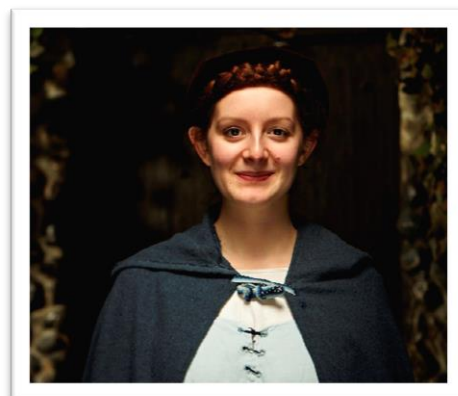


KS3 Accompanying Notes

These notes are meant to be read in conjunction with the KS3 Pre/post visit lessons/activities document, available from our learning resources page. There are also other resources there which may be of use. Please feel free to browse and let us know if you require them sent to you in a different format via email info@canterburytales.org.uk.

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Pilgrimage in 14th Century England

The majority of the population believed in God, Heaven and Hell. The Church was still Catholic and devotion to God was seen as a good thing. The country was largely agricultural, with most people tenant farmers or labourers on the land. It was not easy to move up the social scale without money. Trades were kept within families and apprenticeship was expensive. Some tradesmen and merchants were able to live comfortably, marry well and improve their social standing. The majority of land was held by the Church or the Crown with the latter then bequeathing titles to those Knights who were loyal which came with lands which they rented out to farmers.

Education was the preserve of the wealthy male or those who had entered religious life, although it was also possible for poor boys to be sponsored through the beneficence of a rich relation, friend or acquaintance. In return for such generosity, the benefactor would be helping to ensure their place in Heaven, plus they would guarantee loyalty from the student and their family. Men of the cloth were often employed as scribes for the wealthy illiterate, of which there were large numbers.

A pilgrimage was viewed as a way to atone for sins or to bring about a cure for the pilgrim themselves, or a loved one. By making the long, arduous and often dangerous journey and offering any suffering endured along the way as a sacrifice to God or to their favourite saint, people made pilgrimages as a way of taking action to improve their lives and that of their families as well as increasing their chances in the life after death.

Suggested Activity:

- Research the saints and choose one that appeals to them: St Francis of Assisi (animals), St Christopher (travellers), etc
- Research Thomas Becket and his spectacular rise and fall and canonization
- Research Lourdes or other places of pilgrimage



Geoffrey Chaucer

If you were lucky enough to receive an education, as Chaucer did, because of his family's wealth and connection, you would have learnt French and Latin, the language of the Court and the Church respectively.

Most people were illiterate. In churches, stain glass windows and wall paintings depicted bible stories to help the congregation understand. They would not have understood a lot of what was being said during mass (church service).

Printing had not reached England yet, so books as we know them did not exist. Books were hand-made from manuscripts, hand-written by scribes in places like St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury. Paper was not in existence either, so parchment or vellum was used. Vellum is animal hide with the best quality being calves skin.

Chaucer was not a professional writer but wrote for pleasure, for his own amusement and that of his family and friends. His poetry was a great favourite of the King's.

Chaucer wrote in the vernacular rather than French and Latin.

Suggested activity:

- Research the method of preparing animal hide in order to use it to write on
- Research the method of making inks and preparing quills
- Look at images of manuscripts – [Canterbury Cathedral archive](http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/conservation/archives/) has some <http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/conservation/archives/>
- Discuss in groups why they think
 - Chaucer chose to write in 'English' rather than the more accepted languages – audience?
 - Why poetry rather than prose?
 - Why reading aloud rather than reading to oneself?
 - Chose the content, language and settings in the Canterbury Tales

The Language / Settings

The example shows an excerpt of the Knight's Tale in Middle English.
The translation is by Nevill Coghill.
Spelling was not standardized, there was no dictionary.

Suggested activity:

- Show the Middle English to students first and ask them to take turns trying to read a line each
 - Is it easier to read aloud than to yourself?
- Ask them to try and translate the Middle English without showing them the translation
- Show them the translation
 - Do they agree with Nevil Coghill's choice of words?
- Discuss whether the creative spelling was a good or bad thing
 - What does this sort of spelling allow you to do which is not possible using standard spelling?
- Ask them to write a poem or prose paragraph using Middle English
- Can the students pick out words that are the same today?
- Ask them to consider the subject matter of the tale
 - Why set the tale in Greek Mythology?
 - What does this tell the reader about the status of the Knight?

The Characters

Suggested activity:

- You can use the images resource to get pictures of the characters to put up on your board whilst students are reading the prologues, etc.
- Discuss characterization and descriptive writing/language
- If the students were to write a modern day pilgrimage, where would it be to and what modern characters would they replace the medieval ones with?
- Discuss as a class or in groups the different stories and their storytellers
- Get them to draw each character just from the written description
- Who does Chaucer want us to like?
 - Evidence
- Who does Chaucer make fun of?
 - Evidence
- Who does Chaucer disapprove of?
 - Evidence
- Who does Chaucer respect?
 - Evidence



Post-visit consolidation lesson

Suggested activity:

Thinking about the visit to The Canterbury Tales

- Ask students to discuss in pairs
 - What did they like about the visit and why?
 - How did the settings impact on their experience?
 - How did the voices and language impact on their enjoyment/understanding of the tales?
 - How would they amuse themselves on a long journey?
 - What is a modern pilgrimage?

Thinking about the Canterbury Tales as written by Chaucer

- What poetic conventions did he use?
- What impact did they have?

Storytelling Activity

- Limit the students to a set number of lines as they compose their own short tales to ensure each student has some to read out
- Set the students the task of writing about a trip they have made (or fictional if need be) using descriptive language, characterization, etc, in poetry or prose which will be performed
- When giving feedback, remember the feedback given by Harry Bailey
 - Keep to the 1 thing that went really well and 1 which could be improved