

Canterbury Tales CW/HW Packet, Week 2: The General Prologue

Questions from the Article on Pilgrimages (to be read independently)

Directions: After reading the article on Pilgrimages, complete the following activity by typing the letter of the correct answer along with the sentence from the article that confirms your answer. (5 points)

1. In the Middle Ages, Pilgrimages were trips taken to
 - a. visit royal places.
 - b. visit holy people.
 - c. visit religious shrines, cathedrals or artifacts.
 - d. get away from the stress of daily life.

2. In *The Canterbury Tales*, pilgrims traveled in groups because
 - a. their churches arranged the trips much like a travel agent of today.
 - b. they felt safer if there were more people in the group.
 - c. they thought God was more apt to hear their request if a group said the prayer.
 - d. the groups were actually traveling bands of storytellers.

3. Thomas à Becket was
 - a. assassinated by men acting on behalf of a king.
 - b. assassinated by the archduke of Normandy.
 - c. assassinated by pilgrims who sought his help.
 - d. alive and well when Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*.

4. Highwaymen were on the roads for the purpose of
 - a. giving directions to wayward pilgrims.
 - b. making sure the roads were in good condition.
 - c. collecting taxes for the King.
 - d. robbing and sometimes killing travelers.

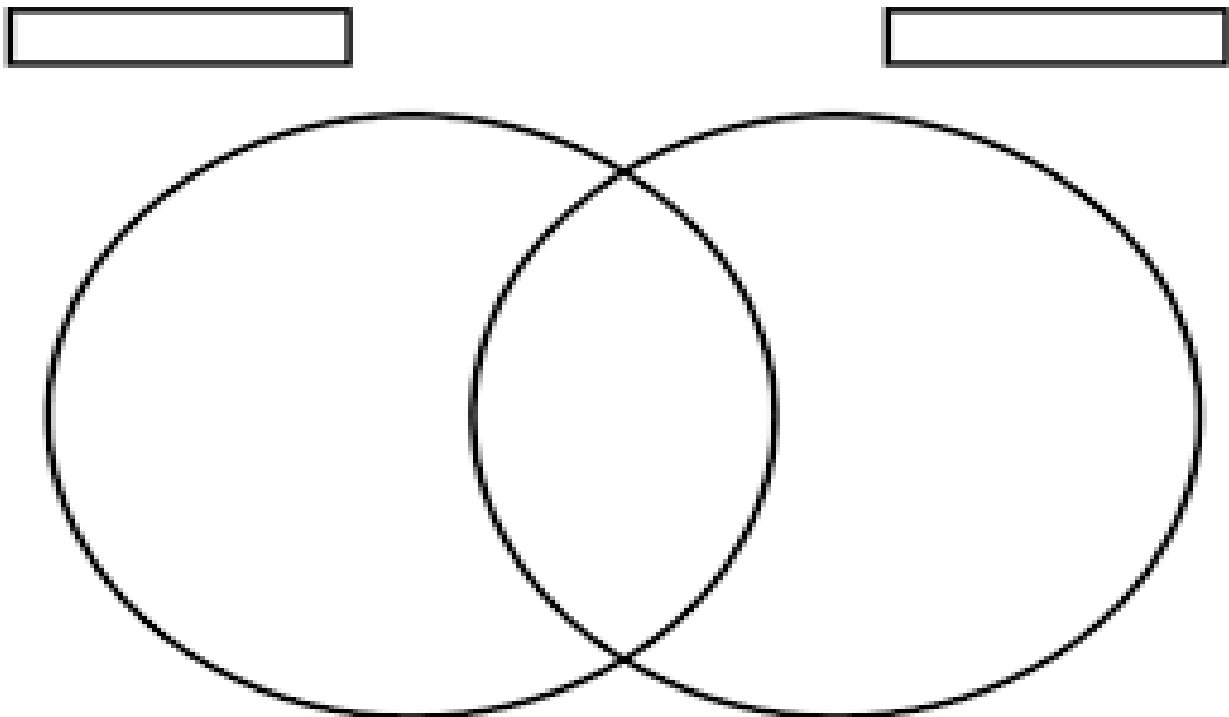
5. Pilgrimages were seen as both good and bad because
 - a. those who made their living by creating shrines and cathedrals were overworked and collapsed under the pressure, while the pilgrims demanded more.
 - b. those who made their living by creating shrines and cathedrals had more business, but the pilgrims were seduced into worshiping beautiful objects rather than God.
 - c. the pilgrims started new religions by worshipping relics and shrines instead of following the doctrine of the church; they employed men to build churches for their new religion.
 - d. during the Middle Ages all of the cathedrals and shrines were ransacked by highwaymen such that the pilgrims had to rebuild the cathedrals and shrines before they could perform their religious rituals.

General Prologue (to be read together in class)

**Section One: Introduction, Knight through Friar (Pages 3-10)
Comprehension Check**

Directions: Complete the following activity by answering (5 points)

1. Think about Chaucer's description of the spring and draw conclusions about why these signs might inspire a person to take a potentially long trip to see a sacred shrine.
2. Compare the Knight and the Squire by completing the Venn diagram like the one below. Copy the chart onto your own page to complete. Use the descriptions given in the text to complete the chart.



3. To what extent is the description of the Knight consistent with your ideas about what a knight should be?

**Section One: Introduction, Knight through Friar
Standards Focus: Satire**

In literature, **satire** refers to the use of poetry or prose to expose and promote ridicule of human faults and failures. In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer creates his characters to show their ridiculous sides and bring the faults and failures of society to light. Because he chooses to pick on members of all social classes or *estates* except the monarchy, *The Canterbury*

Tales is known as an *estate satire*. In the General Prologue, Chaucer begins his satire as he describes some of the characters. As he shows through his descriptions of the Prioress, Monk, and Friar, Chaucer is able to use different strategies to develop his satires.

Part A: Prioress

To set up the satire of the Prioress, Chaucer uses a series of contrasting images in his description. A prioress is a nun who has been placed in charge of a convent. As a nun, the Prioress would be expected to uphold the vows taken by nuns including such things as poverty, chastity, and obedience to God and to her superiors.

Directions: After reading Chaucer's description of the Prioress, complete the chart below with specific examples from the text. Explain Chaucer's description of the Prioress and tell why it is important. Finally, evaluate how this image does or does not fit with the "normal" image or expectations of a nun. An example has been done for you.

Description; Page: "Her way of smiling very simple and coy." (6)

Explanation: She is smiling, which is generally a sign that a person wants to reach out to others and yet her smile is described as "coy," giving the impression that there is something going on with her that we don't know about.

How this fits the "image" of a nun: Nuns are often portrayed as either very friendly, smiling, or as very stoic—never smiling. The "coy" smile does not fit the image I have of a nun, since nuns are supposed to be pure and this gives the impression that she has secrets, or is flirtatious.

4. What other details about the Prioress are included that don't seem to fit your ideas of what a good nun should be? Use a quotation to support your answer.
5. What about the monk? What details are included about him that seem somehow inconsistent with what a good monk should be?

Paragraph (write this after reading the General Prologue)

Directions: The General Prologue provides the basic set-up of the story for the *Canterbury Tales*. Explain what that set up is, then discuss how he uses satire to poke fun at the pilgrims. Your paragraph should be 7-10 sentences in length. (10 points)