

William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Acts 3-5,**April 05, 2026****Meeting Summary**

Attendees:

David J-CA; Peregrine-CA; Elizabeth-CA; Geneva-MO; Yann-Paris; Ginny-TO; Laurel-ON

Quick recap

This meeting was a literary discussion focused on analyzing Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, with participants examining Act 3 to the end, comparing it to Homer's Iliad and Chaucer's earlier version. The group discussed key themes including the nature of war, honor, and the role of women as political pawns, while examining specific scenes and character motivations. David led the discussion through various scenes, with Elizabeth and other participants providing insights about literary devices, historical context, and character development. The conversation covered topics such as the meaning of "scruple" (both as a weight measurement and a moral concept), the use of iambic pentameter versus prose, and the dramatic structure of eavesdropping scenes. Participants also discussed how Shakespeare's work differs from Homer's by removing divine elements and focusing more on human relationships and moral complexity.

Next steps

- Elizabeth: to read the Emily Wilson translation of *The Iliad* for the next meeting, May 3, 2026.
- All participants: Read the first six books of the assigned or your preferred translation/edition of *The Iliad*
- (Optional, if applicable) Yann: Indicate which French translation of *The Iliad* will be read for the next meeting.

Summary*Shakespeare Play Discussion Meeting*

The group met to discuss the final three acts of Shakespeare's play. David shared his fascination with various aspects of the play, including the meaning of "scruple" as a measurement and references to gravity and space travel.

Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida Analysis

David led a discussion about Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, using the Arden Shakespeare edition with its helpful footnotes, comparing it to Homer's Iliad and questioning why Shakespeare named it after these characters despite their presence being a sub-plot in a war story.

Play Characters and Literary Analysis

Peregrine and David discussed the characters and context of a play, focusing first on the roles of Pandarus, Paris, and Helen. They explained the literary background of the story and noted the use of wordplay and iambic pentameter throughout the play.

Shakespeare's Cressida Scene Analysis

The group discussed Scene 3 of a Shakespeare play, focusing on the character Cressida and her interactions with Pandarus and Troilus. They examined the differences between Shakespeare's portrayal and Chaucer's earlier version, noting how Shakespeare condenses the story. Elizabeth and Peregrine mentioned purchasing a Royal Shakespeare Company production on Amazon Prime for \$10, which includes subtitles to help understand the text.

The discussion also touched on the use of iambic pentameter versus prose in Shakespeare's writing, with Elizabeth questioning the pattern of when prose is used.

Literary Analysis of Troilus and Cressida

David, Peregrine and Elizabeth discussed a literary text, focusing on the characters' dialogue and themes of love, wisdom, and power dynamics. They analyzed Cressida's strategy of appearing hard to win and Troilus's poetic defense of truth in love. The conversation highlighted the characters' self-awareness as literary figures and their reflections on the nature of truth and falsehood in relationships.

Trojan War Text Analysis Discussion

David and Peregrine discussed their analysis of a text about the Trojan War, focusing on character motivations and plot developments. They examined the exchange proposal involving Cressida and Antenor, questioning the Greek generals' motivations for wanting the Trojan lady. David noted that the Trojans had previously rejected similar exchange offers, and they discussed Ulysses' efforts to convince Achilles to rejoin the fight. The conversation ended with a discussion about the challenge involving Hector and Ajax.

Women's Roles in Homer's Iliad

The group discussed the role of women in Homer's Iliad, particularly focusing on how female characters like Helen and Brisias were central to sparking the war over honor and private disputes. They examined how the gods, especially female deities like Aphrodite, played a significant role in the narrative unlike in Shakespeare's works. The discussion also covered Ulysses' strategy to persuade Achilles, highlighting themes of honor and external recognition versus internal virtue, with references to Seneca and Montaigne's influence on these ideas.

Troilus and Cressida Discussion

David and Peregrine discussed the etymology of the word "scruple," tracing it back to its Latin origin meaning a pebble, used to measure the lowest weight on ancient scales [1/24 oz.]. They analyzed Cressida's declaration of faithfulness and the symbolic exchange of a sleeve and glove between her and Troilus.

Act 4 Scene 5 Analysis Discussion

David, Peregrine and Elizabeth discussed Act 4, Scene 5 of a play, focusing on the interactions between Greek and Trojan characters, particularly around Cressida. They analyzed Ulysses' suspicious character assessment of Cressida and examined the rules governing the single combat between Hector and Ajax, noting that the fight was conducted according to chivalric rules rather than to the death. The discussion included details about character motivations and the play's themes of honor and combat.

Theatrical Production Character Analysis

The group examined dialogue exchanges between Hector and Achilles, including their family connection and the use of familiar language (e.g.: thy/thou) as an insult. The conversation also touched on the character of Cressida and her relationship with Troilus, with David expressing particular interest in how Cressida's character develops.

Shakespeare Play Analysis Discussion

David and Peregrine analyzed the dramatic structure, including the use of eavesdropping and theatrical telescoping of time. The conversation highlighted the challenges of staging certain scenes, particularly those involving multiple characters speaking simultaneously, and they noted that while some elements may be confusing in the text, they likely work better in performance.

Cressida Scene Analysis Discussion

The group discussed reading and analyzing the key scene between Cressida and Diomedes from the play. Ginny read Cressida's dialogue, with David reading Diomedes. The discussion focused on understanding Cressida's motivations and the development of her relationship with Diomedes throughout the scene. Elizabeth and David praised Ginny's dramatic reading of the passage.

Cressida Wrap-up and Iliad Discussion Plans

The group concluded their discussion of *Troilus and Cressida*, focusing on themes of choice and power, particularly how Cressida uses her allure as a form of "armament" in making decisions during crisis situations. David drew parallels to contemporary examples like star athletes choosing teams and women facing contemporary political pressures. The discussion concluded with plans to move on to reading Homer's *Iliad*, with participants selecting different translations including versions by Emily Wilson, Robert Fagles and Richmond Lattimore. The first of eight sessions on the Homeric epics was scheduled for May 3, 2026. We will experiment with a different format for our Homer Meetups: it will be a thematic approach rather than linear progress through each book.

William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Acts 1-2,**March 22, 2026****Meeting Summary**

Attendees:

David J-CA; Peregrine-CA; Elizabeth-CA; Geneva-MO; Yann-Paris

Quick recap

The group met to discuss and analyze Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, focusing on Acts 1 and 2 and comparing it to Chaucer's version. The participants examined the play's themes of war versus love, the character of Achilles, and the debate between Hector and Troilus regarding whether to return Helen. They discussed the play's complex portrayal of honor, duty, and the madness of war, noting its experimental nature as a tragic comedy set during the Trojan War. The group also explored the play's historical context, including its contemporary relevance to Elizabethan politics and the influence of Cicero's writings on the characters' arguments about duty and honor.

Next steps

- [David: Send direct email to Jan to ensure Jan's email is captured for future direct communication \(instead of only through Meetup\).](#)
- [All participants: Read Acts 3, 4, and 5 of *Troilus and Cressida* in preparation for the next meeting on the 5th.](#)
- [David: Finish reading the 100-page introduction in the Arden edition of *Troilus and Cressida* before the next meeting.](#)
- [All participants: Consider and decide on which translation of the *Iliad* to read for the next group \(after *Troilus and Cressida*\), with some considering Lattimore, Fagles, or Emily Wilson translations.](#)

Summary

Shakespeare Play Reading Discussion

Peregrine and David discussed their reading progress on a Shakespeare play, with David having read two acts plus much of the introduction. They explored additional resources including a Harvard lecture by Marjorie Garber and an RSC production, which they found helpful in understanding the text. The conversation touched on their different editions of the Arden Shakespeare, with Peregrine reading the latest edition and David using a 2003 version, while

Elizabeth is reading the Pelican edition. David expressed satisfaction with the play's blend of love story and war narrative, describing it as an "experimental" work that fits into multiple genres including tragic comedy.

Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida Analysis

The group compared it to Chaucer's work exploring how Shakespeare transformed the story into a tragedy with a focus on the Trojan War rather than the love story. Peregrine noted that Shakespeare likely had access to Homer's Iliad, which influenced his portrayal of the characters and the war narrative, while Chaucer's version came through Boccaccio and other sources without direct access to Homer. Geneva observed that Shakespeare's version focused more on the war and characters like Achilles rather than the love story between Troilus and Cressida.

Shakespeare's Character Development Discussion

The group discussed the literary sources and character development in a play, focusing on the influence of Caxton, Chaucer, and Chapman on Shakespeare's work. David expressed interest in the complexity of the characters and their internal struggles, particularly regarding themes of manhood and love. Peregrine highlighted the play's staging as a pageant-like presentation and explained that the characters were already aligned in their affections before the play began, contrasting with the longer, more drawn-out development in Chaucer's version. Geneva inquired about the reasons behind the character pairings, and Peregrine clarified that the staging was more about observing and evaluating the warriors rather than actively choosing partners.

Troilus and Cressida Scene Discussion

The group discussed Act 1, Scene 2 of *Troilus and Cressida*, focusing on the relationship dynamics between Troilus and Cressida and the play's historical context. Peregrine explained Cressida's strategic approach to courtship, while David provided background on the play's controversial nature due to its treatment of women and male sexuality, particularly regarding the relationship between Achilles and Priam's daughter Polyxena.

Classical Literature Study Discussion

The group discussed their approach to studying the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*, with David explaining he favored edstrong storytelling over specific sides. Peregrine shared historical context about Oxford University factions called "Trojans" and "Greeks" during Elizabethan times, with the Greeks being more focused on classical learning and noting that the Elizabethans were generally pro-Trojan and anti-Greek in their perspectives on the play. The discussion then shifted to analyzing the opening speeches of Greek characters in a play, particularly focusing on Agamemnon's speech about the challenges of a seven-year siege and how to address the growing demoralization of the troops. Peregrine requested a detailed breakdown of the three opening Greek speeches to better understand the logic and arguments presented in the dense language.

Literary Metaphors in War Text

The group discussed literary metaphors from a text, focusing on nature imagery including tree growth and sea navigation as analogies for war and human character. Peregrine explained how these metaphors illustrate how adversity reveals true character, with the "shallow boats" representing ordinary people and the "strong-ribbed bulk" representing heroes who demonstrate their true worth during storms. The discussion included questions about historical context, particularly regarding fallen heroes and supply logistics during a seven-year siege, with Peregrine clarifying that the metaphors were not literal but represented character distinctions in times of challenge.

Importance of Order and Hierarchy

Peregrine analyzed a passage discussing the importance of order and hierarchy, particularly in military and societal contexts. He explained how maintaining proper degrees and ranks prevents chaos, using examples from both ancient military tactics and astronomical concepts like planetary alignment. Peregrine concluded by highlighting how neglecting proper order leads to discord and weakness, using Troy as an example of a situation where proper hierarchy was not maintained.

Ulysses' Critique of Achilles

The group discussed Ulysses' speech in which he criticizes Achilles for not participating in battle and instead mocking the leaders from his tent. They analyzed whether Ulysses represents a fascist perspective or is simply manipulative, with Peregrine suggesting he might be like "the Ted Cruz of the moment." The discussion then moved to Ulysses' prescription for the problem, which involves imitating both Achilles and Agamemnon to highlight their disrespectful behavior, with Geneva reading the relevant passage aloud.

Play Scene Analysis Discussion

Peregrine and David discussed a scene from a play, focusing on a dialogue between characters including Aeneas, Hector, and others. They analyzed the meaning and context of various lines, particularly regarding war strategy and the role of love in warfare. Geneva joined the discussion to point out the hypocrisy of the Greek characters, noting that Achilles was sulking over a love dispute while criticizing others for prioritizing love over war. The conversation also touched on theatrical conventions, such as characters speaking in the third person to aid the audience in character recognition.

Play Scene Analysis Discussion

The group discussed a scene from a play, focusing on the character Ajax being sent in place of Achilles. They analyzed Ulysses' manipulative strategy to remove Ajax and potentially spur Achilles to action. The conversation then shifted to Act 2, where they examined Hector's response to the suggestion of returning Helen. Hector argued that the war had cost too much, with each soul lost being as valuable as Helen herself. The discussion concluded with Troilus questioning whether the worth of the Trojan king's cause should be measured by such small scales.

Honor vs Reason in Shakespeare

David and Peregrine discussed a debate in a play about the value of honor versus reason, specifically focusing on a debate between Hector and Troilus regarding whether to return Helen. They examined how Elizabethan thinkers were influenced by Cicero's concepts of duty, particularly through his work "De Officiis," which supported Troilus's position against returning Helen. The discussion also touched on how Protestant theology influenced the play's themes, particularly through a biblical reference from Matthew's Gospel about idolatry, and how Shakespeare avoided contemporary religious and political topics due to censorship and threat of imprisonment.

Play Themes: Paris and War

Peregrine and David discussed themes from a play, focusing on the character of Paris and the concept of unworthiness in acquiring stolen goods. They explored how the play reflects on the madness and stupidity of war, referencing historical productions set during wartime. The conversation touched on the character Cassandra's role as a prophet whose warnings are ignored and the broader theme of whether individuals should act based on personal desires or collective interests.

Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida Discussion

The group next focused on the final scenes in Act 2 and analyzing character interactions, particularly between Achilles and Patroclus. They reviewed historical context about Homer and Aristotle's timelines, with Peregrine clarifying that the Trojan war (12th-Cent. BC), Homer (9th-C ent. BC) and Aristotle (4th-Cent. BC) lived centuries after apart. The group decided to take a break in after their next meeting on the April 5th due to David's travel to Washington D.C. and planned to resume their discussion on May 7th 2026 with plans to read the *Iliad*.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Books 4-5,**March 08, 2026****Attendees:**

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

Quick recap

The group met to discuss and analyze the final part of *Troilus and Criseyde*, focusing on themes of predestination and free will through a detailed reading of selected passages. They explored how Chaucer's work reflects Boethian philosophy regarding divine providence and human agency, particularly in the context of Troilus's suffering and

Criseyde's decision-making. The participants examined how the characters' fates appear predetermined yet still grapple with personal choices, drawing parallels to the author's role in shaping the narrative. They also discussed the dramatic tension surrounding Criseyde's departure and potential return, as well as the character development of Diomedes and his interactions with Criseyde. The session concluded with reflections on the story's structure and the emotional impact of Troilus's despair and hope.

Next steps

- [All participants: Read the first two books of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida before the next meeting in two weeks.](#)
- [All participants: Consider post-Shakespeare reading options \(Virgil, Ovid, Homer\) for future discussion.](#)
- [Peregrine: Try to read the whole play of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida before the next meeting.](#)

Summary

Predestination and Free Will Debate

The group discussed the concept of predestination versus free will, focusing on a passage from Chaucer (IV, 960-1084) that explores divine providence and Boethius's ideas on the subject. They examined how the text presents a deterministic view where human actions and thoughts are bound by an inflexible bond, suggesting that merit, virtue, and vice are all preordained. The discussion highlighted the contradiction between the certainty of divine foreknowledge and the existence of free will, questioning the justice of rewarding or punishing individuals for actions not freely chosen. The group also considered the implications of this view on human agency and the futility of prayer or hope for escape from predetermined outcomes.

Predestination vs. Free Will Debate

The group next focused on a passage from Boethius that explores whether God's foreknowledge of events makes them inevitable. They analyzed different arguments about whether God's prescience leads to predetermined outcomes or if events still occur through free choice despite God's knowledge. The discussion included a comparison to authorship, where the author knows the story's outcome, but the characters must experience it, drawing parallels to God's relationship with human actions.

Foreknowledge and Free Will Discussion

The group discussed the concept of foreknowledge and its relationship to necessity, using a passage from a text to explore this idea. They compared this to the role of an author in writing a story, where the author may know the outcome, but the characters still have their own choices. Peregrine suggested that this metaphorically pertains to God's prescience, knowing what will happen but not making it happen. The discussion also touched on how authors sometimes revise their plans due to inspiration from their characters, and how this can create unexpected twists in stories or even in tragedies.

Divine Foreknowledge and Human Agency

David and Peregrine discussed the concept of necessity in divine foreknowledge, exploring how God's prescience of events does not necessitate those events but rather that they must occur as foreseen. They also examined the story of Cressida's impending departure, which is predetermined but altered by a brilliant human idea—a prisoner swap proposed by her father to save her from the doomed Trojans. The discussion highlighted the tension between human agency and divine foreknowledge, with Peregrine noting that while the story's outcome was predetermined, human actions like the swap could still influence its course.

Text Translation and Poetic Analysis

David and Peregrine discussed the translation and interpretation of a text, focusing on its poetic structure and thematic elements. They analyzed specific lines and phrases, including references to gods, predestination, and Criseyde's plans to deceive her father. Peregrine suggested listening to the Audible recording for a dramatic reading

of a modern translation. They also examined the character's motivations and the implications of her actions, considering the consequences of her plan to elope with Troilus.

Troilus and Criseyde's Emotional Conflict

The group discussed the character of Troilus in the text, noting his whiny and fainting behavior, which Elizabeth found tiresome. They analyzed the dramatic tension surrounding Criseyde's decision to leave Troy and her emotional exchange with Diomedes. David and Elizabeth debated the reasons behind Criseyde's conversion and the lack of detail about her relationship with her father. The discussion concluded with Troilus's emotional turmoil and the author's admission of being unable to fully capture the depth of his sorrow.

Criseyde's Departure and Literary Adaptation

They examined how Chaucer adapted this material in *Troilus and Criseyde*, from Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, noting that while Chaucer characterized her response as thankfulness, he omitted some details about her exchange. The discussion also touched on the significance of dreams in literature. Finally, they analyzed Pandarus's efforts to encourage Troilus to overcome his reluctance to participate in the war, highlighting the contrast between the epic narrative's portrayal of eager warriors and the more nuanced human reactions to conflict.

Troilus and Criseyde Character Analysis

The group next analyzed Criseyde's emotional state and her father's opposition to her seeing Troilus again, as well as the role of Diomedes in the plot. The participants also examined the author's use of language and literary devices, such as foreshadowing and character descriptions. They noted that the story presents a complex view of love and loyalty, with characters facing difficult choices and moral dilemmas.

Cressida's Character in Chaucer's Troilus

The group discussed the character of Cressida in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, focusing on her relationship with Diomedes and her transition from loving Troilus to falling for Diomedes. They compared Chaucer's portrayal with Boccaccio's version, noting differences in how Cressida's class and status are depicted. The class difference is emphasized in Chaucer, while Boccaccio's version is less explicit about it. The group also touched on the sources Chaucer drew from, including Benoit's *Troy*, and discussed the sequence of events leading up to Cressida's betrayal of Troilus. They concluded by scheduling two sessions on Shakespeare play *Troilus and Cressida* and planned to compare and contrast the characters and authorial treatment in between Chaucer's and Shakespeare's versions.

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.

