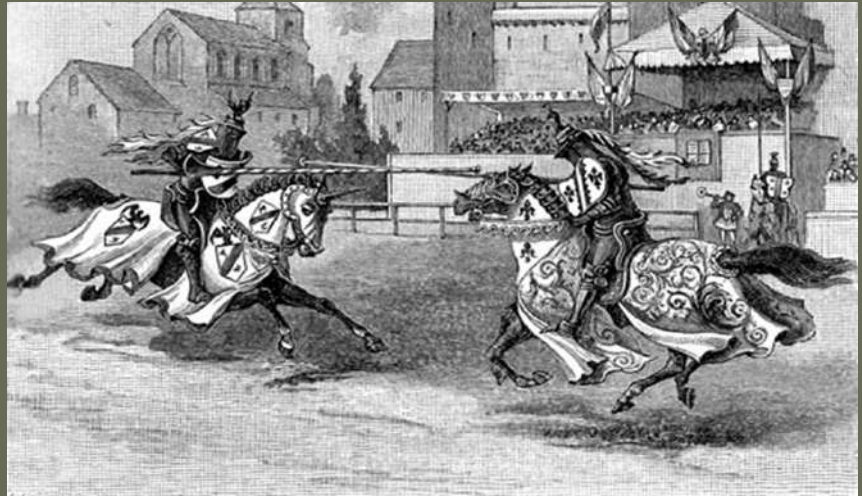


Medieval Time Period
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Canterbury Tales

Background and Important Terms



The Middle Ages (Medieval)

- The Middle Ages lasted from 1066-1485.
- France's William of Normandy conquers England in 1066, bringing a new emphasis on law and order, including feudalism.



Big Events

- The Crusades (1095-1270): European Christians fought Muslims, with Jerusalem and the Holy Land as the prize; the Europeans failed.
- The Black Death (1348-1349): Caused a labor shortage, eventually leading to serfs' freedom and the end of feudalism

Feudalism

- Feudalism was a pyramid system based on a religious concept of a hierarchy
- Any males above the social class of serf were expected to serve the king as warriors



Women in Medieval Times



- Women had no political rights and were subservient to men
- A woman's social standing depended on her husband's or father's status

Chivalry

- Chivalry (or the Chivalric code) was a system of ideals and social codes governing the behavior of knights and gentlewomen
- Militaristically, knights had to keep their oaths of loyalty and observe certain rules of warfare



Courtly Love



- Courtly love required a knight to admire and act in the name of a certain lady
- However, courtly love was not supposed to cross the line into physical love; the lady should always remain pure and out of reach

7 Deadly Sins

- **Pride** is excessive belief in one's own abilities, that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. (In other words, pride is being full of yourself)
- **Envy** - desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.
- **Gluttony** - desire to consume more than that which one requires.
- **Lust** - craving for the sexual pleasures of the body.
- **Anger** - (also known as wrath)
- **Greed** - desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness.
- **Sloth** - avoidance of physical or spiritual work. (laziness)

Chaucer- author of *Canterbury Tales*

● Varied experiences shaped his writing

- Son of merchant
- Page in royal house (introduced to aristocratic society)
- Soldier
- Diplomat
- Royal clerk
- Prisoner

● Early poems based on European poets

● Developed his own style over time

- Displayed deep insight into human character

● Married into royalty

● Wrote in the English vernacular (Huge difference between French and the Church was Latin.)



The Canterbury Tales: A Snapshot of an Age

- ◎ It frames a story of characters on a religious pilgrimage to Canterbury.
- ◎ The characters are a portrait of the cultural values of the society.
- ◎ The pilgrims are instructed to tell 2 tales on the way to Canterbury Cathedral and the best tale will be rewarded by the inn owner and host of the journey
- ◎ The pilgrimage is a quest narrative that moves from images of spring and awakening to penance, death, and eternal life.
- ◎ The characters tell stories that reflect “everyman” in the universal pilgrimage of life.



Cross-section of society:

● Those who work

- Landed gentry: Franklin
- Professionals: Sergeant of the Law, Doctor of Physic
- Tradespeople: Merchant, Wife of Bath, Five Guildsmen, Harry Bailly (tavern keeper), Miller
- Secular employees: Manciple, Reeve
- Laborers: Shipman, Yeoman, Cook
- Peasants: Plowman

● Those who fight

- Knight
- Squire

● Those who pray

- Religious Orders: Monk, Prioress, Friar, Nun's Priest, Second Nun
- Parish clergy: Parson
- Student: Clerk at Oxford
- Church employees: Pardoner, Summoner

Wife of Bath

- Alisoun, 5 times a widow
- Inherited and earned (she is a weaver) income
- Associated with the color red (her costume her face)
- Traits—assertiveness & sensuality



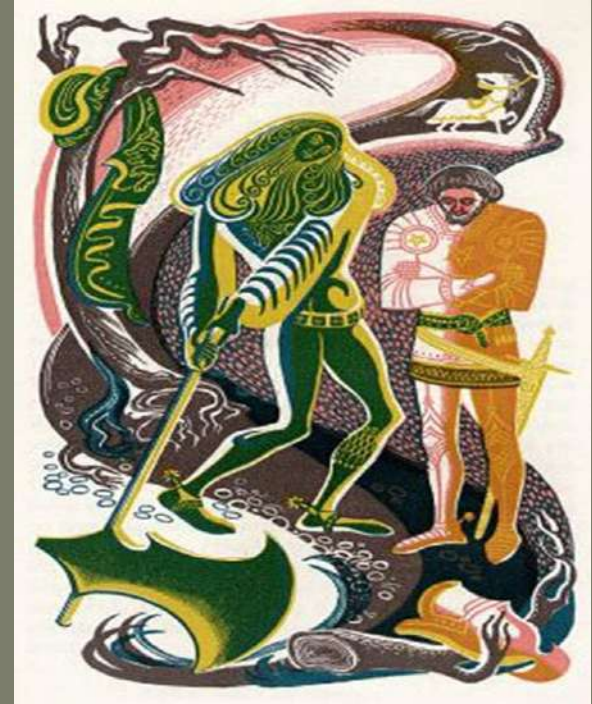
The Pardoner

- Documented spiritual benefits from virtuous deeds (sold pardons)
- Also sold (dubious) relics
- Takes advantage of the faith of the poor and simple



SGATGK Facts

- Composed after the Crusades, around 1375
- Though composed in the 12th century, it is set in the 500s
- The tale centers around the semi-legendary King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table (King Arthur ruled from 516-537)



SGATGK Context

- During and after the Crusades, promoting Christianity (particularly Catholic beliefs) became very prevalent
- Even though not set during the Middle Ages, *SGATGK* includes feudalism, chivalry, and courtly love

SGATGK = Romance

- Chivalry gave rise to a new genre of literature, called the romance
- Romance: a poetic narrative which usually records the adventures of a brave knight who must go on a quest and overcome great danger for love of a noble lady or high ideal
- Romances typically contain supernatural or magical events
- The world of romance suspends the laws of nature and idealized heroes almost always conquer evil

SGATGK Literary Terms

- Alliteration
- Symbol
- Bob and wheel: in alliterative verse, a group of five lines with an “ababa” rhyme scheme. The “bob” is the first line in the group and is shorter than the rest; the “wheel” is the quatrain that follows.
- Foreshadowing: the use of clues to hint at what is going to happen later in the plot; builds suspense

SGATGK Characters

- Sir Gawain
- Green Knight
- King Arthur
- The Lord
- The Lady

