

2025 Symposium Seminar: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

OPTIONAL: Resources to Aid Your Preparation

A Short Guide to the Tales was attached to the welcome email for your reference. Hopefully it will be helpful with regard to keeping track of the order we'll be using, the basic names and plots, and the sources of the tales.

If the medieval time period is entirely new to you, or you really prefer to start off knowing something about the author and the world he lived in, links to some optional background information appear below.

But you should also feel free to jump right to **Reading the Text** (see notes in the welcome email) and come back to these resources whenever you choose. There is a great deal of scholarly and popular information available about Chaucer and the Tales, but for our purposes, it's best to concentrate on reading the Tales themselves, and consult outside references only as needed.

However, if you would prefer to start with some background information on the time period and world in which Chaucer lived, here are some suggestions:

A basic video introduction to "Chaucer's England" (with Pardoner's Tale) from an old Encyclopedia Britannica film (30 minutes) on YouTube:

<http://youtu.be/o9TXiUBOXAw>

The Medieval World

While we found this version of the text quite difficult to read due to the end of line footnotes, the introduction to the online Gutenberg CT provides a good overview:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2383/pg2383-images.html>

Chaucer's Biography

<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/chaucerbio.htm>

On a useful website with many links to literary and historical information.

Audio Version

A decent audio version in modern English is available on YouTube:

http://youtu.be/_4Be9pQtQPU

[THE CANTERBURY TALES by Geoffrey Chaucer - FULL AudioBook | Part 1 of 2 | Greatest AudioBooks. Modern English, Gutenberg.]

A Note on Middle English

As noted above, the seminar will assume familiarity only with the modern English versions of the Tales. During one session, we'll provide a few notes on the original Middle English text and some of the changes in the English language that led to what we are reading.

If you'd like some background on the history of the English language and the changes to it between Chaucer's time and our own, Wikipedia does a decent job on this:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_English

Or check out this talk on "Old, Middle, Modern: Chaucer as the turning-point in the story of English pronunciation" on YouTube. It's long, but a good complete look at Old/Middle/Modern English differences: <https://youtu.be/jlSbgvgRTTM>

Here are a couple of links to the text read in Middle English, if you'd like to hear it as it was written to be read:

- 1) Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" Reading [Middle-English] General Prologue (Lines 1-117)" on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/6T1t6zfF9yU>
- 2) "The Knight's Tale" read in Middle English" on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/bXlmcQjD-Ok>

And if you'd like a stab at learning Middle English yourself, try this YouTube recording that helps you take your pronunciation from slow to fast:

<http://youtu.be/HXMypzdWxsc>

Finally, just for fun:

- 1) The Canterbury Tales 01 out of 3: Leaving London (1998) Russian/ Welsh animation, English subtitles. Part 1 of the series you can see on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/NLRW91mNMK0>
- 2) Chaucer's Wife of Bath animated: <https://youtu.be/e3cvOm7qStk>

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