

***The Canterbury Tales* Pre-Reading Task**

Activity 1: Stereotypes

Background Information:

The General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* introduces readers to a variety of characters, each of whom represent a different aspect of Medieval life. Through direct and indirect characterization, Chaucer reveals the virtues and faults of each, providing a brilliant social commentary. Readers are, thus, given insight into his society, its values, and its customs. By learning how Chaucer views each character, one is able to conclude how he viewed English society.

Chaucer's characters are "types;" they are given no names and are meant to symbolize all people of their given profession. Put together, the characters outlined in the General Prologue create a microcosm of Medieval English society.

Task:

You are being asked to think critically about your own culture and society. What are some character types you observe on a daily basis? To put it another way, if Chaucer was writing *The Canterbury Tales* now, what is one "character type" he'd be sure to include?

You and a partner must choose one such character type and write at least two paragraphs describing him or her. (These paragraphs do NOT have to be complete sentences; in fact, you may use bullets. Please be specific and to-the-point with your descriptions) Consider what this character type looks like as well as his/her positive and negative personality traits.

Just as Chaucer was known for his use of indirect characterization, you need to utilize both direct and indirect characterization in your character sketch.

Literary Terms Reference Sheet