



Canterbury Tales Webquest

Developed by Andria Amott Ho, andriaamodtho@gmail.com

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Overview

This WebQuest is designed to introduce students to British literature through Geoffrey Chaucer's work, *The Canterbury Tales*.

English IV Grade 12

Strands and objectives from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and

Reading this WebQuest supports:

English IV Knowledge and skills.

(2) Writing/writing processes. The student uses recursive writing processes when appropriate.

(9) Reading/variety of texts. The student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including British literature, in increasingly demanding texts.

(10) Reading/culture. The student reads widely, including British literature, to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across culture.

NISD Academic Standards this WebQuest supports:

English IV

III. Content Standard: Conventions of Writing. The student will apply with increasing skill and maturity the conventions of standard written English.

IV. Content Standard: Literature. The student will read and analyze British and world literature.

Resources needed: Students will need access to the internet and a color printer to complete this WebQuest.

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Introduction

Whanne that April with his shoures sote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote.

Canterbury Tales. Prologue. Line 1.

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of prose and verse stories written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the 14th century. Chaucer's stories are embedded in a framework narrative told by pilgrims on their way to Canterbury Cathedral to visit the burial place of St. Thomas à Becket.

- v But if you've been paying attention in class, you already know all this! The real question is why should you care (besides the fact that a grade is involved), and why are you being asked to complete a WebQuest?
- v To answer these questions, we need to begin with: who is Geoffrey Chaucer, and why do we study *The Canterbury Tales*? [This website says it a whole lot better than I do.](#)
<http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/chaucer/about.acds>
- v If you have a few minutes, make sure to listen to the rap version of "The Pardoner's Tale" found at the bottom of the page. Yes, rap. No, I am not kidding.
- v If you would like to read along with Baba's rap, the lyrics are posted [here](#).
<http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/chaucer/pardoner.acds>

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Questions

The ultimate goals of this WebQuest are to enrich your experience with *The Canterbury Tales*, learn a little bit more about life in the Middle Ages, and help you begin to see that as much as things change, they still remain pretty much the same. Chaucer's tales could easily be told by any of you in this day and age.

To complete this WebQuest, you will have to answer a series of questions, research a website or two, and choose one of three projects to finish. Don't worry; I've made sure the information is at your fingertips.

Short response questions: Most of these questions can be answered in one to two complete sentences. Turn in your typed responses by the end of class today (or within the time frame set by your teacher).

1. Chaucer

- a) When was Chaucer born, and when did he die?
- b) What were his links to royalty?
- c) What roles did he fulfill in life?
- d) What was happening in Europe during his lifetime?

2. The Canterbury Tales

- a) What is a frame story (or frame narrative)?
- b) How does this technique of storytelling apply to *The Canterbury Tales*?

3. The Prologue

- a) What season is this? What are the clues Chaucer gives us?
- b) Look at the differences between modern English and Middle English. Make a note of at least 5 Middle English words which are spelled differently but you can still tell what they mean. Make sure to include what you think they mean.

<p>The Prologue When April with his showers sweet with fruit The drought of March has pierced unto the root And bathed each vein with liquor that has power To generate therein and sire the flower; When Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath, Quickened again, in every holt and heath,</p>	<p>The Prologue Whan that aprill with his shoures soote The droghte of march hath perced to the roote, And bathed every veyne in swich licour Of which vertu engendred is the flour; Whan zepirus eek with his sweete breeth Inspired hath in every holt and heeth</p>
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<p>The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun Into the Ram one half his course has run, And many little birds make melody That sleep through all the night with open eye (So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)- Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage, And palmers to go seeking out strange strands, To distant shrines well known in sundry lands. And specially from every shire's end Of England they to Canterbury wend, The holy blessed martyr there to seek Who helped them when they lay so ill and weal Befell that, in that season, on a day In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay Ready to start upon my pilgrimage To Canterbury, full of devout homage, There came at nightfall to that hostelry</p>	<p>Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne, And smale foweles maken melodye, That slepen al the nyght with open ye (so priketh hem nature in hir corages); Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages, And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes, To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes; And specially from every shires ende Of engelond to caunterbury they wende, The hooly blisful martir for to seke, That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke. Bifil that in that seson on a day, In southwerk at the tabard as I lay Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage To caunterbury with ful devout corage, At nyght was come into that hostelrye</p>
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Tasks

I realize all of you have different talents, and I'd like to give each and every one of you a chance to show off your abilities. Choose one of the three following tasks, whichever suits you best, to complete as one of your major grades for the semester.

Task 1: Character Poster

Medieval Characterization Poster

Chaucer creates extremely vivid characters that we can visualize and even relate to. Through these descriptions, we get an insight into medieval fashion as well as timeless characteristics of mankind. Choose a character from *The Canterbury Tales* to reproduce in a poster. You may use any materials you can find to make your depiction of the character. Follow these guidelines:

- vFollow the physical description as closely as possible, both in physical attributes and attire. (10 pts.)
- vIn the top right corner, include a paragraph describing the character's personality. (15 pts.)
- vProvide direct quotations to support your interpretation of the character. These may be captions to the picture. (10 pts.)
- vIn the top left corner of the poster, draw a symbol for your character with an explanation of why you chose it. (15 pts.)
- vIn the bottom left corner, demonstrate how readers today can relate to the character. (15 pts.)
- vFinally, in the bottom right corner, explain what the character tells us about medieval English society. (15 pts.)

Make your poster as aesthetically pleasing as possible, and use some creativity. Try not to copy the pictures from the book (or the internet—like I did!); remember, Chaucer did not illustrate his work, so the pictures are someone else's interpretation of the characters. I want to see your interpretation. (20 pts., includes neatness, effort, and creativity)

"But for a little cap his head was bare" (703)

**"His chin no beard had harbored, nor
would harbor, / Smoother than ever chin
was left by barber." (709)**



**"This Pardonere had hair as yellow as wax,
Hanging down smoothly like a hank of flax."
(695)**

Thank
you to
Shanna
Lyssy
for

permission to use this project.

Task 2: Character Journal

Chaucer wrote his characters with such vivid detail that we can practically imagine ourselves riding right alongside, heading toward Canterbury Cathedral on a pilgrimage of our own. To complete this task, you must imagine yourself in the position of one of the pilgrims and write a journal of the experience. Although Chaucer's travelers appear to have made the journey to Canterbury in one day, typically this trip would have taken four days to complete. Write one journal entry of at least 150 words for each day of the journey (four journal entries of 150 words each). Be creative, stay in character, and use as much detail as possible. You will want to do some research about the points of interest along the way as well as some study into the profession of your chosen pilgrim. The Resources page has several links to help you complete this task.

We are all pilgrims, Chaucer says, and all of us have many tales to tell, some finished and others still in the making. And what was true in Chaucer's time is still true today, six hundred years later. We are, all of us, pilgrims on the journey through life.



*This world nis but a thoroughfare full of woe,
And we been pilgrims passing to and fro."*

Task 3: The Canterbury Bard

If Baba's performance of "The Pardoner's Tale" has inspired you to try something similar on your own, then this task is the one for you. Rewrite the Prologue description of one of the major characters in *The Canterbury Tales*. Update the language while keeping the same feel as Chaucer. The trick to this task is that you must maintain a similar rhyme scheme, and the rewritten description must be at least 24 lines long. A proper bard will recite his or her piece for the class, and an exceptional bard will go the extra mile—think music, costume, illuminating the text, whatever is necessary to bring out the full flavor of the piece. There are links on the Resources page to help you with rhyming if necessary.

***Note: Because this is a performance piece, please let your teacher know ahead of time that you have chosen this task.

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Resources

Here are some URLs to help you along the way. Many of these are single pages within larger websites. Feel free to poke around in those sites; you might find just what you need, or you might find an idea of where else to go for the information you want. Don't be afraid to go beyond the links listed here! There is so much to be said about this subject and more ways of saying it than you can imagine. Find the resources that best suit YOUR needs.

- v <http://www.canterburytales.org/> This “official” site
- v <http://www.godecooking.com/pilgrims/pilgrims.htm> What Chaucer left out: background information, social status, income, the Tabard Inn, and a map of the journey.
- v <http://www.librarius.com/chauchro.htm> Chronology of Geoffrey Chaucer's life and times
- v <http://www.learner.org/interactives/middleages/feudal.html> What was it really like to live in the Middle Ages?
- v <http://csis.pace.edu/grendel/projs4a/TALES.htm> Brief annotation of each pilgrim
- v <http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/bin/litcrit.out.pl?ti=can-92> Literary criticism sites about *The Canterbury Tales*
- v <http://csis.pace.edu/grendel/projs4a/TALES.htm> Brief annotation of each pilgrim
- v <http://www.librarius.com/cantales.htm> This site offers an annotated version of *The Canterbury Tales*
- v http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/middleages/topic_1/welcome.htm Information about the Middle Ages
- v <http://www.rhymer.com/> Online rhyming dictionary
- v <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Couplet> Of course there is a Wikipedia site about iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets!
- v <http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/CraftOfPoetry/> Tons of information about writing poems
- v <http://www.rhymezone.com/> Another rhyming site

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Evaluation

Your teacher will provide rubrics for each of the tasks.

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Conclusion

Hopefully you have enjoyed your jaunt through the Middle Ages and even learned a little bit along the way. If you feel like you have a slightly better understanding of the time period and a better feel for *The Canterbury Tales*, then the goal of this WebQuest has been met.

Before we part ways, I would like to ask you to answer a few questions about your experience with this assignment. Cut and paste these questions into a Word document, answer them, and turn in the printed sheet along with the other materials to show you have completed this WebQuest.

- v Have you ever worked with a WebQuest before?
- v Did you learn anything new in the completion of your task or while answering questions?
- v What, if anything, interested you about completing this assignment?
- v What would you have changed about this assignment to make it more appealing or interesting?

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Thank you to the following sites for the images used in this WebQuest:

Image #1

<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/librarybriefings/archives/001548.html>

Image #2

http://uk.encarta.msn.com/media_121623136_761562849_-1_1/canterbury_pilgrims.html

Image #3

[Chaucer_ellesmere.jpg](#)

Image #4

http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/5900/5927/canterbury_12.htm

Image #5

<http://www.godecookery.com/pilgrims/pilgrm04.htm>

