

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is one of the most important texts in British literature. Starting the tradition of writing in vernacular language, Chaucer – the father of English – holds up a mirror to the changing medieval society, especially representing the shift from Latin- and French-dominated literary and scriptural arena to the vernacular consciousness. For this very reason, this text also points to the transition from the Medieval Age to the Reformation and the Renaissance.

Using the story of the pilgrimage as a frame tale – a technique as ancient as *A Thousand and One Nights*, *Canterbury Tales* gives a panorama of Medieval English lifestyle, occupations, classes, gender perceptions, power dynamics, politics, and economics. Through estates satire, the text wittingly illustrates how people misuse their ranks and powers. Most of the pilgrims do not behave in accordance with their occupations. To give but a few examples, despite the expectations of hygiene, the cook has an open wound; Nun the Prioress behaves like a romance lady rather than a nun (she speaks French, she wears lipstick, she takes care of animals rather than humans, and so on); and the pardoner explicitly states that he pardons the sins of the “dupes” – as he refers to – only for money, not for holy causes.

Centring around a story-telling contest on the way to Canterbury for pilgrimage, a group of pilgrims tell stories to each other. By presenting different genres, tones, and styles for each story told by each pilgrim, *Canterbury Tales* not only depicts medieval society but also illustrates the literary richness of the time. Employing end-links to represent the dialogues between each pilgrim between the stories, Chaucer masterfully knits the story-within-story technique in *Canterbury Tales*.

As a homework project, ELIT 270 Medieval English Literature students wrote a letter in the mouth of a pilgrim of their choice. Here is a selection of those letters by students.

Teaching and enjoying,

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