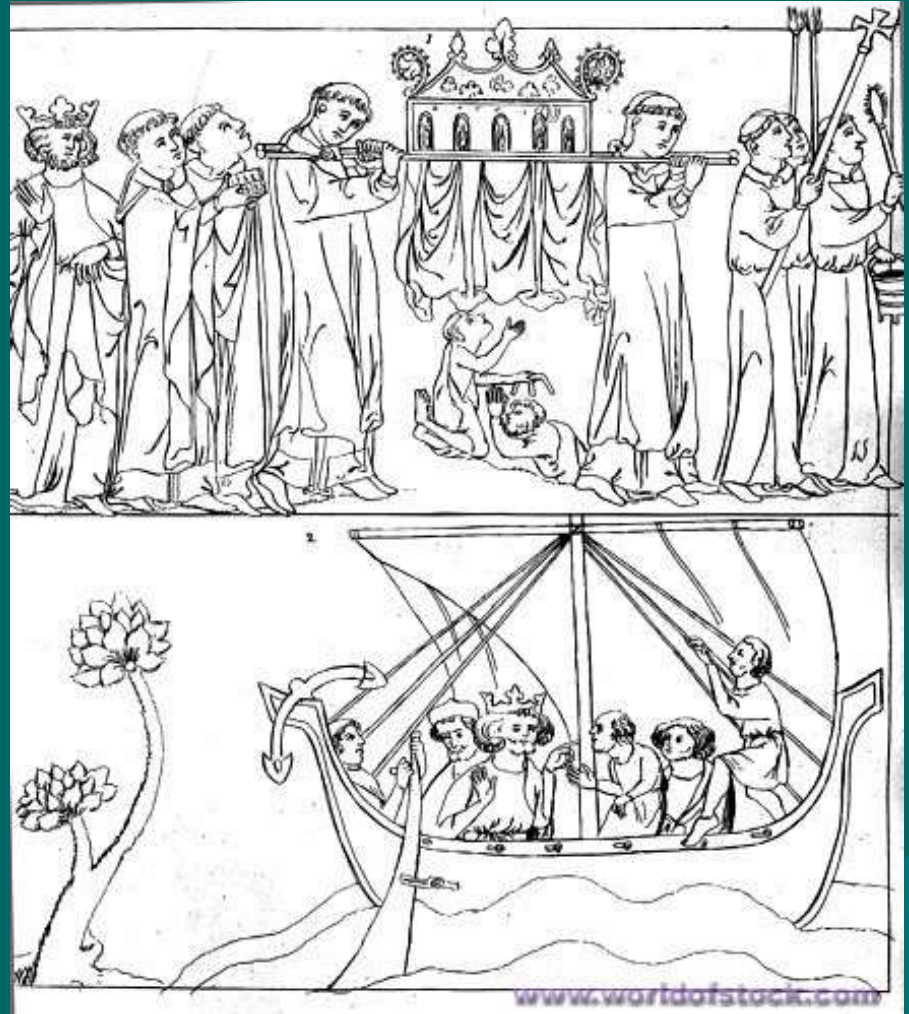


The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer



Background of these tales

- ◆ Geoffrey Chaucer wrote this story in the late 1300's but never finished it.
- ◆ He wrote in the native language or vernacular of the Medieval period in Britain called Middle English.



Geoffrey Chaucer, The Father of English Poetry

- ◆ Chaucer was a religious man all of his life.
- ◆ From the C. Tales he shows deep Christianity.
- ◆ He has a firm belief in God's love and mercy.
- ◆ He doubted friars or Popes have much to do with a sinner reaching heaven.

Geoffrey Chaucer, The Father of English Poetry

- ◆ Chaucer was born into a middle class family in London, thus educated.
- ◆ His father was a wine merchant who could afford to send him to school.
- ◆ Chaucer loved to read, observe people
- ◆ He was the “social critic” of his time.

The Story



- ◆ Twenty nine people that represent all aspects of Medieval society go on a pilgrimage to the cathedral at Canterbury in southeast England.

- ◆ The cathedral at Canterbury is the main cathedral of the Church of England. The shrine to the martyr Saint Thomas a Becket is located at this cathedral.



The story format

- ◆ Chaucer's characters are going to pay respects to this shrine as a part of a religious pilgrimage. They all meet at a tavern to begin their journey.



Did You Know?

- ◆ Pilgrimage - a journey, especially a long one, made to some sacred place as an act of religious devotion.
- ◆ During Chaucer's lifetime, people went on pilgrimages for many reasons...
 - To show devotion
 - Pray for miracles
 - Some went for more ordinary reasons (they wanted adventure or perhaps just a change of scenery...)

Did You Know?

- ◆ Pilgrims usually banded together for safety and convenience.
- ◆ The roads they traveled on often were unpaved, muddy, and difficult to ride on.
- ◆ Also, a lone traveler was more like to be robbed than with a group.
- ◆ Today, the distance that Chaucer's band traveled would be a two-hour drive...in Chaucer's day, it would take several days.
- ◆ People stayed at inns along the way, often sharing rooms and sometimes beds with complete strangers!!!
- ◆ Ram – Aries – Mid-April
- ◆ Zephyrus – Greek god of the West Wind

- ◆ Saint Thomas a Becket was the archbishop of Canterbury, and in 1170 he was martyred by some knights of the king of England, Henry II, who was overheard complaining about Becket's loyalty to the church at Rome over his loyalty to his king.



Thomas a Becket (1118 -1170)

- ◆ He became chancellor (prime minister) under King Henry II.
- ◆ At this time, all Christians were Catholic.
- ◆ King Henry II appointed Thomas archbishop of Canterbury – this meant he was the head of the Catholic Church in England.

Saint Thomas A. Becket (1118 -1170)

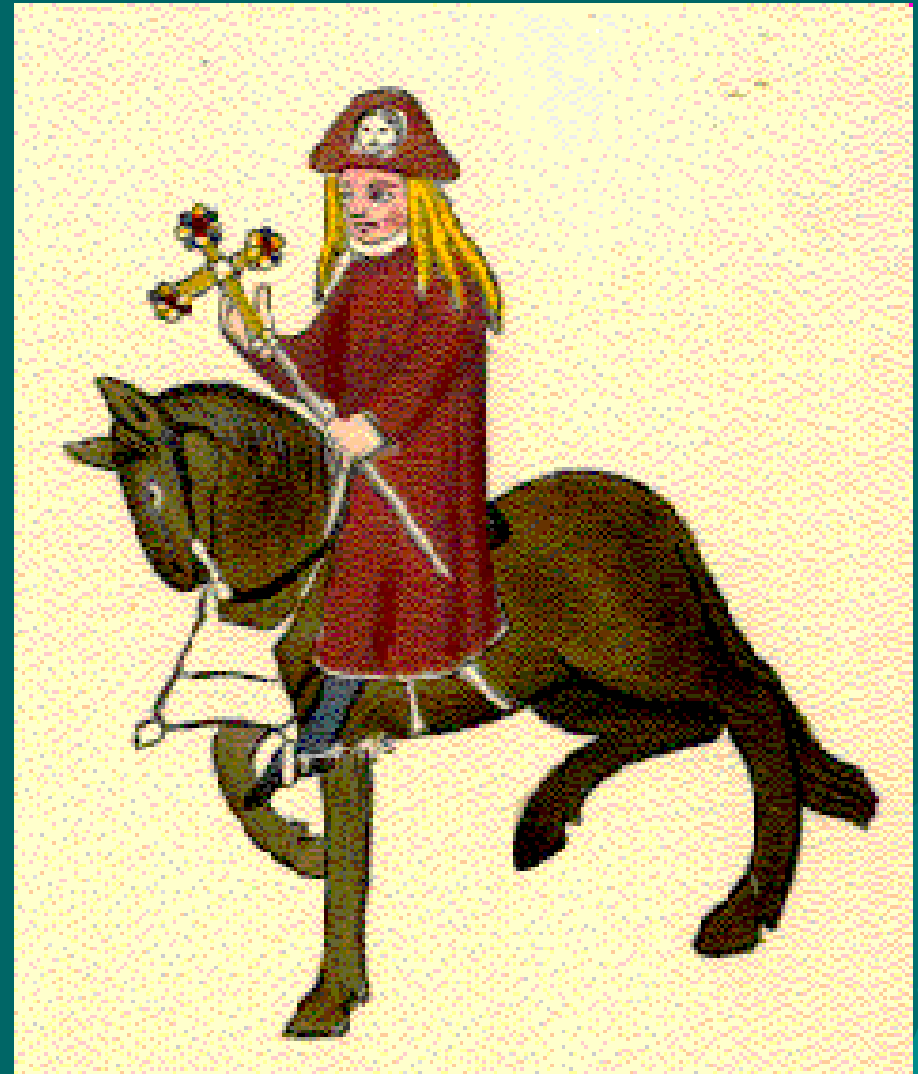
- ◆ King Henry hoped to gain the upper hand in disputes with the church.
- ◆ Thomas took the Pope's side more than once, infuriating the king.
- ◆ In December 1170, Henry raged, "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?"
- ◆ Four knights took him seriously and murdered Thomas in his own cathedral.
- ◆ A witness to the murder described the scene as grisly and horrible.
- ◆ **Public outrage at Becket's murder led to devotion to Saint Thomas the Martyr and created a backlash against King Henry II**

Some of the characters

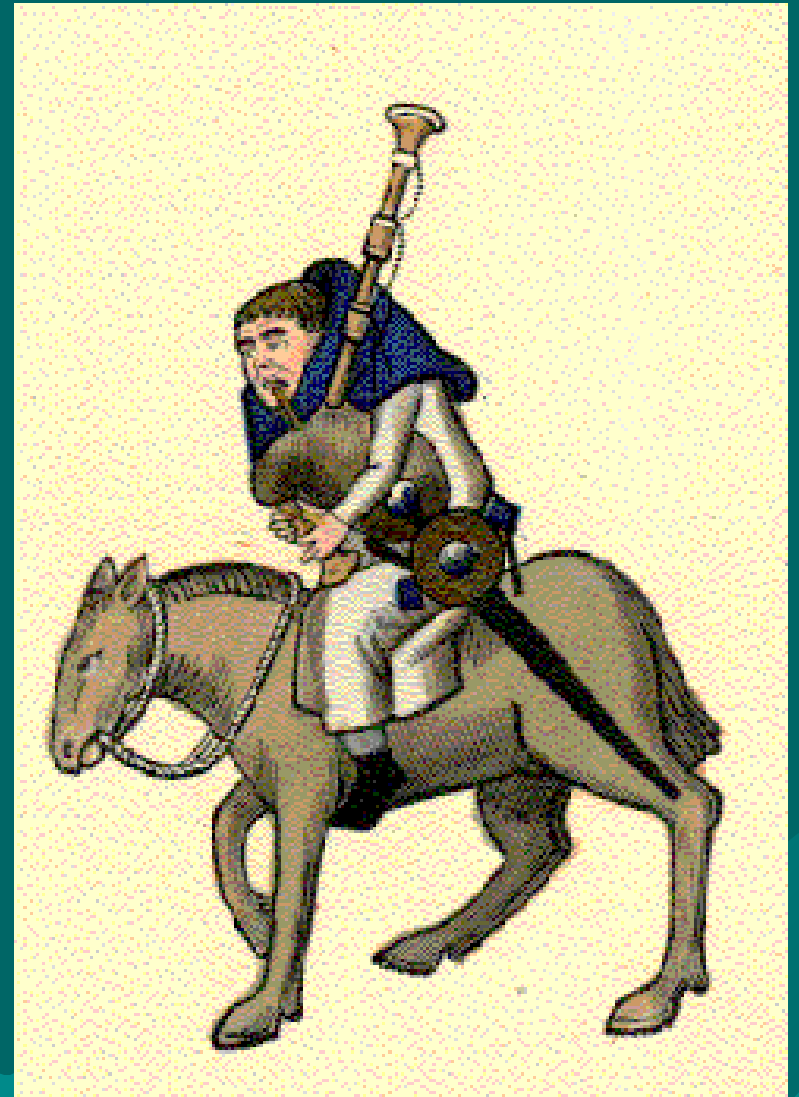
- ◆ The host of the tavern or innkeeper is the man who suggests that the pilgrims each tell a story on the way to entertain the group. Chaucer intended for each to tell 2 stories, but he only got to write one apiece.



The following characters are the wife of Bath
and the pardoner,



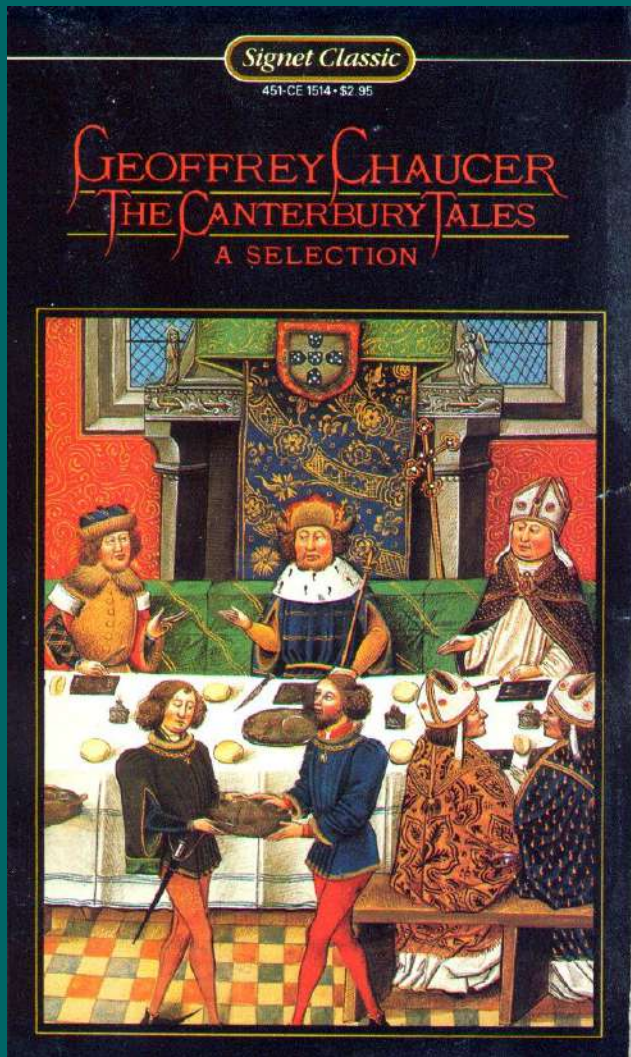
The following characters are the priest and the miller



And two more familiar characters are the knight and his squire



Format of the poetry



- ◆ *The Canterbury Tales* are called a frame story, meaning that there are many stories “framed” in the larger story of the pilgrimage to Canterbury.

Some Examples of Middle English

◆ 1 **Whan that Aprill with his shoures
soote**

When April with its sweet-smelling
showers

2 **Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete
breeth**

When the West Wind also with its sweet
breath,

3 **Inspired hath in every holt and heeth**
In every wood and field has breathed life
into

Satire and Irony

- ◆ So much humor is tucked inside of this frame story.
- ◆ Two of the most common forms include satire and irony.
- ◆ **Satire** – a type of writing that pokes fun at people, their weaknesses, institutions, and social conventions.
- ◆ Satire takes different forms: moralistic and indignant (angry), or it can be gentle and draw out laughter to make a point.

Satire and Irony

- ◆ **Irony** – means using words to express the opposite of what is literally said.
- ◆ A writer who uses **verbal irony** might state things that readers know to be false, such as calling a stingy person “generous.”
- ◆ Writers also use **situational irony**, in which readers expect one thing but get surprised by its opposite.
- ◆ For example, a writer might create a character who is a firefighter, yet who, for the thrill of extinguishing them, sets fires deliberately.