

Geoffrey Chaucer The Canterbury Tales

In 1387, a group of people went to Canterbury. On their way, they told stories. The stories were exciting and interesting. They helped the group to enjoy their time travelling. But these stories don't only tell us about the past. They're stories that anybody can read and enjoy today. They're stories that can teach us many things: about love, about friendship, and about life.

In this reader you will find:

- Information about Geoffrey Chaucer
- A section focusing on background and context
- A glossary of difficult words
- Comprehension and grammar activities including A1 Movers style exercises and 21st century skills activities
- Final test

Tags

Friendship | Stories

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE Canterbury TALES



Book brief

- 1** *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of stories written in English by Geoffrey Chaucer between 1387 and 1400.
- 2** People say it's Chaucer's greatest work and one of the most important works in English literature.
- 3** The book is about a group of pilgrims. Each of them tells a story as they travel from London to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket at Canterbury Cathedral.
- 4** Through the stories, Chaucer gives us an ironic and critical picture of English society at that time and in particular of the Church.
- 5** Chaucer uses different kinds of people to tell the stories to show us what 14th century England was like.

Geoffrey Chaucer

The Canterbury Tales

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Main Characters

THE Canterbury TALES CHARACTERS



The Knight

*Everybody likes him
and he's always happy
to help people.*

The Clerk

*A nice man who
doesn't speak
much. He loves
reading and
studying.*



The Merchant

*He has a lot of money
but he isn't happy.*

The Franklin

*A very rich, important
man with a big house
in the country.*

The Pardoner

*He says prayers
for people
if they give him
money.*

Before you read

Grammar

- 1 Read a part of a letter. Complete the letter with the verbs below.

~~am~~ are is know tells travel want

I'm reading *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer. Do you (1) _____ anything about this book? Chaucer wrote this book in 1387. At this time, God was very important for many people. People often went on pilgrimages. You go on a pilgrimage when you (2) _____ to an important town or city. People go on a pilgrimage because they (3) _____ to be near to God. In Chaucer's book, a group of people go on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. Canterbury (4) _____ a town in England. Everybody in this group (5) _____ a story. These stories (6) _____ the Canterbury Tales.

- 2 Complete the sentences with the verbs below.

buy ~~look~~ study talk work pay

The Knight: Look at the men in the picture on page 27.
That's my job. Don't worry! The group is safe with me.

- 1 **The Clerk:** I'm a student and I _____ all the time.
2 **The Merchant:** I have a business. I _____ things, and then people _____ for the things I buy.
3 **The Franklin:** I have a big farm. A lot of people _____ on my farm.
4 **The Pardoner:** I _____ to people about God. I help them to be near to God.



Reading and Writing

MOVERS

- 3 Choose the correct word for each sentence about people from the stories.

Emily is a beautiful, young girl in the Knight's Tale.

are am is

- 1 Walter is in the Clerk's Tale. Everybody _____ what he says.

do does don't

- 2 Damien is in the Merchant's Tale. He _____ for a man with a lot of money.

work does works

- 3 Does Damien _____ a good job?

have has is

- 4 Dorigen is in the Franklin's Tale and she _____ near the sea

has lives leaves

- 5 Ames is in the Pardoner's Tale and he _____ having fun.

goes wants likes

Speaking

- 4 This book is called *The Canterbury Tales*. Look on the Internet and answer these questions.

- 1 Which part of England is Canterbury in?

- 2 What does 'Tale' mean?

- 3 Who was Thomas à Becket and what happened to him?

- 4 Why is Canterbury Cathedral important?

- 5 Who was Geoffrey Chaucer?

21st
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Chapter 1

The Prologue

- 2 It's a beautiful day! The weather is good. The birds are singing. The grass is green, and there are flowers everywhere. Now, my story can begin. My name's Geoffrey. Today, I'm going on a pilgrimage¹ to Canterbury. I'm going to Canterbury with a group of people. We're going there together. I met these people yesterday, at an inn², in London.

Geoffrey Chaucer stops at an inn in London before starting his pilgrimage to Canterbury.

I arrived³ at the inn in the afternoon. I was very tired, and hungry. 'Good afternoon!' I said to the man who worked at the inn. He was the innkeeper. 'I'd like a room for the night. I'm going to Canterbury tomorrow. The road to Canterbury is long. I need to sleep well before I start.'

'Good afternoon,' said the innkeeper. 'Do you know that some other people are going to Canterbury tomorrow? They're staying here tonight.'

'I'd like to meet them,' I said to the innkeeper.

¹ **pilgrimage** when you go to a special place to be near to God

² **inn** a place to sleep, and to eat and drink

³ **to arrive** to travel and then find the place that you want to go to

The Canterbury Tales

In the evening, I met the other people. The inn was big and there was a lot of good food and drink. Everybody had dinner together. The innkeeper gave good food to everybody. The innkeeper was a nice person. He was a very big man and he enjoyed speaking to people. He was very good at his job. Everybody enjoyed their dinner.

After dinner, the innkeeper spoke to the group. 'You're a very nice group of people,' he said. 'I know that God wants to listen to your prayers¹. You're all going to the same place, so, you must go to Canterbury together. What do you think?'

'Yes, we can go together!' I said.

'I want to go to Canterbury with you,' said the innkeeper. 'Now, we have to travel for a long time. I think we can do something interesting². We can play a game. What do you think?'

'Yes!' said everybody in the group. 'Tell us about this game.'

'Now, listen to what I have to say,' said the innkeeper. 'We can go to Canterbury together.'

Geoffrey has dinner with the other people who want to go to Canterbury and the innkeeper says he wants to go with them. He says that they can play a game on their way to Canterbury.

¹ **prayer** when you talk to God, you say a prayer

² **interesting** something you enjoy

Geoffrey Chaucer

Everybody must tell a story and the innkeeper wants to give the person with the best story a free dinner at his inn. Everybody likes the idea.

The Knight says his story is about two brothers who love the same woman.

Every person can tell a story¹. I want to listen to every story. Then I can tell you which story is the best.' Everybody in the group wanted to play this game. 'Very well,' said the innkeeper. 'I want to give something to the person who tells the best story. That person can have dinner at my inn. I want to pay for the dinner.'

The people in the group were very happy. They began to think of what story to tell. In the group there was a Knight. Everybody liked him. He was always happy to help people. He was an important man, but his clothes were cheap. His horse was fast, but it was small.

'I'm a Knight, and my life is very exciting,' said the Knight. 'My story is also exciting. It's about two brothers who love the same woman.'

There was also a Clerk in the group. He was a nice man, but he didn't speak very much. He liked reading and studying. That's all he wanted to do. He was very slim and he didn't eat very much. He liked books more than food.

¹ **story** when you tell someone about something that happened in the past



The Pardoner is saying a prayer.



Geoffrey Chaucer

The Clerk likes reading and his story is about a King with many secrets.

‘I read a lot of books,’ said the Clerk. ‘I don’t want nice clothes or good food. I don’t have much money. I use the money I have to buy books. That’s why I read a lot of stories. My story is very easy to understand, but, it’s not boring. It’s about a King¹ who has many secrets².’

Another³ person in the group was a Merchant. He had a lot of money. But he wasn’t a happy man. He always had a sad face. He was different from the Knight. His clothes were very expensive. Everything he had was expensive: his clothes, his hat, and his horse.

The Merchant has a lot of money but he’s sad. His story is also sad about an old man who can’t see.

‘I have an important business,’ said the Merchant. ‘And I have a lot of things to do. But I’m not very happy with my life. That’s why my story is sad. It’s about an old man who can’t see.’

I also have to tell you about another man. He was a Franklin. He was different from the Clerk. He was very rich⁴ and important, but he didn’t have a business. He had a big house in the country.

¹ King 

² secret something that you don’t want other people to know

³ another one more

⁴ rich a person who has a lot of money

The Canterbury Tales

He often invited people there. He liked good food.

‘I’m very old. My house is big. I like inviting people there,’ said the Franklin. ‘In my house, I often tell stories. I enjoy it. My story is very interesting. It’s about a woman who doesn’t like the sea. Why doesn’t she like the sea? Well, you have to listen to my story.’

The Franklin is very rich and invites people to his big house. His story is about a woman who doesn’t like the sea.

There’s another person I want to tell you about. He was a Pardoner. He also liked reading. He liked to sing songs and say prayers. He had a strange¹ face.

‘I travel a lot and I always say prayers for people,’ said the Pardoner. ‘There are a lot of bad people in the world. I say prayers for them, but they have to give me some money. My story is about three people who do something very bad.’

The Pardoner says prayers for people who give him money. His story is about three people who do something bad.

Everybody was very tired. It was late in the evening, and the Knight said, ‘We can go to bed now. Then we can leave early in the morning.’ We all went to bed. We were tired, but happy.

Early next morning, we got up. Then we

¹ **strange** (here) unusual for this person

Geoffrey Chaucer

left for Canterbury on our horses. We were slow. After many hours we came to a place called Saint Thomas and we stopped there.

The next morning, they leave for Canterbury. They stop to have something to eat and the Knight says he wants to be the first to tell his story.

We sat down, then we had something to eat. After eating, the innkeeper said, 'Listen, do you remember what we said last night?'

'Of course,' said the Knight.

'Well,' said the innkeeper, 'who wants to begin? Who wants to tell the first story?'

'I'm happy to tell you my story,' said the Knight. 'It's very exciting.'

The Knight began to tell his story. 

Think

Which story do you think sounds the most interesting?



The innkeeper asks who wants to be the first to tell their story.



Reading Comprehension

1 Match the descriptions of each story.

- 1 ☒ The Pardoner's story is about three men
- 2 ☐ The Franklin's story is about a woman
- 3 ☐ The Knight's story is about two brothers
- 4 ☐ The Merchant's story is about an old man
- 5 ☐ The Clerk's story is about a King

- a who doesn't like the sea.
- ☒ b who do something very bad.
- c who love the same woman.
- d who has many secrets.
- e who can't see.

Writing

2 Complete the sentences using some of the adjectives from Chapter 1

bad big expensive fast hungry old slim

Geoffrey was very tired and hungry .

- 1 The Knight's horse was _____ .
- 2 The Clerk didn't eat very much, and he was very _____ .
- 3 The Merchant's horse was very _____ .
- 4 The Franklin was an _____ man.
- 5 The Franklin had a _____ house.
- 6 The Pardoner said that there are a lot of _____ people in the world.

Speaking and Writing

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Skills

- 3 The people in the book must all tell a story.
Talk to a partner and answer these questions.

- 1 What kind of books do you like reading in your free time?
- 2 How important do you think it is to read? Why?
- 3 Where do you like reading?
- 4 Do you like ebooks more than paper ones? Why? /Why not?
- 4 How often do you read comics like the ones in this picture?



Before-reading Activities

Reading and Writing

MOVERS

- 4 Look at this picture from Chapter 2. Complete the sentences and answer the questions.

The woman is in the garden.

- 1 The woman has got blond _____.
- 2 Who's watching her? _____.
- 3 How many flowers are there in the woman's right hand? _____.
- 4 What's the woman doing? _____.



Listening

- 3 5 Listen to the first part of Chapter 2. Cross out the incorrect option.

- The Knight / ~~the Merchant~~ told the first story.
- 1 The two brothers were clerks / knights.
 - 2 They were from Thebes / Athens.
 - 3 They were happy / sad.
 - 4 They lived in Thebes / Athens.