qualities does the knight possess?
8. In what places has he fought?
9. What is Chaucer's opinion of him?
10. Chaucer says the knight has "Fine horses." Why are fine horses important for a knight?
11. Describe his physical appearance.
12. Why is he going on the pilgrimage?
13. Who rides with him?

SQUIRE

14. What does the squire have in common with most young men his age?
15. Where has he served and with what "military" branch?
16. What details about him show his vanity?
17. What skills does he possess?
18. What does Chaucer think of the squire?
19. How is the squire different than his father?
20. Who rides with the knight and the squire?

YEOMAN

21. What is the yeoman's job?
22. Describe his physical appearance?
23. What about his physical appearance tells Chaucer that the yeoman is a "proper forester?"
24. Do you think the yeoman talked to Chaucer? Why or why not?

NUN

25. What is a prioress?
26. What are the qualities/images we usually associate with a nun?
27. Authors often use names to help develop a character. Chaucer calls the nun "Madam Eglantyne." What quality does the name suggest?
28. What is the demeanor of the nun?
29. What does the nun "counterfeit" or pretend she has?
30. How does she feel about animals?
31. Describe her physical appearance?
32. What does her pin say? Why does this seem unusual for a nun?
33. Does Chaucer like her or not? Explain.
34. Who travels with her?

MONK

35. What are the qualities/images we usually associate with a monk?
36. What does the monk enjoy most in life?
37. What does Chaucer say about the monk's horse? Why would this be unusual for a monk?
38. How do the monk's beliefs about the monastic life differ with the church's beliefs?
39. Chaucer says he "agreed" with the monk's views about the monastic life, and he says they "were sound." What evidence is there that he probably doesn't really agree? So why did he say he agreed with the monk as he was speaking with him?

40. Describe his physical appearance.
41. What is a palfrey?
42. What type of personality do you think the monk might exhibit? Explain.

FRIAR

43. How does a friar's life differ from a monk's?
44. The friar is called a "Limiter." What is his job?
45. What extra duties does he perform? How good is he? What is his goal?
46. How does he "make a decent living?"
47. With what types of people does the friar like to spend his time?
48. What is his attitude toward the poor?
49. Describe his physical appearance.
50. Describe his personality.
51. What is the friar's name?
52. Through his description of the monk and the friar, what is Chaucer trying to do?

MERCHANT

53. Describe the merchant's physical appearance.
54. What are his opinions?
55. What is Chaucer's opinion of the merchant?
56. What is the significance of Chaucer not knowing the merchant's name?

CLERIC

57. What is a cleric?
58. Where does he attend college?
59. Describe his appearance and that of his horse.
60. What is suggested by the details of his clothes and by the description of his horse?
61. What does he study?
62. Where does all his money go?
63. How does he repay the friends who have given him money?
64. How does he compare with the monk and the friar?
65. What does the last line of his section reveal about him?
66. What is Chaucer's opinion of him?

SERGEANT AT THE LAW

67. What is his job?
68. What type of man does he appear to be? What shows us that Chaucer may have his doubts?
69. Explain: "Though there was nowhere one so busy as he, He was less busy than he seemed to be."
70. How well does he know the law?
71. Describe his physical appearance.
72. What does Chaucer think of him?

FRANKLIN

73. What is a franklin?
74. Describe the franklin's appearance.
75. Who was Epicurus?
76. What type of life did the franklin like to live?
77. What type of reputation do you think he had? Explain.

TRADESMEN

78. What professions travel together? What is each tradesman's job?
79. What is a guild?
80. Why does Chaucer point out that "their gear would pass for new?"
81. How well off are these men?
82. What things seem important to the tradesmen?
83. What do the wives want?

COOK

84. What is the cook's reputation?
85. What about his description is so in contrast with the image of a cook?

SKIPPER

86. What kind of a horseman is the skipper? Why?
87. Describe his physical appearance?
88. How has he treated wine merchants?
89. How has he treated prisoners?
90. Does Chaucer like him or not? Explain.
91. How good is he as a sailor?

DOCTOR

92. On what does the doctor base his medical treatments?
93. With whom does he work to make money? How?
94. Describe his physical appearance.
95. What are "pestilences?"
96. What does he especially love?

WIFE OF BATH

97. Describe her physical appearance.
98. What is her job and where is her home?
99. What is her personality like?
100. What do the red stockings and the red hue of her skin suggest about the wife of Bath?
101. Who else among the pilgrims has traveled as much?
102. Why is it appropriate that she is riding an "ambling horse?"

PARSON

103. What is his job?
104. What qualities of the parson does Chaucer point out?
105. Who are "his sheep?"
106. Explain: "...if gold rust, what then will iron do?"
107. The parson's entire life is devoted to what?
108. What is Chaucer's opinion of the parson?
109. How does the parson compare with the friar and the monk?

PLOWMAN

110. Chaucer says the plowman is the brother of the parson. Although he may be his actual brother, how is he also his brother figuratively?
111. What are some of his qualities?
112. What does the plowman spend his time doing?
113. What does Chaucer think of him? Explain.
114. Describe his physical appearance.
115. What is the significance of Chaucer telling so little about the plowman's physical appearance?
116. What is the significance of the plowman riding a mare?

MILLER

117. A stone is an English measurement equal to 14 lbs. Describe the miller's physical appearance.
118. What is a miller's job?
119. How well does he do his job? Explain.
120. What instrument does he play?
121. Where does he ride in the procession to Canterbury?
122. Unlike the plowman, the description of the miller is almost completely a physical one. What is the significance of this?

MANCIPLE

123. What is a manciple's job?
124. How well does he perform his duties?
125. What does Chaucer think of the manciple?
126. What does he seem to have that the people he works for lack?

REEVE

127. What is a reeve's job?
128. Describe his physical appearance.
129. How good is he at his job?
130. What is his financial status?
131. What is his special skill?
132. Describe his horse.
133. Where does he live?
134. Where does he travel in the procession of pilgrims?

SUMMONER

135. What is the summoner's occupation?
136. Describe his physical appearance.
137. What does his appearance suggest about his character?
138. What does he enjoy eating and drinking?
139. What does he know a little of and where did he learn it?
140. He will ignore sins on what condition?
141. What does Chaucer think of him?

PARDONER

142. What is a pardoner's job?
143. What is the significance of the summoner riding with the pardoner?
144. Describe his physical appearance.
145. Chaucer characterizes the pardoner as being effeminate. What details does he give to develop that characterization?
146. What kinds of "relics" does he carry?
147. What is prevarication?
148. Why is the pardoner so successful in selling his "relics"?
149. How does he behave in church?
150. Why does he try to sing so well?
151. Compare the pardoner to the monk and friar.

HOST

152. For what does Chaucer ask that his readers now condemn him?
153. Describe the host.
154. What does Chaucer think of the host?
155. What does the host propose?
156. How does the host's proposal help set up Chaucer's plan for The Canterbury Tales?
157. What is the storytelling plan he suggests?
158. What will the winner receive?
159. Who will judge the contest?
160. How do the pilgrims decide who will begin the storytelling?

LESSON 2 - SUGGESTED ANSWERS

THE CANTERBURY TALES - "The Prologue"

1. What is the most popular time of year for pilgrimages?
In the springtime, April, after the March rains have passed and the flowers are blooming.
2. Where do most pilgrims in England choose to go on pilgrimages?
To Canterbury
3. Where does Chaucer, the narrator, meet the pilgrims?
At The Tabard , an inn in Southwark, a borough of London south of the Thames River. (In most stories we teach our students to separate the writer from the narrator. In "The Prologue," Chaucer is both.)
4. Why is Chaucer there?
He's going on a pilgrimage to Canterbury.
5. How many people does he meet?
29
6. What shall Chaucer discuss before the journey begins?
"What their condition was, the full array
of each of them, as it appeared to me,
According to profession and degree,
And what apparel they were riding in.."

He wants to tell his reader what each pilgrim's personality, demeanor, attitude (as far as he can tell!) and appearance are.

KNIGHT

7. What qualities does the knight possess?
distinguished, truthful, honorable, generous, and courteous, a noble soldier, wise, modest
8. In what places has he fought?
Alexandria, Egypt; Prussia , Lithuania, Russia, Granada, North Africa, Anatolia - all along the Mediterranean coast
9. What is Chaucer's opinion of him?
"He was of sovereign value in all eyes."
"He was a true, a perfect gentle-knight."
10. Chaucer says the knight has "Fine horses." Why are fine horses important for a knight?
He travels long distances and into battle, so he needs a strong, sturdy, dependable horse.
11. Describe his physical appearance.
He rides a fine horse, but his clothes are plain. He wears a tunic of coarse cloth which is stained and dark from the armor he had worn into battle. He is not concerned about his physical appearance as he is interested in much more important things.
12. Why is he going on the pilgrimage?
He has just returned from war and is going on pilgrimage to express his thanks for a safe return.
13. Who rides with him?
His son, the squire.

SQUIRE

14. What does the squire have in common with most young men his age?
He is "a lover and cadet, a lad of fire."
"He loved so hotly that till dawn grew pale/He slept as little as a nightingale."
15. Where has he served and with what "military" branch?
He was in the cavalry in Flanders, Artois, and Picardy in Northern Europe.
16. What details about him show his vanity?
He has neatly curled hair and wears a shirt embroidered with red and white flowers.
17. What skills does he possess?
A good rider; sings and plays the flute; writes songs and poems which he recites; jousts and dances, draws and writes (a skill few possessed during the Middle Ages).
18. What does Chaucer think of the squire?
He finds him courteous, lowly and serviceable. He serves his father.
19. How is the squire different than his father?
The knight is a religious man who is more interested in the spiritual than the material world. The squire enjoys the pleasures of the material world. He is much less spiritual than his father.
20. Who rides with the knight and the squire?
The yeoman, servant of the knight and squire.

YEOMAN

21. What is the yeoman's job?
servant to the knight, but also a forester, a hunter
22. Describe his physical appearance.
He wears a green coat with a hood. He carries his arrows in a sheath at his waist. He carries a bow, and has a brace on his arm to protect it from the bow's string. He has a shield, sword, dagger, and hunting horn. He is tanned from always being outside. He wears a St. Christopher's medal. (St. Christopher is the patron saint of foresters and travelers.)
23. What about his physical appearance tells Chaucer that the yeoman is a "proper forester?"
His arrows are "bright and keen and neatly sheathed," and they never droop.
24. Do you think the yeoman talked to Chaucer? Why or why not?
Probably not since Chaucer tells us nothing of his personality and offers only a physical description. At the end of his description, he says, "He was a proper frostier, I guess," as though he really has nothing but physical clues upon which to base his opinion.

NUN

25. What is a prioress?
The head of a priory, or nunnery, a group of nuns.
26. What are the qualities/images we usually associate with a nun?
Caring for others, deeply religious, dressed plainly in a nun's habit
27. Authors often use names to help develop a character. Chaucer calls the nun "Madam Eglantyne."
What quality does the name suggest?
The name "Eglantyne" suggests the word "elegance," a quality toward which the prioress seems to be striving, even though most people do not think this to be a quality of a nun.
28. What is the demeanor of the nun?
She strives to be proper, cultured, and elegant.
29. What does the nun "counterfeit" or pretend she has?
Courtliness, stateliness, dignity, an air of properness like those of the upper classes.
30. How does she feel about animals?
"She was all sentiment and tender heart" when it comes to animals. She weeps if she sees a trapped mouse. She travels with little dogs on which she dotes. She seems more aware of her animals than she does of people.
31. Describe her physical appearance?
Elegant nose, grey eyes, small red mouth, large forehead, not "undergrown".
She wears a cloak, a bracelet, a gold brooch, and she carries her rosary beads.
32. What does her pin say? Why does this seem unusual for a nun?
Amor vincit omnia which means "Love conquers all." We don't normally think of a nun wearing a large gold brooch and the engraving makes us think what kind of love she means.
33. Does Chaucer like her or not? Explain.
He does seem to like her although, as she is a nun, he does not agree with some of her ways. He points out her oddities, but he isn't cruel.
34. Who travels with her?
Besides her animals, another nun and three priests (although only one priest is mentioned again in the story).

MONK

35. What are the qualities/images we usually associate with a monk?
Bald man wearing brown robes and sandals who have taken a vow of chastity, poverty, and obedience, cloistered in a monastery, saying very little and devoting himself to prayer and contemplation.
36. What does this monk enjoy most in life?
Riding to hunt
37. What does Chaucer say about the monk's horse? Why would this be unusual for a monk?
His bridle is elaborate and jingles as he rides. The monk draws attention to himself, the complete opposite of what we normally expect from a monk.
38. How do the monk's beliefs about the monastic life differ with the Church's beliefs?
He ignores the "old and strict" beliefs and "took the modern world's more spacious way."
39. Chaucer says he "agreed" with the monk's views about the monastic life, and he says they "were sound." What evidence is there that he probably doesn't really agree? So, why did he say he agreed with the monk as he was speaking with him?
Chaucer points out the ways in which the monk breaks from the rules of his monastic order. He seems to have "agreed" with the monk because, as he listened to the monk and reports his words to the reader, Chaucer probably couldn't get a word in, much less argue or disagree with the monk. Perhaps agreeing with this man was

far easier than starting an argument with someone who wouldn't listen to anyone whose opinion differed from his own. The picture he gives us of the monk is of a man who has his own opinions and listens to no others, not even those of his Church.

40. Describe his physical appearance.

He wears grey fur at his cuffs, and his hood is fastened with a gold pin in the shape of a lover's knot (remember the nun's pin?). His bald head and face are so shiny they seem to be greased. He eats well so is fat. He has large eyes that take in everything that's going on. He has good riding boots, a healthy color from being out riding so much, and rides a fine horse.

41. What is a palfrey?

A saddle horse. Chaucer mentions the monk's horse throughout the profile and tells us his horse is in "fine condition." The monk is an enthusiastic hunter who needs a good horse that is easy and comfortable to ride. He is concerned with appearance, so his horse needs to look as good as he.

42. What type of personality do you think the monk might exhibit? Explain.

Talkative, opinionated, worldly, yet lively and interesting to be around.

FRIAR

43. How does a friar's life differ from a monk's?

Instead of being cloistered in a monastery, a friar goes out and helps the needy.

44. The friar is called a "Limiter." What is his job? How good is he?

He is a beggar who is to collect money for the Church in a certain area. He is "the finest beggar of his batch, so good that he can talk someone with nothing to give into giving something.

45. What extra duties does he perform? How good is he? What is his goal?

He arranges marriages. He hears confessions (which he is not allowed to do) by telling people he has a "special license from the Pope." He offers absolution, "for a gift." He is good at his job and is "highly beloved and intimate" with the people. He arbitrates disputes.

46. How does he "make a decent living?"

He sells absolution. He offers forgiveness for a fee.

47. With what types of people does the friar like to spend his time?

Pretty girls, tavern goers.

48. What is his attitude toward the poor?

"It was not fitting with the dignity
Of his position, dealing with a scum
Of wretched lepers; nothing good can come
Of commerce with such slum-and-gutter dwellers..."

His job is to work with the "lowest of the low" yet he chooses to ignore them and deal only with those from whom he can financially profit.

49. Describe his physical appearance.

Instead of dressing in the cheap clothes of most friars, his cape is expensive. In his tippet, his long hood, he carries pins and pocket-knives for the pretty girls. He dresses more like a doctor or the Pope than a friar. He fakes a bit of a lisp. His eyes are bright and twinkle. His neck is lily-white but strong.

50. Describe his personality.

He is merry, enjoys a good time, sings well, plays the hurdy-gurdy, is a charmer.

51. What is the friar's name?

Hubert

52. Through his description of the monk and the friar, what is Chaucer trying to do?

Point out the corruption in the Church

MERCHANT

53. Describe the merchant's physical appearance.

Forking beard, colorful clothes, beaver hat, daintily buckled boots-sits straight, tall, and elegantly on his horse.

54. About what does he talk?

He talks about his money, the need for more sea-police to protect ships, and what a good businessman he is.

55. What is Chaucer's opinion of the merchant?

Chaucer seems to find him a bit arrogant. He tells us the merchant was in debt but is so stately and gives such a

good appearance that people think him "an excellent fellow."

56. What is the significance of Chaucer not knowing the merchant's name?

He doesn't seem to have spent much time with the merchant as the profile is so short.

Perhaps he was bored by his arrogant opinions and never took the time to learn the man's name, or if he did, the merchant is so unremarkable that Chaucer forgets his name.

OXFORD CLERIC

57. What is a cleric?
A cleric is someone who is a part of the Church. The Oxford cleric is a student studying to enter the Church.
58. Where does he attend college?
Oxford University
59. Describe his appearance and that of his horse.
Both he and his horse are quite thin. The student has a hollow look as though he doesn't get enough to eat. He has a serious stare. His clothing is threadbare.
60. What is suggested by the details of his clothes and by the description of his horse?
As he has not found a job within the Church yet, and doesn't want to work in the secular world, he has no money.
61. What does he study?
Aristotle's philosophy
62. Where does all his money go?
For his education or to buy books. He has twenty books which would be considered quite an extensive collection. Remember that Chaucer is writing during a time when the printing press had not yet been invented. All books were handwritten and expensive.
63. How does he repay the friends who have given him money?
He prays for them.
64. How does he compare with the monk and the friar?
He is totally devoted to the teachings of the Church while the monk and friar use the Church to benefit themselves.
65. What does the last line of his section reveal about him?
He is devoted to learning and to teaching others about what he has learned. His true happiness comes from learning.
66. What is Chaucer's opinion of him?
He definitely likes and respects the student. He is a good man, not corrupt like so many in the Church.

SERGEANT AT THE LAW

67. What is his job?
lawyer
68. What type of man does he appear to be? What shows us that Chaucer may have his doubts?
Important, wise, "a man to reverence." Chaucer adds "or so he seemed" to his description of the sergeant at the law as though he hears what the man says, but he's not too sure he believes him.
69. Explain: "Though there was nowhere one so busy as he, He was less busy than he seemed to be."
He gives the appearance of being busy and having so much to get done, but Chaucer doubts that the sergeant at the law really works as hard as he suggests. Perhaps he just likes to make himself sound important.
70. How well does he know the law?
Well. He knows all the old cases and has the laws memorized.
71. Describe his physical appearance.
He wears a parti-colored coat with a silken pin-striped belt.
72. What does Chaucer think of him?
He doesn't seem too interested in him. He sees him as self-important.

FRANKLIN

73. What is a franklin?
a country landowner
74. Describe the franklin's appearance.
He has a white beard and is a sturdy cheerful fellow with a ruddy complexion. He seems harmless. Around his waist hang a dagger and a silk purse
75. Who was Epicurus?
A Greek philosopher who believed that the goal of life is to be happy.
76. What type of life did the franklin like to live?
He wants to have a good time, be happy. "He lived for pleasure...." He is a generous host who serves the best wine and food of anyone around.
77. What type of reputation do you think he had? Explain.
His friends and neighbors probably see him as a jolly fellow who throws a grand party with plenty of delicious food and strong wine.

TRADESMEN

78. What professions travel together? What is each tradesman's job?
A haberdasher (sells small merchandise or notions), a dyer, a carpenter, a weaver, and a carpet maker.

79. What is a guild?
medieval trade unions
80. Why does Chaucer point out that "their gear would pass for new?"
During Chaucer's time, tradesmen were becoming the new class in society, the middle class. Their wealth is new so they probably want to show it off.
81. How well off are these men?
Quite well off. Their knives and pouches are adorned with silver, not common brass.
82. What things seem important to the tradesmen?
Showing off their wealth, establishing themselves in positions of power.
83. What do the wives want?
Social status. To be called "Madam" and to be treated like a queen.

COOK

84. What is the cook's reputation?
Excellent cook. He stands alone for making chicken dishes. He knows ales, all the ways to cook, and can make a good soup and tasty pie.
85. What about his description is so in contrast with the image of a cook?
He has an ulcer, an open sore, on his knee, not an appetizing sight!

SKIPPER

86. What kind of a horseman is the skipper? Why?
He is not a good horseman but rides "as best he could." He spends all his time at sea, so doesn't ride much.
87. Describe his physical appearance?
He wears a woolen gown that comes to his knee, a dagger on a chain across his chest, and he has a good tan.
88. How has he treated wine merchants?
He has stolen from them.
89. How has he treated enemy prisoners?
He has sent them "home" to heaven by making them walk the plank.
90. Does Chaucer like him or not? Explain.
He seems to admire him as a good sailor - even though "the nicer rules of conscience he ignored."
91. How good is he as a sailor?
He is an excellent sailor, knowing all about tides, available harbors, and waterways.

DOCTOR

92. On what does the doctor base his medical treatments?
astrology and the four humors
93. With whom does he work to make money? How?
He works with a group of apothecaries. He prescribes the medicines which the apothecaries provide.
94. Describe his physical appearance.
He is probably in good shape since he eats well and does not overindulge like the franklin. He wears a bright red robe with bluish grey highlights and a taffeta lining.
95. What are "pestilences?"
outbreaks of infectious diseases like bubonic plague
96. What does he especially love?
gold

WIFE OF BATH

97. Describe her physical appearance.
She wears scarves of finely woven fabric around her head and neck. She wears a wide hat. On Sunday she wears several, maybe ten pounds' worth, of scarves around her head. Her hose are scarlet red, and her shoes are soft and new. She has a handsome face with a reddish complexion. She has gap teeth and is somewhat deaf. Her skirt flows over her wide hips.
98. What is her job and where is her home?
She is a weaver who lives in Bath, a town in southern England.
99. What is her personality like?
She is a lively, enthusiastic woman. She likes to laugh and chat. She has had five husbands so she knows all about love. She has traveled widely. As warm as she is, however, she will become angry if anyone tries to get in front of her at the altar in church.
100. What do the red stockings and the red hue of her skin suggest about the wife of Bath?
She is a passionate woman.

101. Who else among the pilgrims has traveled as much?
Only the knight
102. Why is it appropriate that she is riding an "ambling horse?"
She sits easily upon her horse as she has traveled much. She is in no hurry and is enjoying the easy ride to Canterbury. Her ambling horse allows her to visit with her fellow travelers along the journey.

PARSON

103. What is his job?
village priest
104. What qualities of the parson does Chaucer point out?
He is poor but "rich in holy thought and work." He is a learned man who knows the gospel and is devoted to teaching it to his parishioners. He is diligent and patient. Instead of demanding donations from the poor, he gives what he has to them. He never neglects his parishioners. He is holy and virtuous, but never contemptuous or disdainful. Chaucer believes there is no better priest than this parson. He practices what he preaches.
105. Who are "his sheep?"
His parishioners.
106. Explain: "...if gold rust, what then will iron do?"
If the leaders in the Church (gold) are corrupt, then what can be expected from the parishioners (iron)?
107. The parson's entire life is devoted to what?
Leading his parishioners and setting a good example for them to follow.
108. What is Chaucer's opinion of the parson?
"I think there never was a better priest."
109. How does the parson compare with the friar and the monk?
The parson is the ideal religious leader while the friar and monk are corrupt.

PLOWMAN

110. Chaucer says the plowman is the brother of the parson. Although he may be his actual brother, how is he also his brother figuratively?
Both are spiritual individuals, devoted to God.
111. What are some of his qualities?
He is an honest worker who lived in "peace and perfect charity." He loves God and his neighbor. He is a hard worker. He helps the poor and tithes to the Church.
112. What does the plowman spend his time doing?
He is a hard worker. He is a farmer who thrashes corn, digs ditches, and fertilizes his fields.
113. What does Chaucer think of him? Explain.
Throughout his entire description of the plowman, he seems to admire the man. He knows he is a good, holy man.
114. Describe his physical appearance.
He wore a short jacket.
115. What is the significance of Chaucer telling so little about the plowman's physical appearance?
Chaucer clearly indicates that the outside is of little importance. The plowman's personality and inner self are what make him outstanding.
116. What is the significance of the plowman riding a mare?
The plowman has no need for a showy horse like a stallion. He instead rides a calmer, more quiet horse that provides an easier ride.

MILLER

117. A stone is an English measurement equal to 14 lbs. Describe the miller's physical appearance.
The miller is a stout man of 224 pounds. He brags he is so strong he can break a door off its hinges or break it with his head. He has a coarse red beard, a wart with hair growing from it on the tip of his nose, and wide nostrils. He has a large mouth which he uses to tell filthy stories. He wears a sword and buckler (small shield).
118. What is a miller's job?
He runs a mill where grain is ground.
119. How well does he do his job? Explain.
He cheats his customers by putting his finger on the scale.
120. What instrument does he play?
bagpipes
121. Where does he ride in the procession to Canterbury?
He leads the group.
122. Unlike the plowman, the description of the miller is almost completely a physical one. What is the significance of this?
There is little spirituality to the miller.

MANCIPLE

123. What is a manciple's job?
a purchasing agent . This manciple buys food for the Inns of Court, a law school.
124. How well does he perform his duties?
He is an example to others. He is never rash and buys carefully. He is shrewd.
125. What does Chaucer think of the manciple?
He is a cleaver, practical man who is good at his job.
126. What does he seem to have that the people he works for lack?
common sense

REEVE

127. What is a reeve's job?
He is the overseer of an estate.
128. Describe his physical appearance.
The reeve is old and hot-tempered. He is so thin that his legs look like sticks. He has no beard and his hair is cut short. He wears a long blue coat and a rusty sword.
129. How good is he at his job?
He is quite good at his job. He is frugal and knows how to make a good deal. No one questions him, and his employer trusts him completely.
130. What is his financial status?
He has a "lovely dwelling" and has grown rich with a "store of treasure well tucked away." Perhaps he has made his money by dealing a bit deviously with his employer?
131. What is his special skill?
He is a first-rate carpenter.
132. Describe his horse.
He rides a dapple-grey stallion-cob at a slow trot. The horse's name is Scot. A cob is a short-legged, stocky horse. This would be a sturdy work horse for the reeve to ride. The horse moves at a slow trot. Contrast this with the "ambling horse" of the Wife of Bath.
133. Where does he live?
He is not from the London area, but has come from Baldeswell in Norfolk.
134. Where does he travel in the procession of pilgrims?
He rides at the end.

SUMMONER

135. What is the summoner's occupation?
to summon people to appear in the Church's court
136. Describe his physical appearance.
His face is red as it is covered with carbuncles, an inflammation. His cheeks have white pimples. He has narrow eyes, black, scabby eyebrows, and a thin beard. He wears a garland around his head.
137. What does his appearance suggest about his character?
He is an ugly person, inside and out. He is "lecherous as a sparrow." His appearance scares children away.
138. What does he enjoy eating and drinking?
garlic, onions, leeks, and strong red wine
139. What does he know a little of and where did he learn it?
He knows how to speak a little Latin which he has learned from hearing it spoken so often in the Church courts.
He begins to speak Latin when he's had too much wine.
140. He will ignore sins on what condition?
He will accept bribes. In some cases, a quart of wine is enough to get him to ignore a transgression.
141. What does Chaucer think of him?
He is disgusting, but there are others within the Church much worse than the summoner.

"He was a noble varlet and a kind one,
You'd meet none better if you went to find one."

PARDONER

142. What is a pardoner's job?
A pardoner's job was to pardon the sins of those who were truly contrite. This pardoner sells his pardons as well as fake religious relics.
143. What is the significance of the summoner riding with the pardoner?
They are alike in their deceit and corruption.
144. Describe his physical appearance.
He has fine yellow hair that hangs in pieces, "like rat-tails," down to his shoulders. Instead of a hood, he wears a small cap with a holy relic sewn on. He has bulging eyes and a small voice like a "goat has got." He has a smooth chin, no beard in sight.
145. Chaucer characterizes the pardoner as being effeminate. What details does he give to develop that characterization?
Chaucer points out his smooth chin on which he thinks no beard has or ever will grow.
He says, "I judge he was a gelding or a mare."
146. What kinds of "relics" does he carry?
a pillowcase which he says was Mary's veil
a piece of cloth he says came from St. Peter's boat's sail
a metal cross
pigs' bones that he says are the bones of Jesus or a saint
147. What is prevarication?
to deviate from the truth; to lie
148. Why is the pardoner so successful in selling his "relics?"
He charms the country priests, parsons, and parishioners with his flattery and lies.
149. How does he behave in church?
In church, he is "a noble ecclesiast" who reads a lesson or tells a story well.
150. Why does he try to sing so well?
He can inspire listeners to give more money.
151. Compare the pardoner to the monk and friar.
Like the monk and friar, the pardoner is deceitful and corrupt.

HOST

152. For what does Chaucer ask that his readers now condemn him?
For speaking plainly and relating exactly what each pilgrim said, using their "very phrases as they fell." So, if something is offensive, it's not Chaucer's fault; he's just relating what was said.
153. Describe the host.
He is a welcoming fellow who gives everyone good food and strong drink. The host is a striking man with bright eyes and a wide girth. He is wise and tactful, a merry man.
154. What does Chaucer think of the host?
There is no finer merchant in the area.
155. What does the host propose?
Something to keep everyone entertained on their journey to Canterbury, a storytelling contest.
156. How does the host's proposal help set up Chaucer's plan for The Canterbury Tales?
He has introduced the frame into which the individual stories can be placed.
157. What is the storytelling plan he suggests?
Each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two stories on the return to London.
158. What will the winner receive?
a supper at The Tabard Inn paid for by the other pilgrims
159. Who will judge the contest?
The host will join the group and serve as the judge.
160. How do the pilgrims decide who will begin the storytelling?
They draw straws, the shortest straw telling the first story.