

## **British Literature Unit One**

### **The Beginnings of English Literature**

#### **The Canterbury Tales**

**By: Geoffrey Chancer**

#### **PowerPoint 4 Lecture 1**

##### ➤ **The Prologue**

- Adverbial Clause, **Tells When**
- **In spring**, raining to end the drought of March, Water Brings Life to plants/flowers, wind blows on the new shoots, birds are singing, near the middle of April.
- **People going on Pilgrimages** to see remnants of saints, going toward **Canterbury** in hopes that Becket will cure them when they are sick
- **29 pilgrims, staying at The Tabard Inn**
- **Why is it significant that it is springtime?**
  - Time for **renewal**, and **rebirth**

##### ➤ **The Knight**

- **Genteel man** who **loved truth, freedom, chivalry and honor**, a truly distinguished man
- Battled Christians and non-Christians, (Crusades), his fighting spanned 40 years over three groups of people, over 15 battles
- **Always victorious**, plain and honest
- Going to thank the saints for preserving his life through his battles
- **MOST prominent and respected and character of the tales**

##### ➤ **The Squire**

- The Knight's son, about 20 years old
- **Ladies' man, handsome** (Curly hair, strong, and agile), singing, playing the flute
- **Light-hearted, pleasant**, talented
- A fine Horseman, knows how to joust, dance, write and draw
- **(Staying out all night)**

##### ➤ **The Yeoman**

- **Servant to the knight and squire**
- **Outdoorsman**, talented wood carver
- Carried a bow, a shield, a sword and a knife
- **Excellent shot with the bow and arrow**

➤ **A Nun (Madam Eglantyne)**

- Or prioress, spoke French (but very poorly), eats in a refined manner
- Swore Constantly “By St. Loy!” a saint known for not swearing
- Very concerned with outward appearances
- She had 3 dogs with her, seemed to care more for the animals around her than humans
- Physically—Big Forehead, sign of intelligence
- Coral trinket and rosary (Coral trinket fight worldly temptations)
- *Amor vincit omnia*
  - “Love Conquers All”

➤ **Another Nun and three Priests**

- The nun was Madam Eglantyne’s secretary

➤ **The Monk**

- Loved hunting, fine foods and had several good hunting dogs that he was very proud of
- Dressed in fine clothes, some even trimmed in fur
- Rather fat, very Jolly, and bald headed
- Favorite food was roasted swan
- He tended to ignore the rules of the monastery, everything he does in a violation of his monastic vows

➤ **A Firar (Hurbert)**

- Jolly, merry, very festive but notoriously evil and cunning
- Married off girls after he had gotten them into trouble
- He charged people to hear their confessions, the more you paid the more “repentant you were”
- White neck = loose or immoral person
- He knew all the taverns, innkeepers and barmaids (not the sick and needy)
- He even begged off of poor windows who had next to nothing
- Dressed with expensive fabrics
- Overweight

➤ **A Merchant**

- He convinces everyone that he was an expert in finance (his secret — he was horribly in debt)

- Solmn, serious, intelligent and cunning
  - He sets up a safety patrol in the English Channel, safety for tradesmen
  - Excellent fellow
- **An Oxford Cleric**
- Very thin (almost under fed), thredbare clothing
  - But has 20 books with him (a small fortune)
  - Hasn't sought secular employment yet, still studying
  - He did not talk often, but then he did it was with great dignity and moral virtue.
- **A serjeant at the Law**
- "Serjeant" means that he has practiced law with distinction for at least 16 years
  - He knew every law that ever existed, every judgement, every case, every crime
  - Occasionally appointed by the king to serve as the judge on cases
  - "parti-colored coat" sign of affluence, (importance) silk was expensive (imported from the East and had to be tailored)
- **A Franklin**
- Wealthy landowner, but not of noble birth
  - "Epicurus' Son" = pleasure was his priority
  - Entertained in a very lavish manner
  - "Purse of silk" = Wealth
  - Acted as Sheriff, checking and auditing each person's property
- **A Haberdasher, a Dyer, a Carpenter, A weaver, and a carpet-Maker**
- All belonged to a Guild (association of tradesmen, somewhat powerful in this time period)
  - Luxuriously dressed
  - Their wives are demanding and controlling, they want servants to carry their mantles and trains like a queen
- **A Cook**
- Servant to the Haberdasher, Dyer, Carpenter Weaver, and Carpet-Maker
  - Excellent Cook!!! No one can cook like him

- Open sore on kneww though, can that make his food unappetizing?
- **A Skipper**
  - From Dartmouth, known for its piracy and for the brutality of its sailors
  - Couldn't ride his horse, looked awkward on it
  - Stole wine while in Bordeaux
  - Ignored his conscience, immoral, well-tanned, rough
  - Bad guy—kills all prisoners
  - Had a bad temper
- **A Doctor**
  - Used astronomy and astrology, used his patient's horoscope for information on how to treat them
  - Considered a perfectly practicing physician
  - In league with the druggist—worked with the pharmacist to make more money off of people
  - Familiar with medical authorities and their works
  - Not excessive in his own life, very healthy
  - Not religious, materialistic
  - Made a lot of money working during the Plague
- **Wife of Bath**
  - Somewhat deaf, gap-teeth, large hips hidden by her clothing
  - Wanted front row in church and to be first at any offering
  - Wore a heavy (10 lbs) head dress, red stockings, and new shoes
  - No occupation, considered marriage her occupation
  - Went on other famous pilgrimages—Jerusalem, Rome, Boulogne, Compostella, and Cologne
  - Knew the remedy to "love's mischances"
- **The Parson**
  - Very poor but rich in holy thoughts
  - His principle was to live the perfect life first and then teach by example
  - He cared for his parishioners, nothing could keep him from going to check on them
  - Moral and Humble
  - He truly watched over his own congregation

- Wanted everyone to meet to go to heaven
  - (with all the bad examples Chaucer has presented) the Parson is the ideal Christian parish priest
- **The Plowman**
- Ideal Christian Man
  - Followed the two greatest commandments, love god and love your neighbor as yourself
  - God-Fearing man who helps others
  - The Parson's brother
  - Promptly paid his tithes
- **The Miller**
- Big and Brawny man who could wrestle anyone
  - Red beard, hairy wart on his nose, hair in his ears, black nostrils
  - Thief and Cheat, would cheat people with this amount of grain that they brought in
  - Loved playing the bagpipes
- **The Manciple**
- A steward for a dormitory of law students (30 in all)
  - In charge of buying food for the lawyers, very frugal and shrewd
  - Most times outwitted the lawyers and ended up with money in his pocket.
- **The Reeve**
- Thin, legs were lean, bad temper
  - Hair cut short and close = sign of servility
  - Manager of a large estate, able and efficient so he gained a large fortune for his lord (and himself), kept a close account of everything
  - The serfs on his lord's manor are afraid of him
  - Still brought his lord gifts of goods to earn thanks (to suck up to him)
- **The Summoner**
- A man paid to summon sinners to come to trial
  - Red Complexion, boils and lesions all over his face (nothing could cure them)
  - Gets drunk and only speaks in Latin

- Children afraid of him
- Could be bribed very easily

➤ **The Pardoner**

- Sold pardons and indulgences to those charged with sins
- Loud high-pitched voice, long flaxen hair, had no beard (and would never have a beard), effeminate characteristics
- Knew how to sing and preach to people who frighten them to buy the relics
- Made a lot of money selling fake relics