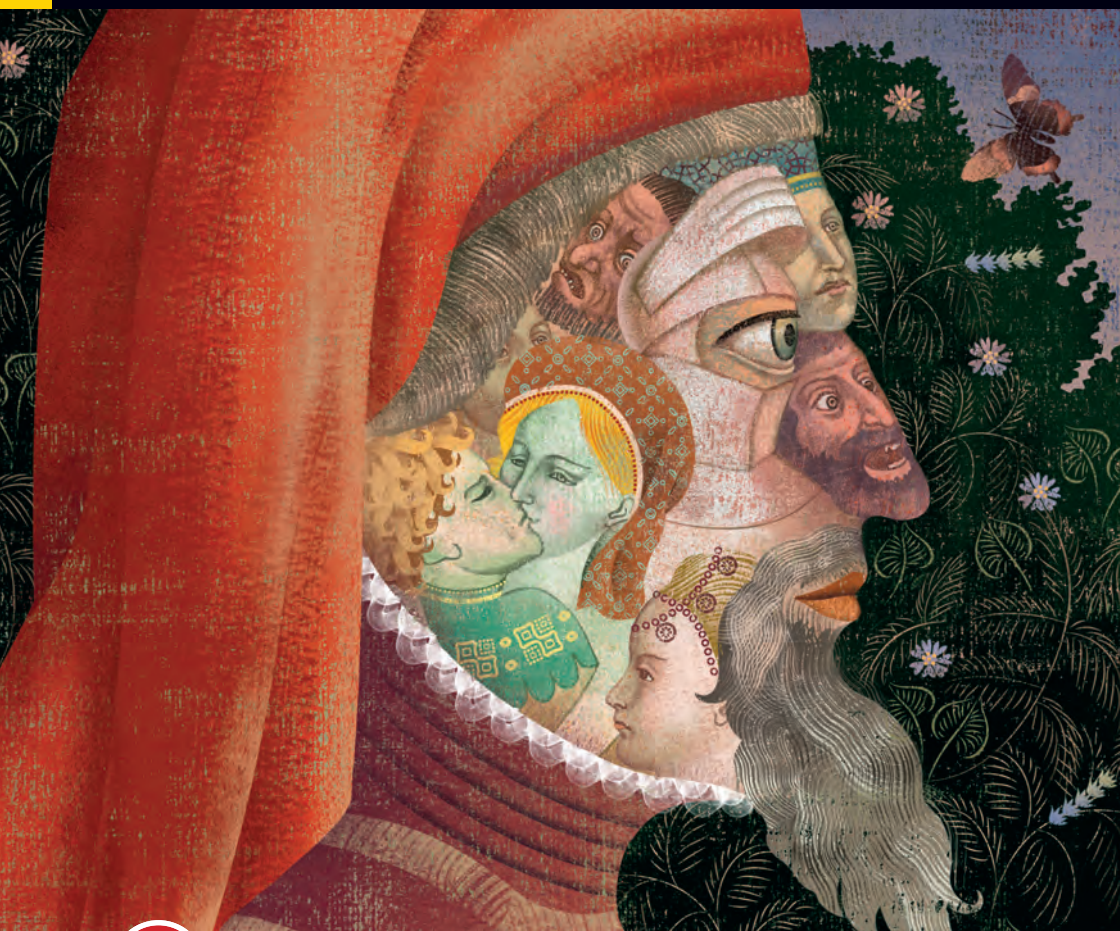


Geoffrey Chaucer

The Canterbury Tales



Free Audiobook



Geoffrey Chaucer
The Canterbury Tales

Adapted by Robert Hill

Illustrated by Anna and Elena Balbusso





Series Editor: Robert Hill

Editors: Daniela Difrancesco, Elena Tonus

Design and art direction: Nadia Maestri

Computer graphics: Carlo Cibrario-Sent, Simona Corniola

Picture research: Alice Graziotin

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First edition: January 2014

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info@blackcat-cideb.com

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ISBN 978-88-530-1417-7

Printed in Italy by Litoprint, Genoa

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The Characters







Geoffrey Chaucer:

His Works and Times

Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer, sometimes called 'the father of English poetry', was born in London in about 1343 into a family who had made money in the wine business. As a teenager he became a page¹ in the household of one of the King's sons, and for the rest of his life he was connected with the royal court in London.

Geoffrey Chaucer describes himself in *The Canterbury Tales* as rather fat, and it seems he was (portrait by an unknown artist).

In 1359 he fought in the war in France, where he was taken prisoner but released for a ransom,² part of which was paid by the English king, Edward III. During the 1360s, he worked in the King's household and married Philippa, a lady of the Queen's court and connected to noble families.

In 1372-3 he was sent on a diplomatic mission to Italy, where he visited Genoa, Pisa and Florence. He already knew French literature

1. **page** : (historical) young boy who is the servant of a noble family.
2. **ransom** : money which is paid in order to set a prisoner free.

Chaucer (standing) is shown reading to the court of Richard II on this first page from an early copy of *Troilus and Criseyde*.

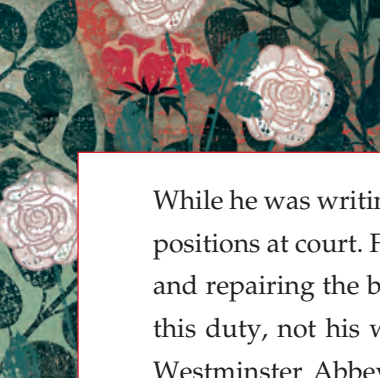
well, but here he got to know the works of the Italian writers Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch; it is thought he met Petrarch personally.

The influence of Chaucer's travels and contacts with other cultures is significant, and his work is sometimes divided into three periods: a French, Italian and English period. In the first period he translated into English

some of the long French poetic allegory³ about love, *The Romance of the Rose*, and wrote some allegories of his own. In the second period he wrote *Troilus and Criseyde*, a tragic story based on a poem by Boccaccio about two lovers set during the legendary war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The third period is when he wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, which he began in about 1387, a poem full of characters who seem very English.

3. **allegory** : story in which the characters and events represent ideas about human life or religion or morality.





While he was writing *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer continued to hold positions at court. From 1389 to 1391 he was in charge of looking after and repairing the buildings of the palace of Westminster⁴ and it was this duty, not his writing, which gave him the right to be buried in Westminster Abbey after his death on 25 October 1400. In 1556 his remains were transferred to a more elaborate tomb,⁵ and since then other famous writers have been buried in the same area of the Abbey, which has become known as Poets' Corner.

The Canterbury Tales

Chaucer's masterpiece is one of the best-loved collections of stories in English literature. The idea is simple: a group of pilgrims⁶ are travelling from London to Canterbury to visit the tomb of Thomas Becket, who had been murdered in Canterbury Cathedral, and who was believed to be able to help the sick and answer prayers. The pilgrims will then travel back to London. The owner of the inn⁷ where they spend the night in London before leaving suggests that they each tell two stories on the way there and two on the way back. As there are 29 pilgrims plus Chaucer himself, that would make 120 stories. But Chaucer never completed his original plan; he only wrote 24 stories, and the pilgrims do not even reach Canterbury.

But these 24 stories are enough to guarantee *The Canterbury Tales* its fame. A major reason for its popular appeal is the cast of characters, who Chaucer describes in the *Prologue*. They are taken from all levels of 14th century, except royalty and the very poor, and the stories they

4. **palace of Westminster** : these medieval buildings were destroyed by fire in 1834; they were located where the Houses of Parliament are today.
5. **tomb** : place where a dead person is buried (it is usually made of stone).
6. **pilgrims** : people who go on pilgrimages, which are journeys with a religious purpose to a place with religious associations, e.g. to Santiago de Compostela.
7. **inn** : place that provided food, drink and accommodation for travellers.

London: the White Tower of the Tower of London in the foreground and London Bridge in the background (late 15th century).

tell reflect their social rank and their personalities. So the characters in the stories range from knights and ladies to farm animals, and the tone ranges from serious to comic. An example of Chaucer's humour can be seen in the

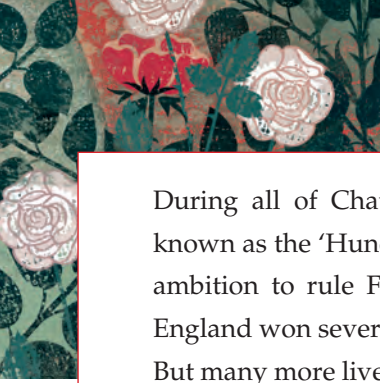
way that he describes himself as rather fat and a little bit stupid; when it is his turn to tell a story, he starts telling such a boring story that he is interrupted and asked to tell another one!

The Canterbury Tales is written in an early form of English called 'Middle English' (you will see some examples on page 111). French was the language of the court and aristocracy, Latin was the language of the law and universities, but English was the language of ordinary people. Although some writers had written in English before him, Chaucer – 'the father of English poetry' – was the first great English writer who wrote fiction in the English language instead of Latin or French.

Chaucer's Times

Social disorder, wars and disease marked Chaucer's times. During the 57 years of his life there were three kings of England: Edward III (1312-1377); Richard II (1377-1399), who was probably murdered the year after he was obliged to stop being king; Henry IV (1399-1413), who forced Richard II to stop being king.





During all of Chaucer's lifetime there was a war against France, known as the 'Hundred Years War' (1337-1543), caused by England's ambition to rule France. All the battles took place in France, and England won several, although eventually it lost the war.

But many more lives were lost because of the 'Black Death' or plague, a terrible disease that came to Europe from the East in 1347 and arrived in England in 1348. It spread rapidly, carried by black rats. It lasted till 1350, and during this time up to a half of the population of England died. Whole villages were destroyed. Both rich and poor were affected – three Archbishops of Canterbury died from the plague.

The plague came back in 1361-62, when a fifth of the population died.



Richard II sails down the Thames to Greenwich to meet the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt.



Burying the dead after an attack of the Black Death in the medieval French city of Tournai (1349).

After that, the plague returned every now and again, although fewer people died.

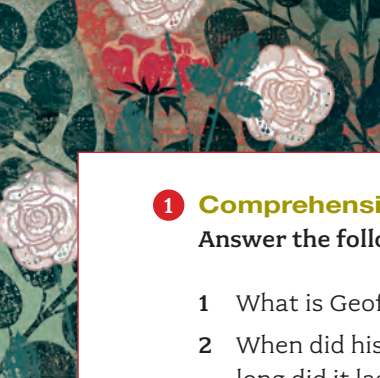
In 1381 there was an unprecedented⁸ violent protest by workers in the country. Thousands of them marched on London in the so-called 'Peasants' Revolt',⁹ demanding a reduction in taxes and an end to the medieval practice of agricultural workers being obliged to work for free for the people who owned land. The young King Richard II had to agree to their demands, but later the leaders were captured and killed and Richard did not keep his promises.

Chaucer certainly lived in troubled times, and references to these troubles are seen throughout *The Canterbury Tales*.

8. **unprecedented** : never having happened before.

9. **Peasants' Revolt** : peasants were farmers or workers in the country; a revolt is an attempt to change or remove a government, using force.





1 Comprehension check

Answer the following questions.

- 1 What is Geoffrey Chaucer often called, and why?
- 2 When did his connection with the royal court begin, and how long did it last?
- 3 What foreign countries did Chaucer visit, and why?
- 4 Some critics divide Chaucer's works into three periods. What are they, and what works are associated with each one?
- 5 How much of his original project for *The Canterbury Tales* did Chaucer complete?
- 6 Give a reason why *The Canterbury Tales* has become popular.
- 7 How does Chaucer describe himself in *The Canterbury Tales*?
- 8 What are the following?
 - a the 'Hundred Years War'
 - b the 'Black Death'
 - c the 'Peasants' Revolt'?

2 Explore

- 1 Put 'Poets' Corner Westminster Abbey' into your search engine. Find the names of a few other famous British writers that you know who are buried there.
- 2 Find a map that shows London and Canterbury. What is the distance between them? How long do you think it took to make the journey on horse?

Before you read

1 Medieval people

In the box below are the pilgrims you will meet in the *Prologue*. Write their names in the appropriate definitions (1-19).

Geoffrey Chaucer Knight Squire Yeoman Prioress Cook Host
Nun's Priest Monk Friar Doctor Scholar Franklin Pardoner
Sea Captain Merchant Wife of Bath Parson Miller Summoner

- 0 *Geoffrey Chaucer* is our storyteller.
- 1 The treated people who were ill or injured.
- 2 This lady from a town in the south-west of England is referred to as the because she had been married five times.
- 3 She was a nun, a religious woman who lived in a community called a convent. Because she was the head of the convent she had the title '.....'.
- 4 He performed religious duties. He accompanies the prioress — the nun — so he is called the '.....'.
- 5 The owned his own land, although he didn't have a very high position in society.
- 6 The was a religious man who lived in a community called a monastery.
- 7 The made his living by buying and selling goods.
- 8 The was a religious man who didn't live in a community; he travelled around, asking people for money and food.
- 9 The was training to be a knight.
- 10 The pilgrims hired the to prepare their meals.
- 11 The was the owner of an inn, a place that provided food, drink and accommodation for travellers.
- 12 If people did not follow the Church's laws, the obliged them to come to a Church court.
- 13 The was in charge of a ship.
- 14 The could forgive people for their sins, if they gave money to the Church.

- 15 The devoted himself to study at a university.
- 16 The was a male servant to a family which had a high social position.
- 17 The was a fighting man with a high position in society; he fought from a horse.
- 18 The was the religious person in charge of a church.
- 19 The owned a mill, where people took their grain to make into flour.

2 Who's who

In Chaucer's original text there are 29 pilgrims plus Chaucer himself, making 30 people altogether. In our *Prologue* we have space for only 20 people, the ones you have just read about in activity 1. In the illustration on pages 4-5 there are 15 of them. Can you guess who they are? Begin from the left. The characters on the extreme left and right are given to you.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 the Parson | 9 |
| 2 | 10 |
| 3 | 11 |
| 4 | 12 |
| 5 | 13 |
| 6 | 14 |
| 7 | 15 the Host |
| 8 | |

You can check your ideas at the bottom of page 111.

3 Discussion

In pairs or small groups discuss the following questions.

- 1 How many of the pilgrims are women?
- 2 How many of the pilgrims are connected with organised religion?
- 3 Which jobs and/or positions in society are still common today?
Which are not common today?



CHAPTER 1

The Prologue

April is a lovely month! After the dry month of March, the earth is thirsty for April's showers and flowers begin to grow everywhere. A gentle wind blows from the west, the sun shines and small birds sing all day long in the green woods. It's the month when people feel like going on a pilgrimage, and from every part of England they go to Canterbury to visit the tomb of the martyr¹ Thomas Becket, who helps the sick.



track 02

My name is Geoffrey Chaucer, and I'm a poet and storyteller. One day in April, I was spending the night in London at The Tabard Inn, ready to set out the next morning on my pilgrimage to Canterbury. Late in the evening a crowd of people arrived, twenty-nine of them, all on their way to Canterbury too. I soon made friends with them and agreed to join them.

'You'll have to get up early,' they said. 'We're leaving at dawn!' Before I begin telling you my stories, I'll describe the pilgrims

1. **martyr** : someone who is killed because of their religious — or political — beliefs.



CHAPTER 1

to you — or at least some of them. There were men and women, young and old, rich and poor... in short, they were a real mixture! I'll begin with the Knight.

The KNIGHT had loved chivalry,² truth and honour all his life. He had fought in wars in Egypt, Germany, Russia, Spain, Turkey and many other places. But even though he was brave and famous his behaviour was always modest and polite: he was a true, perfect knight. He rode a fine horse but he looked rather tired. He had, in fact, just come back from a war and was going on the pilgrimage to thank Saint Thomas for his victories and safe return to England.

The Knight's son, a young SQUIRE, rode with him. He was about twenty years old — at least, that's what I guessed — with curly³ hair and a handsome face. He wore beautiful red and white clothes, which made him look like a field full of fresh flowers! He had fought bravely in the war with his father to win the love of his lady. As well as fighting, he also knew how to write songs and poems, how to draw and how to dance. He was singing or whistling⁴ all day long — he seemed as happy as the month of May!

The Knight had a servant, a YEOMAN. He carried a sword, a hunting horn and a bow and arrows, on which there were peacock⁵ feathers. With his brown face, short hair and clothes that were mostly green, he was a real man of the country. Nobody would ever mistake him for a person from a town!

Then there was a NUN — in fact, she was a PRIORESS — whose name was Madam Eglantine. She spoke French well, although she pronounced it with a London accent, and had very good manners.

2. **chivalry** : the perfect behaviour of knights in Chaucer's time (e.g. protecting ladies, being honest and generous, etc.).
3. **curly** : not straight.
4. **whistling** : making musical noises by blowing air through the mouth.
5. **peacock** : a beautiful bird, famous for its tail with 'eyes'.

When she was eating, she was very careful not to make a mess.⁶ And what a sensitive lady she was! If she saw a mouse caught in a trap, tears came to her eyes. She had several small dogs, which she fed with roast meat, milk and the best bread, and if one of them died she cried so much that she couldn't stop.

She had grey eyes, small soft red lips and a broad forehead.⁷ Her clothes were the latest fashion. She wore an elegant cloak, an expensive bracelet, some beads and a golden brooch marked with an 'A', under which was written *Amor vincit omnia* — that is 'Love conquers all' in Latin. She was accompanied by another nun and a PRIEST, called John, who would later tell us an entertaining story.

There was a well-dressed MONK, whose passion in life was hunting. He was bald and plump,⁸ and his favourite dish was roast swan.⁹ There was also a FRIAR, who loved the company of pretty girls. He had to earn his living by begging¹⁰ but he had such a pleasant way of speaking to people and his social skills were so good that he was never short of money. He was also an excellent musician and he knew all the inns in the towns he visited.

There was a wealthy MERCHANT with a long beard and expensive clothes, who certainly knew how to make money; he never stopped telling us how well his business was doing. The Oxford SCHOLAR, who was thin and looked very sad, rode a horse as thin as himself. He certainly didn't want any bags of money in his bedroom — he preferred to have books by the great philosophers next to him.

Another pilgrim was a FRANKLIN. He loved good food and wine

6. **make a mess** : make things dirty or untidy.

7. **forehead** : top part of the face, between eyes and hair.

8. **plump** : rather fat.

9. **swan** : a big white bird.



10. **begging** : (here) asking people for money or food.



CHAPTER 1

and was very hospitable¹¹ too. Anyone who was a guest at his house was looked after very well — they had more than enough to eat and drink, and slept in very comfortable beds!

The pilgrims had hired a COOK who, despite his unhealthy appearance, knew how to prepare all kinds of delicious dishes. The brown-faced SEA CAPTAIN knew all the ports and routes in the North Atlantic. When he fought battles at sea he didn't take prisoners; he threw them over the side of the ship.

Then there was a DOCTOR, an expert in medicine and surgery, who used astrology¹² to help him choose the best moment for people to take his medicines. He was careful about spending his money, even though the plague¹³ had made him rich.

Another female pilgrim was a WIFE from Bath. She was a big, red-faced woman with a gap¹⁴ between her front teeth. She wore a big hat and a long coat over her wide hips. She had been a respectable woman all her life; she had been married five times (and had had some love affairs when she was young, too). She had been on many pilgrimages: three times to Jerusalem and once to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, to Boulogne in France and to Cologne in Germany. She liked talking about love... and that was a subject which she seemed to know a lot about! When you spoke to her, you had to shout because she was a bit deaf.

There was another religious man with us, a PARSON. He was patient, hard-working and very kind. Although he did not have much money himself, he always gave some to the poor. He was a perfect priest, and his behaviour was an example to everyone.

11. **hospitable** : kind and generous to guests and visitors.

12. **astrology** : study of the movements of the stars and planets, and how they influence people's lives.

13. **plague** : a terrible disease (see Introduction, page 9).

14. **gap** : a space.

The MILLER was a big, strong man with a red beard and huge muscles. He took part in wrestling¹⁵ matches, which he usually won, and he could break down a door with his head! All he had to do was run at a door with his head down, and... bang! He knew all about how to steal corn¹⁶ from his customers and how to make them pay too much. He loved chatting and telling jokes, and as we rode out of town he played the bagpipes.¹⁷

The SUMMONER had such a red face and such black eyebrows that children were afraid of him, and he stank of garlic¹⁸ and onions, which he loved. Although he was supposed to make sure that people respected the laws of the Church, he rarely respected them himself and he used to take bribes.¹⁹

His companion on this pilgrimage was a PARDONER. His long, greasy, yellow hair hung down to his shoulders like rats' tails, and his skin seemed unnaturally smooth. He had a bag full of bits of wood and cloth and bones which he said were relics.²⁰ He could earn more in a day than the honest parson earned in two months. But when he sang in church, he had a fine voice.

There were more pilgrims in the group, but I don't have time to describe them all. Anyway, there we all were in The Tabard Inn. The HOST, a big, hospitable, fun-loving man, served us wonderful food and drink. After the excellent dinner, he banged on the table with his fist to get our attention.

15. **wrestling** : a sport in which you hold and throw the other person.

16. **corn** : a plant which we use to make bread.

17. **bagpipes** : a musical instrument which you play by blowing.

18. **garlic** : vegetable with a very strong smell.

19. **bribes** : money or presents you give to someone to do something dishonest or illegal to help you.

20. **relics** : objects that some people believe are parts of the body or clothes of a religious person; they think they are important.





CHAPTER 1

‘Ladies and gentlemen!’ he said. ‘Give me your attention, please! To tell you the truth, I’ve never seen such a happy group of pilgrims at my inn in all the years that I’ve been here! And what’s more, I’ve enjoyed your company so much this evening that I’ve decided to come with you to Canterbury, and make the pilgrimage myself!’

‘Now, I’ve got a suggestion to make, and I hope you’ll all agree with me! Let’s entertain ourselves on the journey like this: each person must tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two more on the way back! And when we get back here after the pilgrimage, we’ll all pay for the dinner of the person who tells the best story. And as for who tells the best story... well, I’ll be the judge of that! What do you think?’

Everyone agreed, and we all went to bed happy, looking forward to the pilgrimage, the lovely April weather... and the stories!

Early next morning our host woke us up and we set off while the sun was still rising, but soon after we had left London he stopped and asked us all to listen to him carefully.

‘So, we all remember our agreement, I hope!’ said our host. ‘But who’s going to tell the first story? I’ve got an idea. Let’s draw lots²¹ to choose our first storyteller!’

He told each of us to take one piece of straw²² from the pieces of straw that he had in his hand — we could only see the tops of the pieces of straw. The person who took the shortest straw had to begin.

It was the Knight who took the shortest straw.

‘Very well,’ said the Knight. ‘I’ll begin our game of telling stories. Now, my fellow pilgrims, let’s ride on towards Canterbury — and I’ll tell you my story.’

21. **draw lots** : a way of deciding who does something; taking pieces of straw was a usual way to do this.

22. **straw** : dry piece of grass or corn.



The text and **beyond**

FIRST 1 Comprehension check – The characters

For questions 1-15 below, choose from the pilgrims (A-T). The pilgrims may be chosen more than once. There are 2 examples at the beginning (00, 0).

A	Geoffrey Chaucer	H	the Friar	O	the Wife of Bath
B	the Knight	I	the Merchant	P	the Parson
C	the Squire	J	the Scholar	Q	the Miller
D	the Yeoman	K	the Franklin	R	the Summoner
E	the Prioress	L	the Cook	S	the Pardoner
F	the Nun's Priest	M	the Sea Captain	T	the Host
G	the Monk	N	the Doctor		

Which pilgrim

- 00 ☐ A was a professional writer?
- 0 ☐ E ☐ O was a woman?
- 1 ☐ was sentimental?
- 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ wore fine clothes?
- 3 ☐ ☐ had recently been fighting abroad?
- 4 ☐ spoke French?
- 5 ☐ ☐ ☐ was fond of eating and drinking?
- 6 ☐ ☐ didn't have much money?
- 7 ☐ ☐ had travelled a lot?
- 8 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ was unscrupulous?
- 9 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ was musical?
- 10 ☐ was in love?
- 11 ☐ was carrying weapons?
- 12 ☐ ☐ took good care of guests?
- 13 ☐ had considerable experience of love?
- 14 ☐ ☐ ☐ was physically unattractive?
- 15 ☐ worked with the sick?

**2 Listening**

track 03

FIRST

You will hear eight of the pilgrims talking. For questions 1-8, choose the best answer (A, B or C).

- 1 You hear a man talking about his work. How does he feel about his customers?
 - A ☐ He appreciates the stories they tell.
 - B ☐ He likes the money they bring in.
 - C ☐ He pretends to like them, although he doesn't.
- 2 You hear a man talking about a woman. How does he feel about her?
 - A ☐ He is sure that she loves him.
 - B ☐ He is not sure that she loves him.
 - C ☐ He is not sure that he loves her.
- 3 You hear a woman talking about her appearance. How does she feel about it?
 - A ☐ She is pleased with it.
 - B ☐ She doesn't think it's suitable.
 - C ☐ She would like to be more modest.
- 4 You hear a man talking about how he earns a living. How does he feel about it?
 - A ☐ He says he is successful and he enjoys it.
 - B ☐ It is hard work and he would like a change.
 - C ☐ He says he is successful but he doesn't enjoy it.
- 5 You hear a man talking about his lifestyle. What is his priority?
 - A ☐ earning money
 - B ☐ food and accommodation
 - C ☐ study
- 6 You hear a man talking about hospitality. Why does he like having guests?
 - A ☐ He enjoys seeing old friends.
 - B ☐ He just enjoys entertaining people.
 - C ☐ It gives him an excuse to eat and drink well.

- 7 You hear a man talking about how he behaves in battle. Why does he behave like this?
- A ☐ He hates his enemies.
- B ☐ He can't distinguish between right and wrong.
- C ☐ He says it is necessary.
- 8 You hear a man talking about his work. Why is he dishonest?
- A ☐ He needs to behave like that to make money.
- B ☐ It is usual behaviour for people in his job.
- C ☐ He likes behaving like that.

3 Who was speaking?

Who are the eight people speaking in activity 2? Choose from the pilgrims who were introduced in *The Prologue*. The first has been done as an example.

- | | |
|------------------------|---------|
| 1 the Host | 5 |
| 2 | 6 |
| 3 | 7 |
| 4 | 8 |

4 Discussion

In pairs or small groups discuss the following.

- Which of the pilgrims do you think Chaucer admires? Choose three and give your reasons.
- Which of the pilgrims do you think Chaucer disapproves of? Choose three and give your reasons.
- Choose three pilgrims who you think will tell good, interesting stories. Why do you think so?
- Choose three pilgrims who you think will tell boring, uninteresting stories. Why do you think so?
- You are going on a long bus or train journey. Choose three of the pilgrims who you wouldn't want to sit near you, and three who you wouldn't mind sitting near you (or might even enjoy sitting near you). Give reasons for your choices.

‘... they go to Canterbury to visit the tomb of the martyr, Thomas Becket, who helps the sick.’

The relative pronouns **who**, **which**, **whose** and **where** are used to make non-defining relative clauses, which link sentences. Non-defining relative clauses have a comma before them and a comma or full stop after them. Here are some examples:

The Miller bought the farmers’ corn. The Miller turned the farmers’ corn into flour.

*The Miller bought the farmers’ corn, **which** he turned into flour.*

The owner of the Tabard Inn was Harry Bailey. Pilgrims on the way to Canterbury stayed at the Tabard Inn.

*The owner of the Tabard Inn, **where** pilgrims on the way to Canterbury stayed, was Harry Bailey.*

5 Non-defining relative clauses

Use non-defining relative clauses to combine each pair of sentences below into one sentence. For the first seven pairs, you are given the relative pronoun to use. For the last seven pairs, you need to think of an appropriate relative pronoun. The first one has been done as an example.

- 0 Geoffrey Chaucer is sometimes called ‘the father of English poetry’. Chaucer’s best-known work is *The Canterbury Tales*. (WHOSE)
Geoffrey Chaucer, whose best-known work is The Canterbury Tales, is sometimes called ‘the father of English poetry’.
- 1 In 1359 Chaucer fought in the war in France. Chaucer was taken prisoner in France. (WHERE)
- 2 He was released for a ransom. Part of Chaucer’s ransom was paid by Edward III, the English king. (WHICH)
- 3 He was buried in Westminster Abbey. Many famous poets and writers were later buried in Westminster Abbey. (WHERE)
- 4 The pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* go on pilgrimage in April. April is the first month of spring. (WHICH)
- 5 The Knight had just come back from a war. The Knight’s son accompanied the Knight. (WHOSE)

- 6 The Yeoman looked like a real man of the country. Most of the Yeoman's clothes were green. (WHOSE)
- 7 The Parson always gave some money to the poor. The Parson didn't have much money himself. (WHO)
- 8 The Prioress looked more like a fashionable noblewoman than a nun. The Prioress's clothes were very elegant.
- 9 The Merchant hardly ever stopped talking about money. The Merchant's business was doing very well.
- 10 The Cook prepared very tasty dishes. The Cook looked rather unhealthy.
- 11 The plague made the Doctor rich. The plague killed hundreds of thousands of people.
- 12 The Summoner was so ugly that he frightened little children. The Summoner stank of garlic and onions.
- 13 The Pardoner was the travelling companion of the Summoner. The Pardoner also had an unpleasant appearance.
- 14 After visiting Canterbury, the pilgrims were going to return to The Tabard Inn. The best storyteller would get a free dinner at The Tabard Inn.

6 Vocabulary – Adjectives and nouns

Say whether the words in the box are adjectives or nouns, then give the corresponding adjective or noun. Do you remember who the word is associated with? The first one has been done as an example.

~~chivalry~~ brave hard work modest good manners polite
sensitive fashion wealth education strong tired respect
hospitable elegant religion patient corrupt

'Chivalry' is a noun. The adjective is 'chivalrous'. It is associated with the Knight.

7 Discussion – Society

In pairs or small groups discuss the following questions.

- 1 Chaucer chose his pilgrims from all levels of society (except royalty and the very poor) because he wanted to represent society as a whole. His pilgrims give us a good picture of English society in the 14th century, but do they represent modern society?

- 2 Think of a group of travellers to represent society now. They could be waiting at an airport, or at a train or bus station. Chaucer chose 29 people; you can choose any number between 10 and 30. You can choose people from British and/or American society, or from society in your country, or people from all over the world.

8 Writing

Write two paragraphs to describe two travellers you thought of in activity 7. Write 60-90 words for each traveller. Include some of these details:

- age
- physical appearance
- clothes
- jewelry
- things with them
- food and drink
- physical movements
- what they say

Here is an example. How many of the details from above are in it?

The Model was in her twenties. She was tall and slim — you might even say thin. She had her hair pulled back and she wore dark glasses. Her clothes were simple but elegant, all of them with designer labels. At meal times she only ordered salad, which she often didn't finish, and mineral water. She took a small mirror out of her bag every ten minutes or so and nervously checked her makeup. She told us that her work was, in fact, very stressful.

Before you read

1 Prediction

In pairs or small groups discuss the following questions.

- 1 Look at the picture on page 31. Why is the man in the tower looking at the woman? Do you think that he knows her? Does she know she is being watched?
- 2 Look at the picture on page 35. The man and woman in the picture on page 31 are in this picture, too, but who is the other man? What has happened and what is happening now?
- 3 Use the two pictures to make up a story in a few sentences. You don't need to write anything; tell your story to other students.