"The Pardoner's Tale" – Group Work



1. Is there any connection between the three young men in the Pardoner's story and the people who buy the pardoner's goods or indulgences? What are they all looking for – with what level of attention and dedication are they ready to achieve it? You may want to consider an earlier group work (in a subtle – deep background kind of way) that you did on *Grendel* and our tendency to want to believe in conspiracies. Why are "quick-fixes" always popular? Consider the 3 men's solution to their friend dying and the rapidity with which they leave *that quest* in order to secure the treasure. In answering this question, bring in at least one quote from "The Pardoner's Prologue" and one quote from the actual tale.

2a. This story contains one of the surprisingly few (surprising because of the immense impact of the plague on Chaucer's world) mentions of the **plague** in Chaucer's work. Or is it surprising? Considering the devastation of the plague (1/3 of the known world, often killing entire homes and towns), why does your group believe that the plague played such a small part in Chaucer's tales?

Because I could not stop for Death
– Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death--
He kindly stopped for me--
The Carriage held but just Ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove--He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility--

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess--in the Ring--
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain--
We passed the Setting Sun--

Or rather--passed Us--
The Dews drew quivering and chill--
For only Gossamer, my Gown--
My Tippet--only Tulle--

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground--
The Roof was scarcely visible--
The Cornice--in the Ground--

Since then--'tis Centuries--and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses Heads
~~Were toward Eternity--~~



2b. The most popular films during America's own most recent depression (in the 1930's) were filled with big spectacular dance routines or fantastic imagery (*The Wizard of Oz*), but had little mention of the bleak conditions of the outside world. Do you see a reluctance in our own present day society reluctance to incorporate our own recessions, or other "bad" historical events into our entertainment. Reconsider the discussions you have had about the Shaper and Chaucer's works (and ballads as well). By ignoring the plague aren't these tales a diversion (like the Shaper's stories in *Grendel*?) In answering this, you should be specific and definitely build on what you discussed in question #1.

2c. Back to *Grendel* again: Given the horrific living conditions of the Middle (Dark) Ages, and the everyday encounters with plague, suffering, death – is it possible to construct a different relationship (than what is talked about in questions 2a & 2b) between that grim life and the production of a masterwork such as *The Canterbury Tales*. No hints here but I definitely looking for a specific connection to something we've talked about a lot so far – and there are the first 4 words of this question…



3. Is the old man right? *Did they find death beneath the tree*? Explain. Consider this poem by Emily Dickinson – how is the personification of death similar; how is it different? Use at least 1 quote from the poem and from the story.

4. What is the connection between these three things: the description of the pardoner in "The General Prologue," The Pardoner's Prologue," and "The Pardoner's Tale." Go look at all three (split them up among your group[1]). How is the tale that the Pardoner chooses to tell, ironic? Be specific. Find and quote 2 other examples of similar irony between the tale and its prologue and/or the general prologue.

5. Consider question #4 in terms of *Grendel and the Shaper*. Think back to your work on Chaucer and the Shaper (with consideration to his honest portrayal of characters [as opposed to heroic glorification of mundane and despicable behavior.]) How is the Pardoner and the discrepancy between his prologue and his tale an "echo" of the Shaper and his *shaping*? How is Chaucer criticizing the same thing that Grendel (the character – not the book) did? Be specific.

EC (up to 50 pts): Watch the video "Internet Story" at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-SL4ejpP94 (or google youtube "Internet Story") and write a very short essay that answers the following prompt: How is "Internet Story" related to "The Pardoner's Prologue" and "The Pardoner's Tale"? Beyond the story, how does its creator follow in the footsteps of Chaucer – though their medium is completely different – how do they both take **advantage of the medium** that their story is told in. Be very specific and quote whenever you can. Do not go over 1 ½ pages and it must be hand written. **Please note** – the video contains language and ideas that may be considered objectionable and your discretion is urged. If you find it objectionable another EC project may be utilized.

HOMEWORK:

Friday READ at HOME "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" (handout) A big reading (200 point quiz) and an important class (150 points for being there).

Tuesday (11/13) : READ at HOME "The Wife of Bath's Tale" (textbook pg 141-149)

Weds no homework

Thursday – One Day Movie BE HERE

Friday – time to write up movie question answers

Monday (11/19) READ at HOME Fredrigo's Falcon 156-159

[1] This is the IDEAL kind of splitting up work in a Group Work – when you are asked to look back at a text or find quotes. Remember, NEVER split up the questions. Though it is ok for the recorder to keep writing while the group moves on to the next question.