



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE CANTERBURY TALES

BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER



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Written by Sophia Harrison

Name: _____

Date: _____

The General Prologue

Job Duties

Objective: Researching and identifying professional expectations

Activity

The “General Prologue” describes the pilgrims who are traveling together to Canterbury. Chaucer goes into detail about each character’s dress, life, and character traits. Chaucer meant for each of his characters to be not only an individual in the story, but also to stand as representatives of their social class and position.

You should research each of the following professions using books from your library, Internet sources, or other sources. Your task here is to provide more context for the stories by identifying what each profession’s “job duties” would have been.

Don’t assume that clues from *The Canterbury Tales* will allow you to know everything about each profession—remember, the descriptions of each character depend upon the reader already have certain expectations and assumptions about that type of profession. Complete the chart on the next page. One example has been completed for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Knight's Tale

Outline

Objective: Outlining key points for better comprehension

Activity

Outlining is an important strategy to help you organize your thoughts about what you're reading and to help you remember key points in the text. It can be particularly effective in understanding and remembering works of fiction or in helping you learn from works of nonfiction, ranging from science and social studies to history and foreign language tests.

As you read the "The Knight's Tale" you'll be creating an outline that identifies each character's role, the action of the story, the tone, and the author's insights into the characters' traits or motivation.

Your outline should include a number of headings that highlight major points, as well as indented subheadings under the major points.

For example, headings might include the following:

- Setup
- Main Characters
- Plot
- Insights I've Gained into Main Characters
- Main Theme at the End of the Story

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Miller's Prologue

Journal Entries

Objectives: Interpreting details from the text
Reflecting on characters' personalities and motivation
Rewriting verse into prose

Activity

The narrator writes that many pilgrims enjoyed the Knight's Tale, but the Miller rudely interrupts to tell his own story.

Your task here is to write a journal entry as a pilgrim in *The Canterbury Tales*. Rewrite what happens in "The Miller's Prologue" from your own point of view, commenting on your own opinion of the Miller and also the other characters' reactions. You may choose to express positive or negative feelings towards the Miller, but you cannot add major events which are not already in the text.

Your entry should include references to:

- Your own occupation
- Your personal opinion about the Knight's Tale
- Your opinion about the Miller's response
- Your observations on how others are responding to the Miller, and whether or not you agree with them

We have provided a sample beginning for your journal entry; feel free to use it or start your own.

Spring, 1380.

The Knight had just finished telling his sad but wonderful story, when all of a sudden this rude man interrupted! I was shocked—I would never think of doing that, as I have been brought up to be very courtly and polite.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Miller's Tale**Headlines****Objective:** Creating effective headlines**Activity**

Catchy headlines are necessary and important to selling newspapers because they are likely to attract readers. "The Miller's Tale" has the potential for a number of exciting headlines. Imagine you are an editor for *The Canterbury Gossip*, a local tabloid (sensational) paper, and you are choosing headlines for the next issue. Review the events in the story, and select five interesting events that would inspire the best headlines. List the headlines in the spaces provided on the following page. An example has been supplied for you.

Example: Man Marries Young Wife, Keeps Her Hidden From All!

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Wife of Bath's Prologue

Emailing

Objectives: Composing an email
Reflecting on a story

Activity

You are close friends with the Wife of Bath, who has just sent you an excerpt from her Prologue to explain some of her life events. You want to email her back with your reaction. You should be reacting to it as if this were a true story your friend has told you, not reacting to formal literary techniques or themes.

Compose an email to the Wife of Bath, telling her what you think of her history. Include your opinion of her husband's book and how you felt about these stories. Express how you might feel if someone close to you told you this same story, and offer words of encouragement if needed. The purpose of the email should be to reflect upon the story, rather than just summarize what you read.

Remember, this is in email form, so it does not have to be extremely formal.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Tale of the Wife of Bath

Evaluation Chart

Objective: Evaluating and critiquing a text

Activity

Use the following Evaluation Chart to evaluate the story in the following areas:

- Plot
- Characters
- Title
- Ending
- Themes
- Style

Evaluate by scoring each from one to ten points, with one being the least satisfactory and ten being the most. After you finished, your teacher will survey the class and arrive at an average score for the story. As a class, discuss the following with your classmates. Use the chart on the next page with this activity.

- What did you agree on?
- What did you disagree on?

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and The Tale of the Wife of Bath

Trading Cards

Objective: Writing sketches of characters

Activity

A trading card company has commissioned you to design trading cards and write the flip side of the cards for the following characters from this Prologue and tale:

- The Wife of Bath
- The Knight
- The Queen
- The Old Woman

Using full sentences, write a short, thumbnail sketch of each one. Each of these brief write-ups should be between 100-200 words. You will not be actually drawing faces for the characters, unless your teacher makes that one of the requirements for this activity.

Among the points to cover in your thumbnail sketches are the following:

- The character's role in the story
- A brief description of what this character probably looks like
- The character's accomplishments or role in the story
- The character's future goals or aspirations

Use your imagination and have fun!

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Pardoner's Tale

Poetry

Objective: Writing a found poem

Activity

A “found” poem is a poem made up entirely of phrases, sentences, or quotations found in the text. Review the story “The Pardoner’s Tale,” and create a found poem of your own. One of the best parts of writing a found poem is that it gives you the opportunity to interpret the text in any way you choose. Therefore, your poem may provide details about the plot or characters or may be totally unrelated.

Your poem should be at least ten lines long. The lines do not need to rhyme, but they certainly may. You can arrange the phrases in any way you like and change the punctuation, but do not deviate from Chaucer’s actual words. Give the poem a title, which may or may not come from the book. An example taken entirely from another story in *The Canterbury Tales*, “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” follows:

We Made It Up Between Ourselves

If women had but written stories
More wickedness
Than all the race of Adam could redress
Impossible
That any cleric shall speak well of wives.

One for love, the other killed for hate,
Corpses lay on the floor upright
Husbands slept and in such wise were slain

Of wicked wives
More legends and more lives
Woman was the ruin of mankind.

I hit him on the cheek
He struck me so it made me deaf
Bridle reins within my hand
You are to blame therefor

After that day
we never had debate.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Nun's Priest's Tale

Obituary

Objective: Interpreting details from the text

Activity

In “The Nun's Priest's Tale,” the rooster Chanticleer narrowly escapes death when he tricks the fox into letting him go. Had he been eaten by the fox, he would have been mourned by the lady farmer, as well by as the other animals. Imagine that this had been the case—how would Chanticleer have been remembered? What information would his loved ones have wanted to share with the media?

Using details from the text, write an obituary for Chanticleer—a column that appears in a newspaper to announce someone's death. The obituary should include:

- The name of the deceased
- Where the deceased is from
- How the deceased died
- Any accomplishments of the deceased
- Who is the family or anyone else important to the deceased
- Funeral or memorial information
- What the deceased will be remembered for

Your obituary can be as long or as short as you like, but should contain the basic information above. For example, a sample obituary for Geoffrey Chaucer might look something like this:

Geoffrey Chaucer died in 1400 of unknown causes. He was born in London in 1343 and had traveled abroad and fought in the Hundred Years' War. He was a popular writer, but also served the court in several government positions. He will be remembered primarily for his witty banter and kind heart, and especially for his collection called *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's funeral will be held this Saturday at the town church; his family has asked that in lieu of flowers, mourners send donations to the Veteran Storytellers Fund.