

# The Canterbury Tales: The General Prologue

By Geoffrey Chaucer

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Austin Benson*

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THE CANTERBURY TALES. GROUP A. THE PROLOGUE Here biginneth the Book of the Tales  
of Caunterbury.....

THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

,<sup>intro</sup> *EDITED, FROM NUMEROUS MANUSCRIPTS*

BY THE

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THE CANTERBURY TALES: TEXT

'Let every felawe telle his tale aboute,  
And lat see now who shal the soper winne.'

*The Knightes Tale;* A890

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# THE CANTERBURY TALES.

## GROUP A. THE PROLOGUE

Here biginneth the Book of the Tales of Caunterbury.

1 WHAN, <sup>prologueintro</sup> that Aprille with his shoures sote, <sup>shoures\_sote</sup>  
2 The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote, <sup>rote</sup>,  
3 And bathed every veyne, <sup>veyne</sup> in swich licour, <sup>licour</sup>,  
4 Of which vertu, <sup>vertu</sup> engendred is the flour;  
5 Whan Zephirus, <sup>zephirus</sup> eek with his swete breeth  
6 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
7 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
8 Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne, <sup>ram</sup>,  
9 And smale fowles maken melodye,  
10 That slepen al the night with open yē, <sup>ye</sup>,  
11 (So priketh hem nature in hir corages, <sup>priketh</sup>):  
12 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
13 (And palmers, <sup>palmers</sup> for to seken straunge strondes, <sup>straunge\_strondes</sup>)  
14 To ferne halwes, <sup>ferne\_halwes</sup>, couthe in sondry londes;  
15 And specially, from every shires ende  
16 Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,  
17 The holy blisful martir, <sup>martir</sup> for to seke,  
18 That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

19 Bifel that, in that seson on a day,  
20 In Southwerk, <sup>southwerk</sup> at the Tabard, <sup>tabard</sup> as I lay  
21 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage  
22 To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,

23 At night was come in-to that hostelrye  
24 Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,  
25 Of sondry folk, by aventure, <sup>aventure</sup> y-falle  
26 In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,  
27 That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;  
28 The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
29 And wel we weren esed atte beste.  
30 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,  
31 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,  
32 That I was of hir felawshipe anon,

33 And made forward erly for to ryse,  
34 To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.

35 But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,  
36 Er that I ferther in this tale pace, <sup>pace</sup>,  
37 Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun, <sup>resoun</sup>,  
38 To telle yow al the condicioun  
39 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
40 And whiche they weren, and of what degree, <sup>degree</sup>;  
41 And eek in what array that they were inne:  
42 And at a knight than wol I first biginne.

## KNIGHT, <sup>knight</sup> .

43 A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,  
44 That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
45 To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,  
46 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.  
47 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,  
48 And therto hadde he riden (no man ferre)  
49 As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse, <sup>hethenesse</sup> ,  
50 And ever honoured for his worthinesse.

51 At Alisaundre, <sup>alisaundre</sup> he was, whan it was wonne;  
52 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne  
53 Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce, <sup>pruce</sup> .  
54 In Lettow, <sup>lettow</sup> hadde he reysed and in Ruce, <sup>ruce</sup> ,  
55 No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.  
56 In Gernade, <sup>gernade</sup> at the sege eek hadde he be  
57 Of Algezir, <sup>algezir</sup> , and riden in Belmarye, <sup>belmarye</sup> .  
58 At Lyveys, <sup>lyveys</sup> was he, and at Satalye, <sup>satalye</sup> ,

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59 Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See, <sup>grete\_see</sup>  
60 At many a noble aryve, <sup>aryve</sup> hadde he be.  
61 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,  
62 And foughten for our feith at Tramissene, <sup>tramissene</sup>  
63 In listes, <sup>listes</sup> thryes, and ay slayn his foo.  
64 This ilke worthy knight had been also  
65 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye, <sup>palatye</sup> ,  
66 Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:  
67 And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.  
68 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
69 And of his port, <sup>port</sup> as meke as is a mayde.  
70 He never yet no vileinye ne sayde  
71 In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.  
72 He was a verray parfit gentil knight, <sup>verray</sup> .  
73 But for to tellen yow of his array,  
74 His hors were gode, but he was nat gay.  
75 Of fustian he wered a gipoun, <sup>fustian</sup>  
76 Al bismotered with his habergeoun, <sup>habergeoun</sup> ,  
77 For he was late y-come from his viage,  
78 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.

SQUYER, <sup>squyer</sup> .

79 With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,  
80 A lovyere, and a lusty bachelor,  
81 With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse, <sup>lokkes</sup> .  
82 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
83 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
84 And wonderly deliver, <sup>deliver</sup> , and greet of strengthe.  
85 And he had been somtyme in chivachye, <sup>chivachye</sup> ,  
86 In Flaundes, in Artoys, and Picardye, <sup>flaundes</sup> ,  
87 And born him wel, as of so litel space,  
88 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
89 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede, <sup>mede</sup>  
90 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede.  
91 Singinge he was, or floytinge, <sup>floytinge</sup> , al the day;  
92 He was as fresh as is the month of May.

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93 Short was his goune, with sleves longe and wyde.  
94 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.  
95 He coude songes make and wel endyte, <sup>endyte</sup> ,  
96 Iuste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte,  
97 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale, <sup>nightertale</sup>  
98 He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale.  
99 Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,  
100 And carf biforn his fader, <sup>carf</sup> at the table.

YEMAN, <sup>yeman</sup>.

101 A YEMAN hadde he, and servaunts namo  
102 At that tyme, for him liste ryde so;  
103 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;  
104 A sheef of pecok-arwes, <sup>pecok</sup> brighte and kene  
105 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily;  
106 (Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly, <sup>takel</sup>:  
107 His arwes drouped nocht with fetheres lowe),  
108 And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.  
109 A not-heed, <sup>notheed</sup> hadde he, with a broun visage.  
110 Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage.  
111 Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,  
112 And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,  
113 And on that other syde a gay daggere,  
114 Harneised wel, and sharp as point of spere;  
115 A Cristofre, <sup>cristofre</sup> on his brest of silver shene.  
116 An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;  
117 A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.



PRIORESSE, <sup>prioeresse</sup>.

118 Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioeresse,  
119 That of hir smylyng was ful simple and coy;  
120 Hir gretteste ooth was but by sëynt Loy, <sup>loy</sup>;  
121 And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.  
122 Ful wel she song the service divyne, <sup>service</sup>,  
123 Entuned in hir nose ful semely;  
124 And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,  
125 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe, <sup>stratford</sup>,  
126 For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.  
127 At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;

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128 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,  
129 Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.  
130 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
131 That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.  
132 In curteisye was set ful muche hir lest.  
133 Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,  
134 That in hir coppe, <sup>coppe</sup> was no ferthing sene  
135 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.  
136 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,  
137 And sikerly she was of greet disport,  
138 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,  
139 And peyned hir to countrefete chere  
140 Of court, and been estatlich, <sup>estatlich</sup> of manere,  
141 And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
142 But, for to speken of hir conscience,  
143 She was so charitable and so pitous,  
144 She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous  
145 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.  
146 Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde  
147 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.  
148 But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,  
149 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte:  
150 And al was conscience and tendre herte.  
151 Ful semely hir wimpel, <sup>wimpel</sup> pinched was;  
152 Hir nose tretys; hir eyen greye as glas;  
153 Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;  
154 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;  
155 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;  
156 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
157 Ful fetis, <sup>fetis</sup> was hir cloke, as I was war.

158 Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar  
159 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene;  
160 And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene,  
161 On which ther was first write a crowned A,

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162 And after, *Amor vincit omnia* , <sup>amor</sup> .

NONNE.

3 PREESTES, [nonne\\_preestes](#) .

163 Another NONNE with hir hadde she,  
164 That was hir chapeleyne, and PREESTES three.

MONK, <sup>monk</sup> .

165 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye, <sup>maistrye</sup>,  
166 An out-rydere, that lovede venerye, <sup>venerye</sup>;  
167 A manly man, to been an abbot, <sup>abbot</sup> able.  
168 Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable:  
169 And, whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here  
170 Ginglen in a whistling wind as clere,  
171 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel-belle,  
172 Ther as this lord was keper of the celle, <sup>celle</sup> .  
173 The reule of saint Maure or of saint Beneit, <sup>reule</sup> ,  
174 By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,  
175 This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace,  
176 And held after the newe world the space.  
177 He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen, <sup>hen</sup> ,  
178 That seith, that hunters been nat holy men;  
179 Ne that a monk, whan he is cloisterlees,  
180 Is lykned til a fish that is waterlees;  
181 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloistre.  
182 But thilke text held he nat worth an oistre;  
183 And I seyde, his opinioun was good.  
184 What sholde he studie, and make him-selven wood, <sup>wood</sup> ,  
185 Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure,  
186 Or swinken, <sup>swinken</sup> with his handes, and laboure,  
187 As Austin, <sup>austin</sup> bit? How shal the world be served?  
188 Lat Austin have his swink to him reserved.  
189 Therefore he was a pricasour, <sup>pricasour</sup> aright;  
190 Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight;  
191 Of priking and of hunting for the hare  
192 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.  
193 I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond  
194 With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;  
195 And, for to festne his hood under his chin,

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196 He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pin:  
197 A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.  
198 His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,  
199 And eek his face, as he had been anoint.  
200 He was a lord ful fat and in good point;  
201 His eyen stepe, and rollinge in his heed,  
202 That stemed as a forneys of a leed;  
203 His botes souple, his hors in greet estat.  
204 Now certainly he was a fair prelat;

205 He was nat pale as a for-pyned, <sup>for-pyned</sup> goost.  
206 A fat swan loved he best of any roost.  
207 His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

FRERE, <sup>frere</sup>.

208 A FRERE ther was, a wantown, <sup>wantown</sup> and a merye,  
209 A limitour, <sup>limitour</sup>, a ful solempne man.  
210 In alle the ordres foure, <sup>ordres</sup> is noon that can  
211 So mucche of daliaunce and fair langage.  
212 He hadde maad ful many a mariage  
213 Of yonge wommen, at his owne cost.  
214 Un-to his ordre he was a noble post.  
215 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he  
216 With frankeleyns over-al in his contree,  
217 And eek with worthy wommen of the toun:  
218 For he had power of confessioun,  
219 As seyde him-self, more than a curat, <sup>curat</sup>,  
220 For of his ordre he was licentiat, <sup>licentiat</sup>.  
221 Ful swetely herde he confessioun,  
222 And plesaunt was his absolucioun;  
223 He was an esy man to yeve penaunce  
224 Ther as he wiste to han a good pitaunce, <sup>pitaunce</sup>;  
225 For unto a povre ordre for to yive  
226 Is signe that a man is wel y-shrive, <sup>shrive</sup>.  
227 For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,  
228 He wiste that a man was repentaunt.  
229 For many a man so hard is of his herte,  
230 He may nat wepe al-thogh him sore smerte.  
231 Therefore, in stede of weping and preyeres,  
232 Men moot yeve silver to the povre freres.

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233 His tipet, <sup>tipet</sup> was ay farsed ful of knyves  
234 And pinnes, for to yeven faire wyves.  
235 And certainly he hadde a mery note;  
236 Wel coude he singe and pleyen on a rote, <sup>rote2</sup>.  
237 Of yeddinges, <sup>yeddinges</sup> he bar utterly the prys.  
238 His nekke whyt was as the flour-de-lys, <sup>flour-de-lys</sup>;  
239 Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.  
240 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,  
241 And everich hostiler and tappestere  
242 Bet than a lazar or a beggestere, <sup>lazar</sup>;  
243 For un-to swich a worthy man as he  
244 Acorded nat, as by his facultee,  
245 To have with seke lazars aqueyntaunce.  
246 It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce

247 For to delen with no swich poraille, <sup>poraille</sup> ,  
248 But al with riche and sellers of vitaille, <sup>vitaille</sup> .  
249 And over-al, ther as profit sholde aryse,  
250 Curteys he was, and lowly of servyse.  
251 Ther nas no man no-wher so vertuous.  
252 He was the beste beggere in his hous;  
253 [And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt, <sup>ferme</sup> ;  
254 Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt;]  
255 For thogh a widwe hadde noght a sho, <sup>widwe</sup> ,  
256 So plesaunt was his “In principio , <sup>principio</sup> ,”  
257 Yet wolde he have a ferthing, er he wente.  
258 His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.  
259 And rage he coude, as it were right a whelpe, <sup>whelpe</sup> .  
260 In love-dayes, <sup>love-dayes</sup> ther coude he muchel helpe.  
261 For there he was nat lyk a cloisterer,  
262 With a thredbar cope, as is a povre scoler,  
263 But he was lyk a maister or a pope.  
264 Of double worsted, <sup>double\_worsted</sup> was his semi-cope,  
265 That rounded as a belle out of the presse.

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266 Somwhat he lipped, for his wantownesse,  
267 To make his English swete up-on his tonge;  
268 And in his harping, whan that he had songe,  
269 His eyen twinkled in his heed aright,  
270 As doon the sterres in the frosty night.  
271 This worthy limitour, <sup>limitour</sup> was cleped Huberd.

MERCHANT, <sup>marchant</sup> .

272 A MERCHANT was ther with a forked berd,  
273 In motteele, <sup>motteele</sup>, and hye on horse he sat,  
274 Up-on his heed a Flaundrish bever hat, <sup>hat</sup>;  
275 His botes clasped faire and fetisly.  
276 His resons he spak ful solempnely,  
277 Souninge alway thencrees of his winning.  
278 He wolde the see were kept for any thing  
279 Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle, <sup>middelburgh</sup> .  
280 Wel coude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.  
281 This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;  
282 Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette, <sup>dette</sup> ,  
283 So estatly was he of his governaunce,  
284 With his bargaynes, and with his chevisaunce.  
285 For sothe he was a worthy man with-alle,  
286 But sooth to seyn, I noot how men him calle, <sup>noot</sup> .



CLERK, <sup>clerk</sup>.

287 A CLERK ther was of Oxenford, <sup>oxenford</sup> also,  
288 That un-to logik hadde longe y-go.  
289 As lene was his hors as is a rake,  
290 And he nas nat right fat, I undertake;  
291 But loked holwe, and ther-to soberly.  
292 Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy, <sup>courtepy</sup>;  
293 For he had geten him yet no benefyce,  
294 Ne was so worldly for to have offyce.  
295 For him was lever, <sup>lever</sup> have at his beddes heed  
296 Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,  
297 Of Aristotle and his philosophye,  
298 Than robes riche, or fithele, <sup>fithele</sup>, or gay sautrye, <sup>sautrye</sup>.  
299 But al be that he was a philosophre,  
300 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;

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301 But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,  
302 On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,  
303 And bisily gan for the soules preye  
304 Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye, <sup>scoleye</sup>.  
305 Of studie took he most cure and most hede.  
306 Noght o word spak he more than was nede,  
307 And that was seyð in forme and reverence,  
308 And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence, <sup>sentence</sup>.  
309 Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,  
310 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

MAN OF LAWE, [man\\_of\\_law](#) .

311 A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war, [war](#) and wys,  
312 That often hadde been at the parvys, [parvys](#) ,  
313 Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
314 Discreet he was, and of greet reverence:  
315 He semed swich, his wordes weren so wyse.  
316 Iustyce he was ful often in assyse, [assyse](#) ,  
317 By patente, and by pleyn commissioun;  
318 For his science, and for his heigh renoun  
319 Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.  
320 So greet a purchasour was no-wher noon.  
321 Al was fee simple to him in effect,  
322 His purchasing mighte nat been infect.  
323 No-wher so bisy a man as he ther nas,  
324 And yet he semed bisier than he was.  
325 In termes hadde he caas and domes alle, [caas](#) ,  
326 That from the tyme of king William, [william](#) were falle.  
327 Therto he coude endyte, [endyte](#) , and make a thing,  
328 Ther coude no wight pinche at his wryting;  
329 And every statut coude he pleyn by rote.  
330 He rood but hoomly in a medlee, [medlee](#) cote  
331 Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;  
332 Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

FRANKELEYN, frankeleyn

333 A FRANKELEYN was in his companye;  
334 Whyt was his berd, as is the dayesye.  
335 Of his complexioun he was sangwyn, sangwyn.  
336 Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn.

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337 To liven in delyt was ever his wone,  
338 For he was Epicurus, epicurus owne sone,  
339 That heeld opinioun, that pleyn delyt  
340 Was verrailly felicitee parfyt.  
341 An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;  
342 Seint Iulian, iulian he was in his contree.  
343 His breed, his ale, was alwey after oon;  
344 A bettre envyned, envyned man was no-wher noon.  
345 With-oute bake mete was never his hous,  
346 Of fish and flesh, and that so plentevous,  
347 It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,  
348 Of alle deyntees that men coude thinke.  
349 After the sondry sesons of the yeer,  
350 So chaunged he his mete and his soper.  
351 Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,  
352 And many a breem and many a luce in stewe.  
353 Wo was his cook, but-if his sauce were  
354 Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his gere.  
355 His table dormant in his halle alway  
356 Stood redy covered al the longe day.  
357 At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;  
358 Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the shire.  
359 An anlas and a gipser, anlas al of silk  
360 Heng at his girdel, whyt as morne milk.  
361 A shirreve, shirreve hadde he been, and a countour, countour;  
362 Was no-wher such a worthy vavasour, vavasour.

HABAERDASSHER, <sup>haberdassher</sup> .

CARPENTER, <sup>carpenter</sup> .

WEBBE, <sup>webbe</sup> .

DYERE, <sup>dyere</sup> .

TAPICER, <sup>tapicer</sup> .

363 An HABERDASSHER and a CARPENTER,  
364 A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPICER,  
365 Were with us eek, clothed in o liveree, <sup>liveree</sup> ,  
366 Of a solempne and greet fraternitee.  
367 Ful fresh and newe hir gere apyked, <sup>apyked</sup> was;  
368 Hir knyves were y-chaped noght with bras,  
369 But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,  
370 Hir girdles and hir pouches every-deel.

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371 Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys, <sup>burgeys</sup> ,  
372 To sitten in a yeldhalle, <sup>yeldhalle</sup> on a deys.  
373 Everich, for the wisdom that he can,  
374 Was shaply for to been an alderman, <sup>alderman</sup> .  
375 For catel hadde they y-nogh and rente,  
376 And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;  
377 And elles certain were they to blame.  
378 It is ful fair to been y-clept "ma dame , <sup>dame</sup> ,"  
379 And goon to vigilyës al bifore,  
380 And have a mantel royalliche y-bore.

COOK, <sup>cook</sup>.

381 A COOK they hadde with hem for the nones,  
382 To boille the chiknes with the mary-bones, <sup>marybones</sup>,  
383 And poudre-marchant tart, and galingale, <sup>galingale</sup>.  
384 Wel coude he knowe a draughte of London ale.  
385 He coude roste, and sethe, <sup>sethe</sup>, and broille, and frye,  
386 Maken mortreux, <sup>mortreux</sup>, and wel bake a pye.  
387 But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
388 That on his shine a mormal, <sup>mormal</sup> hadde he;  
389 For blankmanger, <sup>blankmanger</sup>, that made he with the beste.

SHIPMAN, <sup>shipman</sup>.

390 A SHIPMAN was ther, woning fer by weste, <sup>woning</sup>:  
391 For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe, <sup>dertemouthe</sup>.  
392 He rood up-on a rouncy, <sup>rouncy</sup>, as he couthe,  
393 In a gowne of falding, <sup>falding</sup> to the knee.  
394 A daggere hanging on a laas hadde he  
395 Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.  
396 The hote somer had maad his hewe al broun;  
397 And, certeinly, he was a good felawe.  
398 Ful many a draughte of wyn had he y-drawe  
399 From Burdeux-ward, <sup>burdeux</sup>, whyl that the chapman sleep.  
400 Of nyce conscience took he no keep.  
401 If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,  
402 By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.  
403 But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,  
404 His stremes and his daungers him bisydes,  
405 His herberwe, <sup>herberwe</sup> and his mone, his lodemenage, <sup>lodemenage</sup>,  
406 Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage, <sup>hulle</sup>.

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407 Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;  
408 With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.  
409 He knew wel alle the havenes, as they were,  
410 From Gootlond, <sup>gootlond</sup> to the cape of Finistere, <sup>finistere</sup>,  
411 And every cryke in Britayne and in Spayne;  
412 His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.

DOCTOR, <sup>doctour</sup> .

413 With us ther was a DOCTOR OF PHISYK,  
414 In al this world ne was ther noon him lyk  
415 To speke of phisik and of surgerye;  
416 For he was grounded in astronomye.  
417 He kepte his pacient a ful greet del  
418 In houres, by his magik, <sup>magik</sup> naturel.  
419 Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent, <sup>ascendent</sup>  
420 Of his images for his pacient.  
421 He knew the cause of everich maladye,  
422 Were it of hoot or cold, or moiste, or drye,  
423 And where engendred, and of what humour, <sup>humour</sup>;  
424 He was a verrey parfit practisour.  
425 The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the rote, <sup>rote</sup> ,  
426 Anon he yaf the seke man his bote.  
427 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries,  
428 To sende him drogges and his letuaries, <sup>letuaries</sup> ,  
429 For ech of hem made other for to winne;  
430 Hir frendschipe nas nat newe to biginne.  
431 Wel knew he the olde Esculapius, <sup>esculapius</sup> ,  
432 And Deiscorides, <sup>deiscorides</sup> , and eek Rufus, <sup>rufus</sup> ,  
433 Old Ypocras, <sup>ypocras</sup> , Haly, <sup>haly</sup> , and Galien, <sup>galien</sup> ;  
434 Serapion, <sup>serapion</sup> , Razis, <sup>razis</sup> , and Avicen, <sup>avicen</sup> ;  
435 Averrois, <sup>averrois</sup> , Damascien, <sup>damascien</sup> , and Constantyn, <sup>constantyn</sup> ;  
436 Bernard, <sup>bernard</sup> , and Gatesden, <sup>gatesden</sup> , and Gilbertyn, <sup>gilbertyn</sup> .  
437 Of his diete mesurable was he,  
438 For it was of no superfluitee,  
439 But of greet norissing and digestible.  
440 His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
441 In sangwin and in pers, <sup>pers</sup> he clad was al,

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442 Lyned with taffata, <sup>taffata</sup> and with sendal, <sup>sendal</sup> ;  
443 And yet he was but esy of dispence;  
444 He kepte that he wan in pestilence.  
445 For gold in phisik is a cordial, <sup>cordial</sup> ,  
446 Therefore he lovede gold in special.

## WYF OF BATHE, <sup>wyf</sup>.

447 A good WYF was ther of bisyde BATHE, <sup>bathe</sup>,  
448 But she was som-del deaf, and that was scathe, <sup>scathe</sup>.  
449 Of clooth-making she hadde swiche an haunt,  
450 She passed hem of Ypres, <sup>ypres</sup> and of Gaunt, <sup>gaunt</sup>.  
451 In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon  
452 That to the offring bifore hir sholde goon;  
453 And if ther dide, certeyn, so wrooth was she,  
454 That she was out of alle charitee.  
455 Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground;  
456 I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound  
457 That on a Sondag were upon hir heed.  
458 Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,  
459 Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful moiste and newe.  
460 Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.  
461 She was a worthy womman al hir lyve,  
462 Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve,  
463 Withouten other companye in youthe;  
464 But therof nedeth nat to speke as nouthe.  
465 And thryes hadde she been at Ierusalem;  
466 She hadde passed many a straunge stream;  
467 At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, <sup>boloigne</sup>,  
468 In Galice at seint Iame, <sup>galice</sup>, and at Coloigne, <sup>coloigne</sup>.  
469 She coude muche of wandring by the weye.  
470 Gat-tothed, <sup>gat</sup> was she, soothly for to seye.  
471 Up-on an amblere, <sup>amblere</sup> esily she sat,  
472 Y-wimpled wel, and on hir heed an hat  
473 As brood as is a bokeler or a targe, <sup>bokelere</sup>;  
474 A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,  
475 And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.  
476 In felawschip wel coude she laughe and carpe.  
477 Of remedies of love she knew per-chance,  
478 For she coude of that art the olde daunce.



PERSOUN, <sup>persoun</sup>.

479 A good man was ther of religioun,  
480 And was a povre PERSOUN of a toun;  
481 But riche he was of holy thoght and werk.  
482 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
483 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;  
484 His parisspens devoutly wolde he teche.  
485 Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,  
486 And in adversitee ful pacient;  
487 And swich he was y-preved, <sup>ypreved</sup> ofte sythes.  
488 Ful looth were him to cursen for his tythes,  
489 But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,  
490 Un-to his povre parisspens aboute  
491 Of his offring, and eek of his substaunce.  
492 He coude in litel thing han suffisaunce.  
493 Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer a-sonder,  
494 But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,  
495 In siknes nor in meschief, to visyte  
496 The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lyte,  
497 Up-on his feet, and in his hand a staf.  
498 This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,  
499 That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte;  
500 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;  
501 And this figure he added eek ther-to,  
502 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?  
503 For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,  
504 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;  
505 And shame it is, if a preest take keep,  
506 A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep, <sup>shiten</sup>.  
507 Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,  
508 By his clenness, how that his sheep shold live.  
509 He sette nat his benefice to hyre,  
510 And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,  
511 And ran to London, un-to sēynt Poules, <sup>poules</sup>,  
512 To seken him a chaunterie for soules, <sup>chaunterie</sup>,  
513 Or with a bretherhed, <sup>bretherhed</sup> to been withholde;

514 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,  
515 So that the wolf ne made it nat miscarie;  
516 He was a shepherde and no mercenarie.  
517 And though he holy were, and vertuous,

518 He was to sinful man nat despitous, <sup>despitous</sup>,  
519 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,  
520 But in his teching discreet and benigne.  
521 To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse  
522 By good ensample, was his businesse:  
523 But it were any persone obstinat,  
524 What-so he were, of heigh or lowe estat,  
525 Him wolde he snibben, <sup>snibben</sup> sharply for the nones.  
526 A better preest, I trowe that nowher noon is.  
527 He wayted after no pompe and reverence,  
528 Ne maked him a spyced conscience, <sup>spyced</sup>,  
529 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,  
530 He taughte, and first he folwed it him-selve.

PLOWMAN, <sup>plowman</sup>.

531 With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,  
532 That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother, <sup>dong</sup>,  
533 A trewe swinker, <sup>swinker</sup> and a good was he,  
534 Livinge in pees and parfit charitee.  
535 God loved he best with al his hole herte  
536 At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte, <sup>gamed</sup>,  
537 And thanne his neighebour right as him-selve.  
538 He wolde thresshe, and ther-to dyke and delve,  
539 For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,  
540 Withouten hyre, if it lay in his might.  
541 His tythes payed he ful faire and wel,  
542 Bothe of his propre swink and his catel.  
543 In a tabard he rood upon a mere.

544 Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,  
545 A Somnour and a Pardoner also,  
546 A Maunciple, and my-self; ther were namo.

MILLER, <sup>miller</sup> .

547 The MILLER was a stout carl, <sup>carl</sup> , for the nones,

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548 Ful big he was of braun, and eek of bones;  
549 That proved wel, for over-al ther he cam,  
550 At wrastling he wolde have alwey the ram, <sup>have\_ram</sup> .  
551 He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre, <sup>knarre</sup> ,  
552 Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre, <sup>harre</sup> ,  
553 Or breke it, at a renning, with his heed.  
554 His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
555 And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.  
556 Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade  
557 A werte, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,  
558 Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres;  
559 His nose-thirles blake were and wyde.  
560 A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde;  
561 His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.  
562 He was a Ianglere and a goliardeys, <sup>goliardeys</sup> ,  
563 And that was most of sinne and harlotryes.  
564 Wel coude he stelen corn, <sup>corn</sup> , and tollen thryes;  
565 And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.  
566 A whyt cote and a blew hood wered he.  
567 A baggepype wel coude he blowe and sowne,  
568 And ther-with-al he broghte us out of towne.

MAUNCIPLE, <sup>maunciple</sup> .

569 A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,  
570 Of which achatours, <sup>achatours</sup> mighte take exemple  
571 For to be wyse in bying of vitaille.  
572 For whether that he payde, or took by taille, <sup>taille</sup>,  
573 Algate he wayted so in his achat, <sup>algate</sup>,  
574 That he was ay biforn and in good stat.  
575 Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,  
576 That swich a lewed, <sup>lewed</sup> mannes wit shal pace  
577 The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?  
578 Of maistres hadde he mo than thryes ten,  
579 That were of lawe expert and curious;  
580 Of which ther were a doseyn in that hous,  
581 Worthy to been stiwardes of rente and lond  
582 Of any lord that is in Engelond,

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583 To make him live by his propre good,  
584 In honour dettelees, but he were wood,  
585 Or live as scarsly as him list desire;  
586 And able for to helpen al a shire  
587 In any cas that mighte falle or happe;  
588 And yit this maunciple sette hir aller cappe, <sup>cappe</sup> .

## REVE, <sup>reve</sup> .

589 The REVE was a sclendre, <sup>sclendre</sup> colerik man,  
590 His berd was shave as ny as ever he can.  
591 His heer was by his eres round y-shorn.  
592 His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
593 Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,  
594 Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.  
595 Wel coude he kepe a gerner and a binne, <sup>gerner</sup>;  
596 Ther was noon auditour coude on him winne.  
597 Wel wiste he, by the droghte, and by the reyn,  
598 The yelding of his seed, and of his greyn.  
599 His lordes sheep, his neet, <sup>neet</sup>, his dayerye, <sup>dayerye</sup>,  
600 His swyn, his hors, his stoor, <sup>stoor</sup>, and his pultrye,  
601 Was hoolly in this reves governing,  
602 And by his covenaunt yaf the rekening,  
603 Sin that his lord was twenty yeer of age;  
604 Ther coude no man bringe him in arrerage, <sup>arrerage</sup> .  
605 Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne,  
606 That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne, <sup>covyne</sup>;  
607 They were adrad of him, as of the deeth.  
608 His woning, <sup>woning2</sup> was ful fair up-on an heeth,  
609 With grene treës shadwed was his place.  
610 He coude bettre than his lord purchase.  
611 Ful riche he was astored prively,  
612 His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,  
613 To yeve and lene him of his owne good,  
614 And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.  
615 In youthe he lerned hadde a good mister;  
616 He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.  
617 This reve sat up-on a ful good stot,  
618 That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.  
619 A long surcote of pers up-on he hade,  
620 And by his syde he bar a rusty blade.  
621 Of Northfolk, <sup>northfolk</sup> was this reve, of which I telle,  
622 Bisyde a toun men clepen Baldeswelle, <sup>baldeswelle</sup> .  
623 Tukked he was, as is a frere, aboute,  
624 And ever he rood the hindreste of our route.

SOMNOUR, <sup>somnour</sup> .

625 A SOMNOUR was ther with us in that place,  
626 That hadde a fyr-reed cherubennes, <sup>cherubennes</sup> face,  
627 For sawcefleem, <sup>sawcefleem</sup> he was, with eyen narwe.  
628 As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe;  
629 With scalled browes blake, and piled berd;  
630 Of his visage children were aferd.  
631 Ther nas quik-silver, litarge, ne brimstoon, <sup>quiksilver</sup> ,  
632 Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon, <sup>boras</sup> ,  
633 Ne oynement that wolde dense and byte,  
634 That him mighte helpen of his whelkes whyte, <sup>whelkes</sup> ,  
635 Nor of the knobbes sittinge on his chekes.  
636 Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,  
637 And for to drinken strong wyn, reed as blood.  
638 Thanne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.  
639 And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,  
640 Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.  
641 A fewe termes hadde he, two or three,  
642 That he had lerned out of som decree;  
643 No wonder is, he herde it al the day;  
644 And eek ye knowen wel, how that a Iay, <sup>jay</sup> ,  
645 Can clepen ‘Watte,’ as well as can the pope.  
646 But who-so coude in other thing him grope,  
647 Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophye;  
648 Ay ‘*Questio quid iuris*’ wolde he crye.  
649 He was a gentil harlot, <sup>harlot</sup> and a kinde;  
650 A bettre felawe sholde men noght finde.  
651 He wolde suffre, for a quart of wyn,  
652 A good felawe to have his concubyn

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653 A twelf-month, and excuse him atte fulle:  
654 Ful prively a finch eek coude he pulle.  
655 And if he fond o-wher a good felawe,  
656 He wolde techen him to have non awe, <sup>awe</sup> ,  
657 In swich cas, of the erchedeknes, <sup>erchedeknes</sup> curs,  
658 But-if a mannes soule were in his purs;  
659 For in his purs he sholde y-punished be.  
660 ‘Purs is the erchedeknes helle,’ seyde he.  
661 But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;  
662 Of cursing oghte ech gilty man him drede—  
663 For curs wol slee, right as assoilling, <sup>assoilling</sup> saveth—  
664 And also war him of a significavit , <sup>significavit</sup> .



665 In daunger hadde he at his owne gyse  
666 The yonge girles of the diocyse,  
667 And knew hir counseil, and was al hir reed.  
668 A gerland hadde he set up-on his heed,  
669 As greet as it were for an ale-stake;  
670 A bokeler hadde he maad him of a cake.

PARDONER, <sup>paronder</sup>.

671 With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER  
672 Of Rouncival, <sup>rouncival</sup>, his freend and his compeer,  
673 That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.  
674 Ful loude he song, ‘Com hider, love, to me.’  
675 This somnour bar to him a stif burdoun, <sup>burdoun</sup>,  
676 Was never trompe of half so greet a soun.  
677 This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,  
678 But smothe it heng, as dooth a strike of flex;  
679 By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,  
680 And ther-with he his shuldres overspradde;  
681 But thinne it lay, by colpons, <sup>colpons</sup> oon and oon;  
682 But hood, for Iolitee, ne wered he noon,  
683 For it was trussed up in his walet.  
684 Him thoughte, he rood al of the newe Iet, <sup>jet</sup>;  
685 Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare.  
686 Swiche glaringe eyen hadde he as an hare.  
687 A vernicle, <sup>vernicle</sup> hadde he sowed on his cappe.

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688 His walet lay biforn him in his lappe,  
689 Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.  
690 A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.  
691 No berd hadde he, ne never sholde have,  
692 As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;  
693 I trowe he were a gelding or a mare, <sup>gelding</sup>.  
694 But of his craft, fro Berwik, <sup>berwik</sup> into Ware, <sup>ware</sup>,  
695 Ne was ther swich another pardoner.  
696 For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer, <sup>pilwe</sup>,  
697 Which that, he seyde, was our lady veyl, <sup>veyl</sup>:  
698 He seyde, he hadde a gobet of the seyl, <sup>gobet</sup>  
699 That sēynt Peter, <sup>peter</sup> hadde, whan that he wente  
700 Up-on the see, til Iesu Crist him hente.  
701 He hadde a croys of latoun, <sup>latoun</sup>, ful of stones,  
702 And in a glas he hadde pigges, <sup>pigges</sup> bones.  
703 But with thise relikes, <sup>relikes</sup>, whan that he fond  
704 A povre person dwelling up-on lond,  
705 Up-on a day he gat him more moneye  
706 Than that the person gat in monthes tweye.  
707 And thus, with feyned flaterye and Iapes,  
708 He made the person and the peple his apes.  
709 But trewely to tellen, atte laste,

710 He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste, <sup>ecclesiaste</sup> .  
711 Wel coude he rede a lessoun or a storie,  
712 But alderbest he song an offertorie, <sup>offertorie</sup> ;  
713 For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,  
714 He moste preche, and wel affyle, <sup>affyle</sup> his tonge,  
715 To winne silver, as he ful wel coude;  
716 Therefore he song so meriely and loude.

717 Now have I told you shortly, in a clause,  
718 Thestat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause  
719 Why that assembled was this companye  
720 In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,  
721 That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle, <sup>belle</sup>.  
722 But now is tyme to yow for to telle

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723 How that we baren us that ilke night,  
724 Whan we were in that hostelrye alight.  
725 And after wol I telle of our viage, <sup>viage</sup>,  
726 And al the remenaunt of our pilgrimage.  
727 But first I pray yow, <sup>pray</sup>, of your curteisye,  
728 That ye narette it nat my vileinye,  
729 Thogh that I pleynly speke in this matere,  
730 To telle yow hir wordes and hir chere;  
731 Ne thogh I speke hir wordes properly.  
732 For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,  
733 Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,  
734 He moot reherce, as ny as ever he can,  
735 Everich a word, if it be in his charge,  
736 Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;  
737 Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewe,  
738 Or feyne thing, or finde wordes newe.  
739 He may nat spare, al-thogh he were his brother;  
740 He moot as wel seye o word as another.  
741 Crist spak him-self ful brode in holy writ,  
742 And wel ye woot, no vileinye is it.  
743 Eek Plato, <sup>plato</sup> seith, who-so that can him rede,  
744 The wordes mote be cosin to the dede, <sup>cosin</sup>.  
745 Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,  
746 Al have I nat set folk in hir degree  
747 Here in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;  
748 My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

749 Greet chere made our hoste us everichon,  
750 And to the soper sette he us anon;  
751 And served us with vitaille at the beste.  
752 Strong was the wyn, and wel to drinke us leste.  
753 A semely, <sup>semely</sup> man our hoste was with-alle  
754 For to han been a marshal in an halle, <sup>marshal</sup>;  
755 A large man he was with eyen stepe,  
756 A fairer burgeys, <sup>burgeys2</sup> is ther noon in Chepe, <sup>chepe</sup>.  
757 Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel y-taught,  
758 And of manhod him lakkede right naught.

759 Eek therto he was right a mery man,  
760 And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
761 And spak of mirthe amonges othere thinges,  
762 Whan that we hadde maad our rekeninges;  
763 And seyde thus: 'Now, lordinges, trewely,  
764 Ye been to me right welcome hertely:  
765 For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,  
766 I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye  
767 At ones in this herberwe, <sup>herberwe</sup> as is now.  
768 Fayn wolde I doon yow mirthe, wiste I how.  
769 And of a mirthe I am right now bithoght,  
770 To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.

771 Ye goon to Caunterbury; God yow spede,  
772 The blisful martir quyte yow your mede, <sup>quyte</sup>.  
773 And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,  
774 Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;  
775 For trewely, confort ne mirthe is noon  
776 To ryde by the weye doumb as a stoon;  
777 And therefore wol I maken yow disport,  
778 As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.  
779 And if yow lyketh alle, by oon assent,  
780 Now for to stonden at my Iugement,  
781 And for to werken as I shal yow seye,  
782 To-morwe, whan ye ryden by the weye,  
783 Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,  
784 But ye be merye, I wol yeve yow myn heed.  
785 Hold up your hond, withouten more speche.'

786 Our counseil was nat longe for to seche;  
787 Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,  
788 And graunted him withouten more avys,  
789 And bad him seye his verdit, <sup>verdit</sup>, as him leste.

790 'Lordinges,' quod he, 'now herkneth for the beste;  
791 But tak it not, I prey yow, in desdeyn;  
792 This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,  
793 That ech of yow, to shorte with your weye,

794 In this viage, shal telle tales tweye, <sup>tweye</sup>,  
795 To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,  
796 And hom-ward he shal tellen othere two,  
797 Of aventures that whylom han bifalle.

798 And which of yow that bereth him best of alle,  
799 That is to seyn, that telleth in this cas  
800 Tales of best sentence, <sup>sentence2</sup> and most solas, <sup>solas</sup>,  
801 Shal have a soper at our aller cost  
802 Here in this place, sitting by this post,  
803 Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.  
804 And for to make yow the more mery,  
805 I wol my-selven gladly with yow ryde,  
806 Right at myn owne cost, and be your gyde.  
807 And who-so wol my Iugement withseye, <sup>withseye</sup>  
808 Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.  
809 And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,  
810 Tel me anon, with-outen wordes mo,  
811 And I wol erly shape me therfore.'

812 This thing was graunted, and our othes swore  
813 With ful glad herte, and preyden him also  
814 That he wold vouche-sauf for to do so,  
815 And that he wolde been our governour,  
816 And of our tales Iuge and reportour, <sup>reportour</sup>,  
817 And sette a soper at a certeyn prys;  
818 And we wold reuled been at his devys,  
819 In heigh and lowe; and thus, by oon assent,  
820 We been acorded to his Iugement.  
821 And ther-up-on the wyn was fet anon;  
822 We dronken, and to reste wente echon,  
823 With-outen any lenger taryinge.

824 A-morwe, whan that day bigan to springe,  
825 Up roos our host, and was our aller cok, <sup>cok</sup>,  
826 And gadrede us togidre, alle in a flok,  
827 And forth we riden, a litel more than pas, <sup>pas</sup>,

- 25 -

828 Un-to the watering, <sup>watering</sup> of saint Thomas.  
829 And there our host bigan his hors areste,  
830 And seyde; 'Lordinges, herkneth, if yow leste.  
831 Ye woot your forward, and I it yow recorde.  
832 If even-song and morwe-song acorde,  
833 Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.  
834 As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,  
835 Who-so be rebel to my Iugement  
836 Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.  
837 Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twinne;  
838 He which that hath the shortest shal biginne.  
839 Sire knight,' quod he, 'my maister and my lord,

840 Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.  
841 Cometh neer,' quod he, 'my lady prioresse;  
842 And ye, sir clerk, lat be your shamfastnesse,  
843 Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man.'

844 Anon to drawen every wight bigan,  
845 And shortly for to tellen, as it was,  
846 Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas, <sup>sort</sup>,  
847 The sothe, <sup>sothe</sup> is this, the cut fil to the knight,  
848 Of which ful blythe and glad was every wight;  
849 And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,  
850 By forward and by composicioun,  
851 As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?  
852 And whan this gode man saugh it was so,  
853 As he that wys was and obedient  
854 To kepe his forward by his free assent,  
855 He seyde: 'Sin I shal biginne the game,  
856 What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!  
857 Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.'

858 And with that word we riden forth our weye;  
859 And he bigan with right a mery chere  
860 His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

*Here endeth the prolog of this book; and here biginnith the first tale, which is the Knightes Tale.*





## Footnotes

intro  
- [AJB]

skeat  
- [AJB]

prologueintro  
- [AJB]

shoures\_sweet-smelling showers. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

rote A root of a tree or plant. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

veyne A sap vessel of a plant; also, a vascular bundle of a leaf. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

licour A liquid found in, or derived from, plants or animals (as juice, sap, blood, etc.), or by mixture of or operation on these. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

vertu In this context, the quickening power of a flower or root; also, the life-sustaining force within a plant; the fruit of a plant. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

zephyrus A personification of the West wind. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

ram An astrological observation. The sun is halfway through its course through the constellation of Aries, a process that spans from about March 21 to April 19. This observation sets the poem somewhere between April 1 and April 5.

- [AJB]

ye Eye. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

priketh So Nature arouses them in their hearts. 'Priketh' means to arouse sexual instincts. It also means to stab or penetrate. Here Chaucer is engaging in a sexual pun. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

palmers Metonymic term for a pilgrim. This is due to the practice of pilgrims to the Holy Land carrying palm leaves. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

straunge ~~strange~~ shores. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

ferne\_hallow Dist. distant shrines. 'Ferne' is cognate to modern 'far'. 'Halwe' is cognate to modern 'hallow'.

- [AJB]

martir [St. Thomas Becket](#), also known as St. Thomas of Canterbury or Thomas à Becket, was the archbishop of Canterbury in the late twelfth century. He was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by followers of King Henry II as a result of a conflict with the king over the investiture of bishops. He was very quickly canonized as a martyr; by the fourteenth century, when Chaucer composed the Canterbury Tales, he was one of the most popular saints in England. His shrine in Canterbury (destroyed during the Protestant Reformation) was purportedly the site for many miraculous healings.

- [AJB]

southwerk A district of central London, on the south bank of the River Thames.

- [AJB]

tabard [The Tabard](#) was a real inn in Southwark, situated along the traditional pilgrim's route from London to Canterbury. It was demolished in 1873.

- [AJB]

aventure Something that happens; an event or occurrence; an experience; an accident. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

resoun In accordance with reason.

- [AJB]

pace "Before I proceed further in this tale." Take note of Chaucer's spatial conceptualization of his story.

- [AJB]

degree Rank; social condition; position in a hierarchy of persons. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

hetheness Territory inhabited or ruled by pagans; a heathen country; also, Moslem territory or country; pagan (or Moslem) lands in general; the non-Christian portion of the world. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

Chaucer's coupling of "Cristendom" and "Hethenesse" encompasses the entire world.

- [AJB]

alisaundr Alexandria, Egypt. The Knight participated in the 1365 [Crusade for Alexandria](#).

- [AJB]

pruce Prussia. The Knight participated in the [Baltic Crusades](#), a series of campaigns against pagans and Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.

- [AJB]

lettow Lithuania. The Knight participated in the [Baltic Crusades](#), a series of campaigns against pagans and Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.

- [AJB]

ruce Russia. The Knight participated in the [Baltic Crusades](#), a series of campaigns against pagans and Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.

- [AJB]

gernade [Granada](#), a region in southern Spain. The Emirate of Granada was the last Moslem-ruled state in the Iberian Peninsula, under constant siege from the Christian Spaniards to its north. It is in this conflict, part of the larger Spanish Reconquista, that the Knight has participated.

- [AJB]

algezir Algezir, a city in southern Spain. The town was captured by the Spaniards in 1344.

- [AJB]

belmarye A Moorish state in North Africa, encompassing what is now the modern nation of Morocco.

- [AJB]

lyeys A Meditterian city in southern Turkey. It was previously called Aegeae, Ayas, Lyeys, or Laiazzo. Today the city is called Yumurtal#k.

- [AJB]

satalye Another city on the southern coast of Turkey, also called Attalia.

- [AJB]

grete\_see The Mediterranean Sea.

- [AJB]

aryve A landing or disembarkation of an armed force. Other sources read "army." Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

tramissen A city in northwestern Algeria. Today it is called Tlemcen.

- [AJB]

listes An enclosed area used for military exercises, jousting, etc.; lists; arena; area of combat; battlefield. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

palatye Palathia. A Christian lordship in southwestern Turkey.

- [AJB]

port Bearing; demeanor; deportment; external appearance. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

verray Exhibiting the indicated action or virtue or possessing the specified character in its full and genuine form; worthy of the name; knightly; wifely; faithful; etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

fustian A kind of cloth, apparently made from cotton, flax, or wool. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

habergeon A coat or jacket of mail or scale armor, often worn under plate armor; also, a hauberk. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

squyer An aspirant to knighthood in the feudal military system; an esquire or a personal servant attendant upon a knight; a soldier below the rank of knight. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

lokkes With curled locks [of hair], as if they had been laid in a curler.

- [AJB]

deliver Agile; nimble; quick. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

chivachy A cavalry expedition or raid. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

flaundes Flanders, Artois, and Picardy are counties in northern France. Note the discrepancy between the limited range of the squire's travels compared to that of the knight.

- [AJB]

mede As if it were a meadow. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

floytinge To play the flute; also, to whistle. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

endyte To write or compose (a book, poem, letter, etc.); to write; to compose; to sing or chant; also, to draft or write a legal document; to bring formal accusation against someone; to charge someone with a crime; to accuse falsely, to slander. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

nightertalNightrtime; night. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

carf To carve (meat). The squire serves his the knight, his father, at the dinner table.

- [AJB]

yeman A free-born male attendant in a royal or noble household holding a rank above that of groom and page but below that of squire; a household official. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

pecok An arrow plumed or fitted with peacock feathers. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

take Well knew he how to care for his equipment as a yeoman should. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#). 'Take' is cognate with modern tackle, as in "tackle box".

- [AJB]

nothead Closely cropped hair. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

crisofre The yeoman wears a silver medal with the image of St. Christopher. Christopher was and is the patron saint of those travelling long distances, and was thus a favorite of pilgrims.

- [AJB]

prioress A woman who is the head of a community of nuns. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

loy St. Loy (French: Eloy. Latin: Eligius) was the bishop of Noyon in the seventh century. He is the patron of goldsmiths and blacksmiths. The prioress' devotion to him is a matter of scholarly debate.

- [AJB]

service The Divine Service, or the Divine Office, is a set of canonical prayers sung or chanted by monks, nuns, and priests at different hours of the day.

- [AJB]

stratford "French according to the school of Stratford-at-Bow." Stratford-at-Bow (today simply Bow) is a district of East London. This line indicates that the prioress is not familiar with "proper" Parisian French. That is to say that she aspires to a certain cosmopolitan sophistication, but is nevertheless somewhat rustic.

- [AJB]

coppe In her cup was not seen a farthing of grease. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

estatlich Dignified; noble; princely; regal; majestic; courtly. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

wimpel A woman's headdress covering the top, back, and sides of the head, including the cheeks and chin, and wrapped so as to cover the neck; also, a veil; also part of a nun's official garb, bestowed ceremonially. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

fetis Cleverly fashioned; neat; elegant. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

nonne\_prieur Because women are unable to be ordained into the priesthood in the Catholic Church, communities of nuns often had a priest assigned to them in order to administer the sacraments of Mass and Confession.

- [AJB]

maistrye An excellent one to a well-nigh unequalled degree. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

venerye Outrider: An agent of a monastery who rides out to administer its affairs.

Venerye: Hunting. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

abbot The superior of a convent of monks. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).



- [AJB]

celle Prior of a subordinate monastic establishment. Chaucer is playing on the word "cell", which can also refer to the individual chamber in which a monk or nun would live. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

reule St. Benedict of Nursia and St. Maurus were two of the founders of the Benedictine Order of Monks. The Rule of Saint Benedict is a book of precepts and rules written by Benedict and delivered to Maurus that outlines the structure of the communal life lived by the Benedictines.

- [AJB]

hen He didn't give a plucked hen for that text; i.e., he has little regard for the founding rule of his order.

- [AJB]

wood Maddened; frenzied; raving; fervent; excited. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

swinken To engage in physical labor; work hard; toil. Constant physical labor was an important aspect of the Rule of Saint Benedict and the Rule of Saint Augustine. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

austin St. Augustine of Hippo. His monastic rule is the oldest in Western Christianity.

- [AJB]

pricasourA horseman; a mounted hunter. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

for-pyned Suffering (from wounds or disease); tormented (by thirst, weariness, etc.); wasted (by old age, by hunger); wretched. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

frere A member of one of the religious mendicant orders; a friar, especially a member of one of the four principle orders: i.e., the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

wantown Extravagant; also, overabundant; of a person: given to excessive pleasure-seeking; overexuberant; rowdy; as noun: a sportive or playful person; reveler; also as playful term of address. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

limitour A mendicant friar whose begging, preaching, and hearing of confessions was limited to one of the subdivisions of the territory of a monastery. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

ordres The four mendicant orders are Catholic religious orders characterized by poverty, traveling, and evangelization. They are: the Franciscans (Friars Minor, or Grey Friars), the Dominicans (Friars Preacher, or Black Friars), Augustinian Friars, and the Carmelites (White Friars).

- [AJB]

curat 'Curat' refers to any ecclesiastic responsible for the spiritual welfare of those in his charge. Clergymen such as these, usually parish priests, were generally the individuals to whom laypeople made their spiritual confessions. That the Friar offers this sacrament more frequently than a 'Curat' testifies to his popularity among the laity. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

licentiat Mendicant friars were originally not permitted to hear confessions. To be 'licentiat' is to have an official ecclesiastic license to preach or here confession. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

pitaunce The Friar gives light penances to those who offer him a 'pitaunce'—that is, a donation of money or food. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

shrive To be 'shrived' is to have made confession. From 'shriven': to make confession. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

tipet An ornamental piece of cloth, usually long and narrow, worn separately covering the shoulders or as part of a hood, the sleeves, etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

rote2 A stringed instrument of the harp family. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

yeddinge A poem or a song; a saying; also, a recitation (spoken or sung) of a verse narrative. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

flour-de-lys The fleur-de-lis is a decorative design common in French heraldry. It is a stylized representation of a lily. Here Chaucer is playing on both senses of the term. The Friar's neck is white as a lily, and we are meant to associate him with Continental French culture.

- [AJB]

lazar A leper. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

poraille Poor persons; the poor. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

vitaille Food; food and drink, especially as needed for sustenance. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

ferme He gave a certain fee for his grant. That is to say, he is a very profitable beggar.

- [AJB]

amor "Amor vincit omnia" is Latin phrase meaning "Love conquers all." It appears in Virgil's *Eclogue X*. That the Prioress has this phrase on her brooch is meant to communicate her education and her sentimentality.

- [AJB]

widwe Though a widow had not a shoe. That is to say, the Friar is very talented at getting money from the poor.

- [AJB]

principio "In principio" is Latin for "In the beginning." The phrase begins the Latin Vulgate Bible; here it is meant to stand in as a synecdoche for his preaching.

- [AJB]

double\_worsted A cloth of some kind, used for making clothing, furnishings, etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

whelp And he knew how to rage, as if he were a pup. The term 'rage' here is ambiguous. It can mean to be furious, to fight, to grieve, or to have sex. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

love-dayes A day appointed for a meeting between enemies, rivals, parties to a lawsuit, etc., for the purpose of reconciliation or arbitration; often, the meeting so arranged; also, the reconciliation or agreement reached at such a meeting. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

mottelee Fabric woven in several colors; parti-colored or variegated cloth; motley. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

hat A Flemish beaver hat. That is, a hat made from felted beaver fur. These were quite fashionable in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance. That the Merchant wears one reinforces his wealth and his international trade connections.

- [AJB]

middelburg Middelburg and Orwell are towns in the Netherlands and Southern Britain, respectively. That is to say, the Merchant is invested in seeing the Crown protect trade routes between the Dutch and the English.

- [AJB]

dette There was no man who knew that he was in debt. This phrase can have two meanings. Either the Merchant is in debt and no one is aware, or he is not in debt at all.

- [AJB]

noot I do not know what men call him. That is to say, the pilgrim Chaucer cannot remember his name.

- [AJB]

clerk The term 'clerk' can refer to a member of the clergy. Here it refers to a university student. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

oxenford The University of Oxford, the oldest university in Britain, and the second-oldest university in the world (after the University of Bologna).

- [AJB]

courtesy Very threadbare was his the top of his jacket. That is to say, the Clerk is so poor that his clothes are falling apart.

- [AJB]

lever "Lever" means "more beloved; dearer." The Clerk values books more than conventional signifiers of wealth. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

fithel A bowed stringed instrument; viol; violin. Related to modern "fiddle." Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

sautrye A stringed musical instrument; psaltery; also, the Book of Psalms. Chaucer's use of the term here is ambiguous. It may mean that the Clerk values Aristotle more than music; it may also mean that he values Aristotle more than the Bible.

- [AJB]

scoleye Those that gave the Clerk the means to study at the university. Universities, in this period, existed principally for the education of priests and other clerics. It is not unusual, then, for the Clerk to offer prayers on behalf of his financial benefactors.

- [AJB]

sentence Doctrinal authority. That is to say, the Clerk's statements often make reference to scientific and theological authorities.

- [AJB]

man\_of\_law lawyer. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

war Sagacious; wise; also, skillful; capable. Related to modern "aware" and "wary." Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

parvys An enclosure, portico, or porch in front of a church; especially St. Paul's, where lawyers often met. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

assyse A session of court charged with the deliberation and disposition of civil actions; the deliberations of such a court. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

caas In collections of legal statutes he had all cases and judgments. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

william William the Conqueror, the French-speaking Duke of Normandy who conquered England in the eleventh century. The Norman Conquest saw a considerable increase in legal documentation. The most famous of these documents is the Domesday Book, a survey of the size and value of every piece of land in England.

- [AJB]

medlee Mixed, blended; of mixed or blended colors; multicolored; of different colored stripes; pied. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

frankeleyn A landowner and member of the gentry ranking immediately below the nobility. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

sangwyn Of a blood-red color; ruddy. To refer to an individual as sanguine can also mean that they are courageous, spontaneous, or amorous. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

epicurus [Epicurus](#) (341-270 BCE) was an ancient Greek philosopher whose ethical system purports that the pursuit of pleasure and the absence of physical are the goals of human life.

- [AJB]

iulian Saint Julian the Hospitaller is a Catholic saint, and the patron of hospitality.

- [AJB]

envyned Stocked with wine. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

anlas Anlas: A two-edged stiletto or dagger.

Gipser: A pouch, often richly ornamented, which hangs from a girdle or sash.

Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

shirreve A high elected or appointed official representing the Crown, having various legal and administrative duties; a sheriff.

- [AJB]

contour An accountant; especially an official who oversees the collecting and auditing of taxes for a shire, a kingdom, etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

vavasour A feudal tenant holding land of some other vassal; a subvassal; often used in contrast with a king, knight squire, etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

haberdassher A seller of various small articles of trade—caps, purses, beads, spurs, inkhorns, thread, stationary, etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

webbe One whose occupation is weaving; a weaver. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

dyere One who dyes cloth. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

tapicer A maker or seller of upholstery-cloth furnishings and tapestries; a weaver of tapestry or figured cloth. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

liveree The official garb of a guild; also, a distinctive hood. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

apyked Adorned. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

burgeys A freeman of a town; a citizen with full rights and privileges; usually used of city merchants and master craftsmen in guilds. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

yeldhalle A building used by a guild; the meeting house of the guild merchant; the hall of the corporation of a town; town hall. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

alderman The chief or warden of a guild; an official having jurisdiction over a municipal ward; a member of the ruling body of a city or borough. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

dame French for "milady." The wives' desire to be referred to as "madame" attests to the high social status of French culture.

- [AJB]

marybone A bone containing edible marrow; marrowbone. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

galingale "Poudre-marchant" appears to be a word coined by Chaucer, and its meaning is unclear. It might refer to a type of seasoning, in this case one used by the Cook on tarts alongside galingale, a powdered root used for flavoring.

- [AJB]

sethe To boil. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

mortreux A dish of thick consistency made with pounded and boiled chicken, pork, or fish. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).



- [AJB]

mormal A dry-scabbed ulcer; sore; an abscess. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

blankman A dish of chopped chicken or fish boiled with rice. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

shipman A sailor; a seaman. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

woning The act or action of living, dwelling. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

dertemouthe Dartmouth is a town in southwest England, on the Southern coast of Cornwall.

- [AJB]

rouncy A riding horse. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

falding A kind of woolen cloth, probably coarse, sometimes napped, and often described as of Irish manufacture. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

burdeux Bordeaux is a region in south-west of France. It was, and is today, renowned for its wines. That is to say, the Shipman has no qualms about stealing fine wine from the merchants on his ship.

- [AJB]

lodemenage Navigation; skill in navigation; also, a course followed. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

hulle Kingston-upon-Hull, usually referred to simply as Hull, is a port city in the north-east of England. Cartagena is a port city in the south-east of Spain.

- [AJB]

gootlond Gotland is an island in the Baltic Sea to the east of Sweden. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

finistere Cape Finistere is a peninsula on the northwestern tip of Spain.

- [AJB]

magik "Natural Magic" here refers to the use of specialist knowledge to cure disease. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

ascendent The Doctor can determine which zodiac is ascending for his patients. [Astrology](#) was seen in the Middle Ages as a foundational science for medical and theological inquiry.

- [AJB]

humour According to ancient and medieval physiology, an individual's body consisted of four "humors": blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile), and melancholy (black bile). The proportions of these humors in an individual determined their health and personality—hence the term "choleric" to refer to someone who is frequently angry, for example. Disease was seen as an imbalance of these humors.

- [AJB]

esculapius [Asclepius](#), the ancient Greek god of medicine. Asclepius commences a long list of physicians with whom the Doctor is familiar.

- [AJB]

deiscorides [Pedanius Dioscorides](#).

- [AJB]

rufus [Rufus of Ephesus](#).

- [AJB]

ypocras [Hippocrates](#).

- [AJB]

haly [Ali ibn Abbas Al-Majusi](#).

- [AJB]

galien [Galen](#).

- [AJB]

serapion [Yuhanna ibn Sarabiyun, also known as Serapion of Alexandria](#).

- [AJB]

razis [Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi](#).

- [AJB]

avicen [Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abd Allah ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna](#).

- [AJB]

averrois [Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd, also known as Averroes](#).

- [AJB]

damascien [St. John of Damascus](#).

- [AJB]

constantyn [Constantine the African](#) .

- [AJB]

bernard [Bernard de Gordon](#).

- [AJB]

gatesden [John of Gaddesden](#).

- [AJB]

gilbertyn [Gilbertus Anglicus](#).

- [AJB]

pers [Blue, bluish; purplish; blue-grey. Source: Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

- taffata A costly woven, glossy silk fabric. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]
- sendal A costly kind of fabric, of comparable quality to silk. Purportedly the fabric with which the body of Jesus was wrapped. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]
- cordial A substance which stimulates or invigorates medicinally. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]
- letuaries A medicine, usually in the form of a paste or syrup. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]
- bathe Bath is a city in southwest England, so named because of its ruins of Ancient Roman baths.  
- [AJB]
- scathe A matter of regret, sorrow, or pity. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]
- ypres A town in western Flanders, today Belgium. It was well known for its cloth industry.  
- [AJB]
- gaunt Ghent, a town in eastern Flanders. Like Ypres, it was well known for its cloth industry.  
- [AJB]
- boloigne Boulogne-sur-Mer, a town on the northern coast of France, near what is today the Netherlands. Its Basilica de Notre Dame de Boulogne was an important pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages.  
- [AJB]
- galice Galicia, a region on the northwestern coast of Spain. Its town of Santiago de Compostela houses the purported remains of the Apostle St. James the Greater. Pilgrimages to venerate his relics were extremely popular in the Middle Ages.  
- [AJB]

coloigne The city of Cologne in western Germany houses the Shrine of the Three Kings, a reliquary purportedly containing the bones of the Three Wise Men who visited the infant Christ at the Nativity. It was also an extremely popular pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages.

- [AJB]

gat The Wife of Bath is gap toothed. According to [medieval physiognomy](#), this physical feature was indicative of being lustful.

- [AJB]

amblere A saddle horse. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

bokeler Both terms "bokeler" and "targe" refer to a small shield. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

persoun A parson; a parish priest. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

ypreved Proven; tempted; tested. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

shiten A shit-stained shepherd and a clean sheep—a metaphor for a parish priest who suffers in looking after his parishioners.

- [AJB]

poules Old St. Paul's Cathedral was the Catholic cathedral of the city of London before the Great Fire of London in 1666.

- [AJB]

chaunteria A position as a chantry priest; an individual who sings prayers in the cathedral on behalf of patrons and the faithful departed. A relatively cushy position, it is to the Parson's credit that he shuns such ambition on behalf of his parishioners.

- [AJB]

bretherheA fraternal order of friars or monks. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

despitousContemtuos, scornful, insulting. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

snibben To rebuke, reprove. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

spyced An overly scrupulous conscience. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

plowmanA plowman; a farmer; one of low social status. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

dong That had hauled very many a cartload of dung. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

swinker A laborer, especially a manual or farm laborer. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

gamed He loved God at all times, whether it pleased (gamed) or pained (smerte) him.

- [AJB]

millier One who runs a mill, grinding grain. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

carl A man (usually of low estate); often patronizingly or contemptuously: a fellow. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

have\_ranTo 'have the ram' means to take the prize—that is, the Miller always wins at wrestling. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

harre There was no door that he could not heave off its hinges.

- [AJB]

knarre A muscular, thick-set man. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

goliardeysJangler: An idle talker; an excessive talker; a chatterbox.

Goliardeys: A buffon.

Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

corn That is, the Miller withholds some of the grain given to him to grind to flour.

- [AJB]

maunciplAn officer or servant who buys provisions for a college, inn of court, or other institution. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

achatoursA buyer of provisions, especially for the household of the king or a lord. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

taille A tax; a tribute. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

algate In all ways; in every way or respect; entirely, altogether. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

lewed Uneducated, ignorant; unlettered, unable to read Latin; lay, non-clerical. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

cappe 'Set all of their caps'—that is, he has fooled them all. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

reve An officer of the king, usually charged with the administration of the affairs of a town or district, a local magistrate or municipal official. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

scleudre Slender. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

gerner A granary and a storage bin. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

neet Cattle. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

dayerye A room or building for making butter and cheese; also, a room for keeping food, a pantry; a dairy farm. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

stoor Livestock. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

arrerage The condition of being behind in payments or short in one's accounts. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

covyne Fraud, deceit, guile. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

woning2 Dwelling place. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).  
- [AJB]

northfolkA county in the East of England.  
- [AJB]

baldesweBawdeswell is a small rural village in Norfolk, in the East of England.



- [AJB]

somnour An officer of an ecclesiastical court responsible for citing persons to appear before the court. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

cherubim An angel of the second order in the hierarchy of the nine orders of angels. The term as Chaucer uses it does not carry the connotation of childlike innocence that it does today. Rather, it is simply meant to communicate that the Summoner has an angelic appearance.

- [AJB]

sawcefleam Afflicted with saucefleume, a skin ailment considered symptomatic of a type of leprosy originating in a humoral disorder, caused by sexual and dietary excess and characterized by red and black discoloration, pustules, swelling, loss of hair, etc. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

quiksilver Mercury, lead-monoxide, or sulphur. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

boras Borax, white lead, nor any oil of tarter. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

whelkes Referring to the white pustules on the Summoner's face.

- [AJB]

jay A jay can call out "walter" as well as the pope. That is to say, the Summoner calls out and recites dense Latin phrases, but does not actually understand them.

- [AJB]

harlot A trifler; a parasite. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

awe Fear; terror; dread; also, reverence; veneration; awe. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

erchedek The "archdeacon's curse" is excommunication, or the formal exclusion of an individual from participating in the sacraments and services of the Catholic Church. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

assoilling Sacramental absolution; removal of an excommunication or other ecclesiastical sentence; canonical absolution. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

significavit In English ecclesiastical law, the formal writ declaring excommunication was called *de excommunicate capiendo*. Its first word, "Significavit," was often used as a synecdoche to refer to it.

- [AJB]

pardoner A pardoner was a clergyman with a special license granted by the Church to sell indulgences. An indulgence is a remission of the corporal punishment merited by individuals in Purgatory after they die.

- [AJB]

rounceval The Pardoner works at [The Chapel and Hospital of St. Mary Rounceval](#).

- [AJB]

colpons A piece cut off, a slice a chunk; a bunch; a section, a segment. That is to say, the Pardoner's hair is thin, and hangs in stringy bunches.

- [AJB]

jet He thought that he rode in the latest style. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

vernicle The Vernicle is a famous Christian relic. It is a cloth or kerchief, said to have beonged to a woman named Veronica, upon which an image of the face of Christ was impressed. A stylized image of the Vernicle (or of Saint Veronica) was referred to in this period as a vernicle.

- [AJB]

gelding A gelding is a horse that has had his testicles cut off. A mare is a female horse. Here the pilgrim Chaucer is speculating that the Pardoner is either a eunuch or a homosexual.

- [AJB]

berwik Berwick-upon-Tweed, sometimes abbreviated to Berwick, is a town in the north-east of England, near the Anglo-Scottish border.

- [AJB]

ware Ware is a town in Hertfordshire, just to the North of London.

- [AJB]

pilwe A pillowcase. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

veyl The Veil of the Virgin Mary (in Latin, the *Sancta Camisia* ), is a cloth purportedly worn by Mary while giving birth to Christ and while standing at the foot of the Cross. It is an extremely important relic, currently housed at the Catholic Cathedral of Chartres. That the Pardoner fraudulently claims a pillowcase is this relic attests to his flagrant disrespect for the laity and their credulity.

- [AJB]

gobet A fragment. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

peter Saint Peter the Apostle was a fisherman before he was called by Christ. That the Pardoner claims to have a piece of his sail, while less outrageous than claiming to have the whole of Mary's veil, is nevertheless outlandish.

- [AJB]

latoun Latoun (today, latten) is an alloy of copper, tin, and other metals. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

pigges The Pardoner carries pig bones in his reliquary, which he fraudulently claims to be the bones of saints.

- [AJB]

relikes The Pardoner sells his fake relics to the unsuspecting and uneducated poor.

- [AJB]

ecclesiastA church official. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

offertorieAn antiphon sung or said in the Mass during the collection of the offering. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

affyle To polish (one's tongue); improve (one's speech). Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

burdoun The Summoner accompanied the Pardoner's song with a strong base. There may be a phallic or otherwise sexual pun here, as the term "burdoun" can also refer to a stick. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

belle "Bell" here is a synecdoche for Southwark Cathedral.

- [AJB]

viage A journey by land or sea; a pilgrimage. Related to contemporary "voyage." Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

pray In this passage, Chaucer is arguing that he is obliged to accurately present the actions and words of the pilgrims, regardless of how crude or sinful they might be.

- [AJB]

cosin The words must be closely related to the deed. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

plato Chaucer's appeal to Christ and Plato is playful. In the texts and sayings attributed to them, neither spoke plainly—Christ spoke in parables, and Plato in extended dialogues. By referencing these two figures, moreover, Chaucer is situating *The Canterbury Tales* in a broad literary tradition, spanning from the classical world to contemporary Christian society.

- [AJB]

burgeys<sup>2</sup> Because the term 'burgeys' typically referred to master craftsmen in guilds or other professional tradesmen, Chaucer's use of the term to refer to the Host is meant to reinforce his wealth and social status.

- [AJB]

semely Worthy of respect; honorable; virtuous; pure; perfect; handsome; good-looking. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

marshal The chief officer of a kingdom, steward; an official in a royal or noble household in charge of ceremonies, protocol, seating, service, etc; a military commander. That is to say, the Host runs a tight ship.

- [AJB]

herberwe A temporary dwelling place; quarters; lodgings; an inn; a chamber. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

chepe Cheapside is a ward in the City of London, and, in the Middle Ages, was a major financial district. Chaucer's decision to set the General Prologue here is fortuitous; he grew up in Cheapside, as his father, John Chaucer, was a wine merchant.

- [AJB]

quyte May the blissful martyr give you your reward. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

verdit A decision rendered by a jury in a court case; verdict; a pronouncement, ruling, or binding decision made by someone empowered to render judgment. Chaucer's use of the legal terminology with reference to the Host is meant to reinforce his role as final arbiter in the competition.

- [AJB]

tweye As the Host frames the competition, each pilgrim is to tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two tales on the way back, or four tales total. The existence of only one tale from each of the pilgrims has left it a matter of scholarly debate whether Chaucer left *The Canterbury Tales* incomplete, or if his omission was intentional.

- [AJB]

sentence2A wise saying; maxim; precept; doctrine; authoritative teaching. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

solas Joy; pleasure; happiness; entertainment; merrymaking; relaxation; recreation. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

withseye To speak against someone or something; make a protest; voice opposition. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

reportour One who reports what was said or done by another; a talebearer; a judge; also, an umpire; a counselor or supporter. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

cok He was the rooster for us all. That is to say, he woke everyone up. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

pas At a little more than a walking pace. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]

watering Pilgrims at the Shrine of Saint Thomas could purchase small vials of the 'Water of Saint Thomas'—purportedly a mixture of Holy Water from his tomb with a drop of his blood. The mixture was said to contain healing properties. This practice was popular among the laity, but controversial among the clergy, reminiscent, as it was, of the Eucharist.

- [AJB]

sort Chaucer's terminology here is intentionally vague, as all three terms here can refer to destiny, accident, fate, or chance. Regardless, here Chaucer is communicating that it's uncertain whether the arrival of the pilgrims at the Tabard was a happy coincidence or an act of Fate.

- [AJB]

sothe The truth of a situation; the actual facts; the truth about. Source: [Middle English Dictionary](#).

- [AJB]