



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Canterbury Tales

based on the tales by  
Geoffrey Chaucer

Written by  
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR  
Geoffrey Chaucer

CHAUCER, Geoffrey (1340?-1400). Called the Father of the English Language as well as the Morning Star of Song, Geoffrey Chaucer, after six centuries, has retained his status as one of the three or four greatest English poets. He was the first to commit to lines of universal and enduring appeal a vivid interest in nature, books, and people. As many-sided as Shakespeare, he did for English narrative what Shakespeare did for drama. If he lacks the profundity of Shakespeare, he excels in playfulness of mood and simplicity of expression. Though his language often seems quaint, he was essentially modern. Familiarity with the language and with the literature of his contemporaries persuades the most skeptical that he is nearer to the present than many writers born long after he died.

--- Courtesy of Compton's Learning Company

## INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. It includes twenty-seven lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

It is based on the Coghill modern translation of Chaucer's tales which stays very close to the old text, mostly substituting modern spellings for the Old English words, but also occasionally substituting modern words for archaic ones. The poetry remains intact, though not always exactly word-for-word the same as Chaucer's. This author thinks the Coghill translation is a good one for most high school students who want to enjoy the stories, learn about Chaucer and his times, and consider the main ideas presented by Chaucer rather than studying Old English and the exact text created by Chaucer's poetic genius.

This unit can be used for either the Old English version or the modern translation. If you use the Old English version, the vocabulary words chosen won't match, making the vocabulary sections of the unit non-applicable. However, you will still be able to use the study guides, tests, writing assignments and other portions of the unit.

The materials in this literature unit plan are based on the Prologue and thirteen of the tales--tales by the Knight, the Miller, the Reeve, the Shipman, the Prioress, the Nun's Priest, the Pardoner, the Wife of Bath, the Friar, the Summoner, the Clerk, the Merchant, and the Franklin. For each of these tales there are short answer study questions, multiple choice study/quiz questions, vocabulary worksheets, vocabulary and text word search puzzles, vocabulary and text crossword puzzles, and extra worksheets.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to *The Canterbury Tales*. Students are given the materials they will be using during the unit including the **group project** through which most of the background and reading of the tales will take place. Students are grouped into pairs. Each pair of students is assigned a tale. One student of the pair is responsible for getting background information about the character type. For example, he/she would find out what Reeves were in the 1300s--where they fit in the social classes, what their jobs were, what function they served in society, what their daily lives were like, etc. The other student will be responsible for reading the story (or a summary of the story if you choose) to the class. In the text there are often references to various gods or historical figures. Both students in the group will create a little reference sheet to go along with their tale on which these names will be listed with a short explanation of who they were. During the reading of the tales, the reader will pause when he/she comes upon one of these key names, and the background person will give a brief explanation of the person named.

This takes care of 26 of your students. What about the others? If you have more students, divide them into two groups. One group will be responsible for creating a presentation lasting 1/2 class period giving background information about life in England in the 1300's. The other group will be responsible for creating a presentation lasting 1/2 class period giving background information about Chaucer's life. If you have too many students for just these two groups, consider adding a third person to a few of the tale pairs, especially for long tales like the Knight's. Have two Knights do the reading--split the tale in half.

The idea behind the pattern for this unit is to simulate the experience of the group traveling to Canterbury and yet still get meaning and an education from the stories told. After being given time to prepare their presentations, different pairs of students will tell their tales each day, dressed in appropriate costumes of the day. Most of the people who tell tales are described in the Prologue to the tales. Students should transform themselves into their characters as much as possible. The person giving background information should dress appropriately also. For example the person giving background information for the Knight might dress as a squire. The person giving background information for the Prioress might dress as a nun or a monk, friar or priest, and so on. Ideally, students in your class should just listen to the presentation being made as the other travelers listened to the tale-tellers. However, if you have a class of students who will not pay attention, you might have them follow along in the text in their books.

During the time scheduled for students to make and listen to the presentations of the tales, students will do the vocabulary worksheet, preview the study questions and read the prologue of the tale to be done in the next class period on the night before. That way, they will have some familiarity with the tale and the more difficult words that will be used, and you won't have to take class time reading the prologue to each tale. After each tale is read or presented, discuss the study questions so you are sure students understand what they just heard. After all the tales have been presented, there is time for a short review of all the tales.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. It might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the text. Prior to each tale, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming tale. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each tale, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the text.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to inform: students take the information gathered through research and organize it into a composition. The second assignment is to express personal opinions: students choose one tale as the "winner" of the free meal offered by the Host. The third assignment is to persuade: students choose one composition from a list related to the tales.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *The Canterbury Tales*. This assignment may be fulfilled through the background research students will do relating to their characters. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. Before and during the tale presentations, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read, giving background information and additional information to the text. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: all multiple choice-matching-true/false or with a mixture of matching, short answer, multiple choice, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer version of the unit test.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **resource sections** include suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the play, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *The Canterbury Tales*

1. Through reading Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* students will gain a better understanding of fourteenth-century English society.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will be exposed to several different forms of literature.
4. Students will see how Chaucer uses the framing device as a structure for his tales.
5. Students will get background information about Chaucer, his times and *The Canterbury Tales*.
6. Students will compare and contrast medieval and modern ideas.
7. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
8. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Canterbury Tales* as they relate to the author's theme development.
9. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the play through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the play.
10. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas  
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
  - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the play
  - d. To encourage logical thinking
  - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
11. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *The Canterbury Tales*

Date Assigned	Reading Assignment	Completion Date
	Prologue	
	Knight's Tale	
	Miller's Tale	
	Reeve's Tale	
	Shipman's Tale	
	Prioress's Tale	
	Nun's Priest's Tale	
	Pardoner's Tale	
	Wife of Bath's Tale	
	Friar's Tale	
	Summoner's Tale	
	Clerk's Tale	
	Merchant's Tale	
	Franklin's Tale	



UNIT OUTLINE - *The Canterbury Tales*

<b>1</b> Introduction	<b>2</b> Prologue	<b>3</b> Library	<b>4</b> Library	<b>5</b> Writing Assignment 1
<b>6</b> Background	<b>7</b> Knight	<b>8</b> Knight	<b>9</b> Miller	<b>10</b> Reeve
<b>11</b> Shipman	<b>12</b> Prioress	<b>13</b> Nun's Priest	<b>14</b> Pardoner	<b>15</b> Wife of Bath
<b>16</b> Friar	<b>17</b> Summoner	<b>18</b> Clerk	<b>19</b> Merchant	<b>20</b> Franklin
<b>21</b> Writing Assignment 2	<b>22</b> Vocabulary	<b>23</b> Extra ?s	<b>24</b> Discussion	<b>25</b> Writing Assignment 3
<b>26</b> Review	<b>27</b> Test			

## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To distribute the materials which will be used in the unit
2. To explain the small group project students will do in this unit
3. To do the prereading vocabulary work for the Prologue

### Activity #1

Distribute the materials which will be used in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each tale as homework the night before each tale is to be done in class to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the tale. After reading the section, students will as a class answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that tale. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to listening to or reading each tale, students will do vocabulary work related to each tale. Following the completion of the reading of the text, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know by when their presentations have to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet up on a side blackboard or bulletinboard and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can make copies for each student to have. In either case, you should advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

Extra Activities Center The unit resource portion of this unit contains suggestions for an extra library of related plays and articles in your classroom as well as crossword and word search puzzles. Make an extra activities center in your room where you will keep these materials for students to use. (Bring the books and articles in from the library and keep several copies of the puzzles on hand.) Explain to students that these materials are available for students to use when they finish reading assignments or other class work early or as extra review/study materials.

Nonfiction Assignment Sheet Explain to students that they each are to read at least one non-fiction piece from the in-class library at some time during the unit. Suggest that students do this assignment in conjunction with the background research they will have to do for their presentations. Students will fill out a nonfiction assignment sheet after completing the reading to help you evaluate their reading experiences and to help the students think about and evaluate their own reading experiences.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *The Canterbury Tales*

### PROMPT

You have been reading lots of factual information about the 1300s, gods, goddesses, people and places. Take a few minutes today to organize your information and begin planning your presentation. To this end, you are to write a composition in which you inform me what you have learned through your research.

### PREWRITING

You have done most of your prewriting by taking notes while you were doing your research. Look at your notes now and think about the information you have gathered. Categorize the information you have, then organize your categories in a logical (chronological, alphabetical, or some other) order.

### DRAFTING

Write an introductory paragraph in which you generally explain what you have been researching.

In the body of your composition, write a paragraph about each of the categories you made in the prewriting stage. Use the information you gathered within each category to fill out your paragraphs.

Write a paragraph in which you state any conclusions to which you may have come as a result of collecting this data and in which you bring your composition to a close.

### PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.