

#9187 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: THE CANTERBURY TALES

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES & SCIENCES

1998

Grade Levels: 11-13+

33 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Expert commentators offer insights into Chaucer's 14th-century poem, "The Canterbury Tales." They discuss the Prologue, the social grouping of the pilgrims, the themes of the tales, and questions the poem raises. Reenactments and period images add flavor.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Language Arts: Reading

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
 - Benchmark: Understands how themes are used across literary works and genres
 - Benchmark: Uses language and perspectives of literary criticism to evaluate literary works

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To explore the themes in Chaucer's poem "The Canterbury Tales."
2. To evaluate the characters involved in the poem.
3. To consider the issues that arises from the poem.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the influence of the following on Chaucer's work:
 - a. Catholic Church
 - b. Black Death of 1349
 - c. Hundred Years' War
 - d. Taxation to fund the war and the peasant's revolt of 1381
2. Discuss how Chaucer's observation of the human condition throughout the time he lived influenced "The Canterbury Tales."
3. What is the plot structure of the poem and how does it affect the meaning of the tales?
4. What is *satire*?
5. Discuss the poetic style of Chaucer.

Applications and Activities

1. Create a list of the themes, such as justice, human suffering, love of money, found in the work and discuss the following:
 - a. Are these stories real or simplified?
 - b. Are these people representative of the society at that time?
 - c. How do the characters fit into the social hierarchy of the times?
 - d. How does the thematic continuity contribute in shaping "The Canterbury Tales"?
 - e. Discuss the quote, "These tales are a microcosm of society."
 - f. Which stories highlight the good in man and which stories highlight the bad in man?
2. Compare and contrast social issues of today with issues found at the end of the 14th century and speculate on how Chaucer might have interpreted these issues into his work.



RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Universal Themes in Literature #9467
- "The Wife of Bath" by Geoffrey Chaucer #9478



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **LIBRARIUS: GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1342 – 1400)**

<http://www.librarius.com/>

Includes a brief section on the life of Chaucer, a section on "The Canterbury Tales," and an extremely informative chronological section on his life.

- **GEOFFREY CHAUCER WEBSITE**

<http://icg.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>

Extensive Web site includes biography of Chaucer, translations, literary subjects, and information on the life and manners of the time.