

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book 3-4,**February 22, 2026****Attendees:**

David J-CA; Peregrine-CA; Elizabeth-CA; Geneva-MO; Laura-ON;

Quick recap

The group met to discuss and analyze Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, focusing on Books 3 and 4 of the text. They examined the narrative structure, character development, and poetic techniques used by Chaucer, particularly comparing his work to Boccaccio's source material. The participants explored the role of Fortune in the story. The group analyzed the character of Pandarus and his role in facilitating the romance between Troilus and Criseyde. They examined the poetic devices used by Chaucer, including enjambment and the use of proverbs. The conversation ended with a discussion of the narrative's implications for understanding medieval notions of love, honor, and social duty.

Next steps

- [David: Send Geneva the link to the Plato Society group.](#)
- [Group: Pick up discussion at Book 4, line 960 \(stanza 138\), focusing on free will versus determinism, for the next meeting.](#)
- [Group: Aim to finish Book 4 within 45 minutes and Book 5 within an hour at the next meeting, with a general summation of the entire poem.](#)
- [David: Do a book report/comparison of Sapolsky's views on determinism/free will as they relate to Spinoza for the group.](#)

Summary*Astrology and Mythology in Literature*

The group discussed astrological references and astronomical events in a text, including a rare alignment of Saturn, Jupiter, and Cancer. They analyzed a scene from Chaucer involving a character named Criseyde staying at her uncle's house with her servants and knight during a stormy night. The group also examined Ovid's influence on the text, particularly in the retelling of Greek myths and the concept of linking unknown phenomena to mythological explanations. They briefly touched on the story of Adonis and its connection to the myth of Europa and Jove.

Chaucer's Adaptation of Apollo and Daphne

The group discussed Chaucer's adaptation of the Apollo and Daphne story, noting that lines 500 to 1250 are not from Boccaccio but from Chaucer's other sources or invention. They analyzed Pandarus's manipulation of the narrative, particularly his use of lies to create jealousy. The group also discussed the use of Greek mythological names in the text and the inconsistency in Chaucer's use of singular and plural forms for god(s).

Epic Love Story Analysis

The group discussed a scene from a romance, focusing on a complex love story involving jealousy, tears, and facilitator Pandarus. They analyzed the characters' emotions and actions, noting how the scene builds tension and drama. Geneva compared this epic love poetry to simpler romances, while Peregrine and David explored the characters' motivations and the unfolding plot. The discussion highlighted the differences between epic poetry and simpler romance narratives, with the group agreeing that this scene was more serious and elaborate in its portrayal of love and conflict.

Medieval Love and Privacy Dynamics

The group analyzed the language and context, noting that privacy expectations in medieval times were different from modern standards. Peregrine suggested that Pandarus' presence nearby, rather than in another part of the house, would have been typical for the time, as it would have been unusual for someone to be completely alone. The conversation also touched on the concept of jealousy and testing in relationships, as depicted in the text.

Medieval Love and Desire Analysis

The group discussed and analyzed excerpts from Boccaccio and Chaucer, focusing on themes of love, desire, and relationships. David read passages aloud, and Peregrine provided commentary and questions about the text's meaning and language. They examined specific lines and phrases, discussing their implications and interpretations. The conversation touched on the erotic and romantic elements of the texts, as well as the authors' use of language to convey emotion and experience.

Troilus and Criseyde's Secret Love

The group discussed a scene from a story involving characters named Troilus and Criseyde, focusing on their secret relationship and the social barriers preventing their marriage. They analyzed Chaucer's poetic rendering of Boccaccio's text, noting its use of Boethius and Ovid, and examined how the story progresses into Book 4 with the characters' clandestine meetings and the context of the 10-year siege of Troy. The discussion highlighted the narrative's exploration of love, social constraints, and the characters' emotional journey.

Troilus and Cressida's Complex Love

The group discussed the story of Cressida and her father, who had fled Troy and joined the Greek side after seeing an omen of defeat. They analyzed the character of Troilus, who was torn between his love for Cressida and his duty to his city, with Hector opposing the exchange of Cressida for prisoners on chivalric grounds. The conversation touched on the complexity of Troilus's inner conflict and the political implications of the prisoner exchange, with Geneva expressing interest in learning more about the story.

Chaucer's Parliament and Love Themes

The group discussed Chaucer's use of the word "Parliament" in his work, noting that while the sources depicted a council or parley, Chaucer used the term in an English sense to refer to a governing body. The group identified several proverbs and sayings used in the text, including "in one ear, out the other" and "absence makes the heart grow fonder." The conversation ended with plans to complete analyzing Book 4 and finish the poem (Bk 5) in the next session than prepping for Shakespeare's play version of the same story.

Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, Book 2-3,**February 8, 2026****Attendees:**

David J-CA; Peregrine-CA; Elizabeth-CA; Geneva-MO; Ellen-MN; Laura-ON; JoyS; Adrienne-TX; Barbara-GA

Quick recap

The group met to discuss and analyze Book 2 of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, focusing on themes of love, power, and manipulation. They examined how Chaucer transformed Boccaccio's source material, particularly in his depiction of Pandarus's character and Criseyde's complex emotions. The participants highlighted Chaucer's use of

interior monologue, stage directions, and literary allusions, including Dante and Ovid. They discussed the narrative's blending of epic and romance elements, as well as Chaucer's consideration for his audience's expectations. The conversation ended with an analysis of the poem's structure, themes, and Chaucer's creative choices in adapting his source material.

Next steps

- David: Research and clarify the meaning and context of Pandarus's "play" with Cressida toward the end of Book 2, especially regarding the potential amorous scene between Pandarus and Cressida, for the next meeting.
- All participants: Mark up their texts with notes and questions as they read and raise their hands to discuss specific passages in the next session.
- All participants: Continue reading to the end of Book 3 (consummation sequence) and Book 4 in preparation for the next meeting.
- All participants: Ponder and optionally consult AI or other sources about confusing passages (e.g., Pandarus's role, the "play" scene) before the next session.

Summary

AI's Role in Literature Analysis

The meeting began with a casual conversation about the potential of AI in literature analysis and tutoring. David proposed a challenge to invite an AI assistant to join their discussion and assist with questions about Chaucer and *Troilus and Criseyde*, suggesting they would need to use prompts to engage the AI.

AI Missteps and Medieval Texts

The group began discussing Book 2 of the text, with Peregrine highlighting a notable line about events occurring a thousand years prior and discussing the use of proverbs in the text. The group agreed to mark up their texts and confirmed they were using the Riverside edition for line numbers, with Anthony Klein's translation providing modern English versions that sometimes alter words to fit meter and rhyme.

Chaucer's Adaptation of Boccaccio

The group discussed Chaucer's adaptation of Boccaccio's work, focusing on the Norton Critical Edition's presentation of facing pages comparing Boccaccio's prose with Chaucer's poetry. They examined the relationship between Pandarus and Criseyde, including a potential amorous scene in the garden and the challenge of maintaining secrecy with Criseyde's entourage of nine attendants. Peregrine shared an interpretation of Procne's story as an omen of betrayal and revenge, which David noted was accompanied by illustrations and footnotes in the text.

Analyzing Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde

The group focused on its genre mix of romance and epic elements. They analyzed the character of Pandarus and his role in promoting Troilus's cause, as well as the anachronistic reference to reading saints' lives. The conversation touched on the astrological timing of the work and its use of truces during the Trojan War siege as a backdrop for romantic pursuits.

Chaucer's Narrative Techniques Analysis

The group discussed the narrative techniques in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, focusing on the use of interior monologue and the omniscient narrator's perspective. They analyzed specific lines and poetic devices, including the adaptation of names for meter and the narrator's involvement in the story. Ellen highlighted the complexity of tracking the narrator's perspective, while Peregrine and David explored how Chaucer's work reflects both oral tradition and theatrical elements.

Manipulation in Chaucer's Troilus

The group next focused on Pandarus's role as a manipulative intermediary between Troilus and Criseyde. They analyzed how Pandarus uses psychological manipulation and subtle pressure to encourage Criseyde to accept Troilus's advances, noting the contrast with Chaucer's portrayal of Emily in the *Knight's Tale*. The discussion highlighted Criseyde's thoughtful

consideration of her situation, including political implications and her own emotional conflict, while also examining the narrative's use of astrology and stage directions.

Criseyde's Decision in Troilus

The group next discussed the character of Criseyde and her complex decision-making about love and loyalty. They noted that Chaucer's portrayal of Criseyde is more sympathetic and nuanced than Boccaccio's version, with Criseyde showing strategic thinking about her situation. The group also examined Antigone's song, which responds to Criseyde's hesitations about love, and discussed its similarities to other medieval love lyrics. They concluded by analyzing a scene where Criseyde reads a letter from Troilus, with the group noting Chaucer's departure from Boccaccio's text in this scene.

Cressida and Troilus: Metafiction Analysis

The group discussed a scene from a text involving Criseyde and Troilus, focusing on their interaction in a sickroom. They analyzed the characters' motivations and the narrative's use of metafiction, with Troilus lying about being sick to see Criseyde. The discussion included details about the characters' relationship dynamics and the author's blending of epic and erotic poetry genres.

Analyzing Pandarus's Role in Troilus

The group next focused on Pandarus's role as a go-between and his complex character traits. They analyzed key passages, including Pandarus's manipulation in arranging a dinner during a hailstorm and his offer to trade one of Troilus's sisters for Criseyde. The group noted foreshadowing and potential flaws in Troilus's understanding of love. They agreed to continue their discussion in two more sessions, with the next meeting scheduled for February 22nd 2026, and planned to research Pandarus's motivations further.

Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, Book 1,

January 25, 2026

Quick recap

The group discussed their reading plans for Chaucer and Shakespeare, including potential adjustments to their reading schedule and methods for analyzing medieval texts. They explored various themes and characters in Chaucer's works, focusing on love, honor, and the narrative structure of his poems. The group also shared their approaches to reading and appreciating Middle English texts, considering different methods and resources for their next session.

Next steps

- [David: Find and share the best complete recording of Troilus and Cressida in Middle English with the group.](#)
- [All participants: Read Book 2 \(and optionally Book 3\) of Troilus and Cressida before the next meeting on Super Bowl Sunday.](#)
- [Peregrine: \(Optional, implied\) Send the Liberius \(or other online text\) link to interested participants.](#)

Summary

Reading Plans for Chaucer and Shakespeare

David, Peregrine, and Elizabeth discussed their reading plans for Chaucer and Shakespeare. They agreed to cover two books per session, with the third session focusing solely on Book 5 of Chaucer. Peregrine expressed

concern about keeping up with the reading, suggesting it would be a relief to focus on one book per session. They considered breaking up the Shakespeare reading into two parts. David mentioned he had not done much work on the Toronto group recently but would do so again.

Medieval Literature and Shakespeare Discussion

The group discussed the play "Troilus and Cressida," noting its problematic nature and mix of comedy and tragedy, and considered involving Jan as a Shakespeare scholar. They explored the possibility of reading three Chaucer and two Shakespeare texts, pending others' input. Geneva, who recently moved from California to the Midwest, joined the discussion and shared her experience with medieval literature, including her current readings of "The Romance of the Rose" and Cretien de Troyes's romances. The group also briefly discussed pronunciation and spelling variations of "Cressida" and the challenges of reading medieval texts.

Chaucer's Epic Romance Innovation

The group discussed Chaucer's innovation of combining epic and romance elements in his works, particularly in "The Knight's Tale." Peregrine explained that Chaucer created a new genre called "epic romance" by blending epic themes with romance narratives, using formal meters and rhyme schemes like rhyme royal. David mentioned that Chaucer's works often included epic devices such as invoking gods and using Latin summaries, while Geneva noted the significance of Chaucer's use of vernacular language in his tales.

Chaucer's Troilus: Love and War

The group discussed the narrative structure and historical context of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, focusing on the character of the narrator as an anguished lover and his connection to medieval love poetry. They examined the story's background, including the Trojan War and the relationship between Paris and Helen, while noting the controversy surrounding Helen's abduction. The discussion also covered the text's translation and formatting, with Geneva and David sharing their sources and methods for reading and analyzing the work.

Criseyde's Background and Cultural Context

The group discussed the character Cressida and her background in Chaucer's work, noting that her father, Calchas, was a lord in Troy who switched sides to join the Greeks. They examined the cultural significance of widows wearing black in medieval times and debated the unclear details about Cressida's marriage and personal history. The conversation also touched on the etymology of the word "pander," tracing it back to Cressida's uncle, and how it relates to modern usage in politics and law.

Criseyde's Character and Historical Context

The group discussed the character of Crusada in a text, focusing on her beauty and noble status. They noted that she was widowed and lived in Troy, maintaining her dignity and being loved by those who knew her. Peregrine mentioned a historical connection to Anne of Bohemia, married to Richard II in 1382. The discussion also touched on the differences between this text and the Canterbury Tales in terms of narrative perspective.

Shakespearean Narrative and Character Analysis

David and Peregrine discussed the narrative structure of a play, noting that Shakespeare could eliminate the narrator, unlike other forms of storytelling. They explored the character of Crusada, who seeks Hector's help after her father's shame, and her uncertain social standing, comparing her situation to that of Princess Diana or the Duke of Wellington. They also examined the role of the Palladium, a sacred relic in Troy, and its

significance in the story. The conversation touched on the use of April as a significant month in the narrative, possibly reflecting Chaucer's fondness for the season.

Chaucer's Love and Courtship

The group discussed the spelling and rhyming conventions in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," particularly focusing on the name "Cressida" and the word "press" in Middle English. They analyzed the character of Troilus, noting his chivalric romantic love for a noblewoman despite her precarious situation as the daughter of a betrayer. The conversation concluded with a brief discussion of an ancient method for declaring interest in potential dance partners, comparing it to modern swipe-right systems.

Troilus' Love Transformation Analysis

David and Peregrine discussed a text, focusing on specific lines and references. They analyzed the character Trilus's transformation from mockery to love, noting the moment he is struck by love (line 39) and reveals his name to Pandora (line 125). Peregrine mentioned a reference to Dante and the "blind world" in line 211. They explored themes of pride, love's power, and the character's change in behavior.

Troilus' Love and Realization

David and Peregrine discussed the character Troyless and his interactions with a woman in Chaucer's text. They analyzed the woman's behavior and Troyless's changing emotions, noting his realization of his error and subsequent lovesickness. The conversation included an exploration of literary references and metaphors, such as the mind as a mirror, and the dangers of revealing love too openly. They also touched on the theme of love and the fear of rejection, as well as potential solutions like the dance card and the go-between.

Chaucer's Love and Character Analysis

David and Peregrine discussed Chaucer's work, focusing on the character Lolius and the source material for Chaucer's poem. They analyzed the paradoxical nature of romantic love, as depicted in the text, and noted similarities between this work and Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale." They also touched on the character Crusada, comparing her to Emily from "The Knight's Tale," and noted that Crusada's role is more developed in this work.

Criseyde's Impact on a Warrior

The group discussed plot development and character analysis for a literary work, focusing on a character named Cresida who is beloved by a Greek warrior despite the ongoing Trojan War. They explored the character's motivations, noting that while he is a skilled warrior, his primary focus is impressing Cresida rather than hatred for the Greeks. The discussion included analysis of the character's self-reflection and emotional struggle, particularly in lines where he acknowledges his foolishness in loving Cresida. The conversation concluded with an examination of a scene where a character named Pandarus discovers the warrior's distress and learns about Cresida's name, marking a significant plot development.

Pandarus's Role in the Narrative

David and Peregrine discussed the literary work, focusing on Pandarus's role and the revelation of love. They identified key moments in the text, such as when Pandarus learns of his friend's love and the subsequent unfolding of events. They also noted the use of classical references and proverbs, highlighting the complexity and depth of the narrative. The conversation provided insights into the characters' motivations and the themes of the work.

Love, Death, and Honor in Literature

David, Peregrine, and Geneva discussed the themes of love, death, and honor in literature, focusing on the works of Boccaccio and Chaucer. They analyzed the character of Pandarus and his role as an intermediary in love stories, highlighting the contrast between heavenly and earthly love. The group also examined the use of religious references in a pagan context and the significance of honor in romantic relationships. They identified potential sources for Shakespeare's works and discussed the impact of love on women's desires and behaviors.

Medieval Romance Reading Discussion

The group discussed their reading assignment for a medieval romance, deciding to focus on Book 2 and potentially Book 3 in their next session on Super Bowl Sunday. Peregrine suggested altering the reading assignment to allow for a more thorough discussion of Book 2, which has significant content. They also explored different methods for reading and appreciating the Middle English text, with Peregrine sharing his approach of using split-screen browsing and Geneva mentioning her preference for reading the Middle English with glosses. David offered to find a complete recording of the text in Middle English for their next meeting.

