APPRECIATION OF CLASSIC BRITISH

经典英美文学作品赏析

（英文版）

李 涛 / 编著

AND AMERICAN LITERARY WORKS

Appreciation of Classic British and American Literary Works

对外经济贸易大学出版社
University of International Business and Economics Press

需要全本请访问 www.ertongbook.com

经典英美文学作品赏析

（英文版）

Appreciation of Classic British and American Literary Works

李　涛　编著

对外经济贸易大学出版社
中国·北京

图书在版编目（CIP）数据

经典英美文学作品赏析：英文 / 李涛编著. —北京：对外经济贸易大学出版社，2021.6
ISBN 978-7-5663-2284-5

Ⅰ. ①经… Ⅱ. ①李… Ⅲ. ①英语–高等学校–教材 ②英国文学–文学欣赏–高等学校–教材③文学欣赏–美国–高等学校–教材 Ⅳ. ①H319.39

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字（2021）第 113178 号

经典英美文学作品赏析（英文版）
Appreciation of Classic British and American Literary Works

李　涛　**编著**

责任编辑：郭玉红

出版发行：对外经济贸易大学出版社　　邮政编码：100029
社　　址：北京市朝阳区惠新东街 10 号　　邮购电话：010－64492338
网　　址：www.uibep.com　　发行部电话：010－64492342
资源网址：www.uibepresources.com　　E-mail：uibep@126.com

成品尺寸：185mm×260mm　　印　　刷：北京时代华都印刷有限公司
印　　张：17.75　　版　　次：2021 年 6 月北京第 1 版
字　　数：410 千字　　印　　次：2021 年 6 月第 1 次印刷
ISBN 978-7-5663-2284-5　　定　　价：59.00 元

前言

《经典英美文学作品赏析》是顺应人文素质教育的教学理念，为高校大学英语课所编写的教材，旨在指导学生在阅读、理解、欣赏英美文学原著的同时，能够更好地理解普遍人性、感悟人生哲理、追求美好的精神境界。

首先，需要谈一下为高校大学英语课编写《经典英美文学作品赏析》教材的初衷。近年来，大学英语教学面临着极大的挑战，大学生入学时的英语水平较从前已有明显提高。在传统方式的英语教学中，学生常会感到英语能力的提高进入了瓶颈期，而问题的关键症结是英语文化的缺失。记得有这样一个故事，周恩来总理当年曾邀请外宾一同欣赏《梁山伯与祝英台》，当外宾要了解剧情时，翻译费了九牛二虎之力讲解，但外宾仍感费解。此时，周恩来总理不得不亲自出手帮忙，他只说了一句话，但却起到了四两拨千斤的作用。周总理说："《梁山伯与祝英台》就是中国的《罗密欧与朱莉叶》。"就如这个故事所提醒我们的，文化背景知识在提高英语能力过程中的作用至关重要，拓宽文化背景是中国大学生提高英语能力的关键。中国学生学习汉语时都要从中国经典文学作品学起，任何一名中国学生都不会忘记自己在语文课上赏析了《诗经》选读、先秦散文、楚辞汉赋、唐宋诗词、元代戏剧、明清小说和大量当代文学领域的名篇佳作。当我们评论外国人的汉语水平时，如果有外国人能用汉语说出"你简直就像诸葛亮""她简直就像林黛玉"，我们会认为他的汉语学到家了。同样，我们也期待中国大学生说出"Don't make yourself a Macbeth（别把自己变成麦克白）""I don't want to be a Frankenstein（我不想成为弗兰肯斯坦）"这样有文化内涵的英语。用经典阅读的方法讲授英语，可以开阔学生的文化视野，有利于培养学生的跨文化交际的意识和能力，同时也陶冶学生性情，丰富精神文化生活，使学生认识人生。文学的广泛题材在表达悟性、反思生活方面的价值，是任何其他方面的学习都难以取代的。

传统"英美文学"教学使用的教材大多有较大难度，这在很大程度上给刚开始接触英美文学的学生带来了困难，畏难情绪又无疑会挫伤学生的学习兴趣和热情。据本教材编者的调查，各院校采用的文学教材多分为"文学史"和"文学选读"教材，而本教材是"史选"合一的教材。此外，与传统"英美文学"教学教材相比，本教材的优势在于：

（一）传统"英美文学"教材的教学内容多出自从早期的文学起源到 20 世纪中期到二战结束的作品，早期作品难度较大，在授课时要把大量时间用在单词、句子、篇章意思等的解释上，而留给对作品的审美解读的时间就不多了。因此，在教材编写过程中要

着眼于可读性、灵活性、启发性和实用性等特点，以便激发学生的学习热情。本教材充分考虑中国大学生英语学习的实际情况，精心选编教学材料，比如，尽量放弃一些语言难度大的早期英语作品。本教材的选材范围主要是 19 世纪以后的经典英美名著，这些经典作品的名字听起来耳熟能详，用英语去了解这些名著会有助于唤醒学生的学习热情。本教材注重对经典名篇进行深入细致的学习和探讨，尽最大可能避免学生因所阅读的文本过于艰深枯燥而丧失学习积极性。

（二）本教材最大的亮点在于重视经典的影响力，在本教材中，学生所阅读的文学作品形成了完整链条，整个英美文学整体演进过程中的经典都没有错过。学生既能接触到作为英语文学和英语诗歌的奠基者——杰弗里·乔叟（Geoffrey Chaucer）的《坎特伯雷故事集》（*The Canterbury Tales*）；原汁原味地感受莎士比亚戏剧《哈姆雷特》的魅力；欣赏到简·奥斯汀（Jane Austen）、查尔斯·狄更斯（Charles Dickens）及托马斯·哈代（Thomas Hardy）等维多利亚时期作家的叙述风格；体验到弗吉尼亚·伍尔夫（Virginia Woolf）文体实验作品中的意识流手法。同时学生又可以概览美国文学的发展，从清教主义时期的纳撒尼尔·霍桑（Nathaniel Hawthorne）的《红字》（*The Scarlet Letter*），到镀金时代（The Gilded Age）马克·吐温（Mark Twain）的《汤姆·索耶历险记》（*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*），再到体现美国梦幻灭的弗朗西斯·菲茨杰拉德（Francis S. Fitzgerald）的《了不起的盖茨比》（*The Great Gatsby*）和西奥多·德莱塞（Theodore Dreiser）的《美国悲剧》（*An American Tragedy*）。另一方面，本教材对英美文学作品的连贯性和整体性的考量有助于适当引入文学批评理论，这对于开拓学生视野，培养其批判性思维能力和创新能力将大有益处。总之，本教材旨在改变英美文学课堂教学中不重视对文本内涵挖掘的教学现状，力图为学生鉴赏文学作品提供适当的切入点和批判价值的尺度，以提高学生的思辨能力。

（三）本教材只选取每个西方文艺潮流中最具代表性的作品，并为中西文化的对比留有余地，如，把莎士比亚与关汉卿、汤显祖等中国古代戏剧家的创作手法进行比较分析，把米尔顿（John Milton）《失乐园》（*Paradise Lost*）中“撒旦”形象与《西游记》中的“美猴王”人物形象塑造进行对比分析；把哈代（Thomas Hardy）的《苔丝》（*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*）与《红楼梦》的叙事时代背景与主人公的悲剧命运的成因进行对比分析，诸如此类的对比学习让东西方文化在课堂上交汇，产生穿越时空的艺术碰撞，能使学生在熟悉西方文化的同时，也重温中国传统文化，提升学生们的民族自豪感。本教材在介绍西方文化的过程中，提倡“平视”西方文化，而不是“仰视”，教学实践中有很多弘扬民族文化和引发学生对中国传统文化珍视的场合，例如，《哈姆雷特》中哈姆雷特评价谄媚的侍臣奥斯里克：“他在吸奶之前，总会对他母亲的奶头说些恭维话。”这样的夸张手法，既突出了人物的性格特征，也反映了当时丹麦王宫的不良风气。在使用本教材的教学过程中，通过中西文化对比，可以让学生们认识到中华民族文化的美好。

在新媒体时代，本教材可以与教学模式的创新路径相对接，运用慕课和微课，实行“翻转课堂”，进行多元化教学。教材使用者可以在教学过程中利用视频、音频以及图片来加强学生的理解，将学生的视觉与听觉调动起来，增加学生的学习兴趣，从而提高教学效率与质量。借助线上自主学习，可以把宝贵的课堂时间大部分留给学生，使学生更多地

参与课堂活动，有的放矢地引导学生开展戏剧表演和自由讨论评论习作等教学活动，本教材所提倡的这种教学模式可以让文学作品所蕴含的丰富智慧、感情、原创力、想象力、生命思想以及审美意识在不知不觉中融入学生的思维中，使学生的知识水平、文学鉴赏能力和人文素养同时得到提高。

经典英美文学作品之所以能够成为“经典”，是因为它们生动地揭示和展现了社会生活风貌。文学代表某种深层文化，阅读经典的价值是目前“快餐式”的“浅阅读”无法替代的。希望当代中国大学生在接受新事物的同时不忘记“美”的源流，希望他们能通过用英语阅读“经典”，传承“经典”，并创造性地使用“经典”。

本教材在编写中得到了北京科技大学教材建设项目的经费资助，特此感谢！

李　涛

2021 年 1 月

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	The Canterbury Tales	1
CHAPTER TWO	Hamlet	11
CHAPTER THREE	Paradise Lost	27
CHAPTER FOUR	The Rime of the Ancient Mariner	43
CHAPTER FIVE	Frankenstein	53
CHAPTER SIX	Pride and Prejudice	69
CHAPTER SEVEN	Great Expectations	91
CHAPTER EIGHT	Tess of the d'Urbervilles	111
CHAPTER NINE	Heart of Darkness	135
CHAPTER TEN	Mrs. Dalloway	157
CHAPTER ELEVEN	The Scarlet Letter	175
CHAPTER TWELVE	The Adventures of Tom Sawyer	195
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	The Great Gatsby	223
CHAPTER FOURTEEN	An American Tragedy	249
References		272

CHAPTER ONE

The Canterbury Tales

Author: Geoffrey Chaucer

Known as the first English author, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote in English at a time when Latin was considered the language which would not change, and most of the upper-class English spoke French. Chaucer revolutionized the literary scene of the Middle Ages, and hence venerated as "the father of English literature", or, alternatively, "the father of English poetry". Chaucer was the first buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. His use of English in his poetry helped establish Middle English vernacular as the mainstream language of the day, replacing Latin and French and in doing so, paving the way for other literary greats such as Shakespeare. In his lifetime he was able to achieve many accomplishments in a variety of fields including most famously as an author and poet but also as a philosopher, astronomer, diplomat and civil servant.

Geoffrey Chaucer was born around 1343 to John and Agnes de Copton Chaucer, a prosperous second generation wine merchant. By the time he was a young man in 1357, he got the position to work at the court under the charge of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster and her husband Lionel, Earl of Ulster. While working at the court Chaucer impressed his employers with his splendid story-telling ability and song composition. His life in court was interrupted when the Hundred Years' War began to unfold on the international stage in 1359. Edward III invaded France. Elizabeth's husband, travelled to France as part of the English army and Chaucer accompanied him. Chaucer was captured during a siege at the French city of Reims. Fortunately for the young Chaucer, Edward III paid a large ransom to secure his release.

Chaucer and Gaunt had a connection through marriage, as they had both married the daughters of Sir Paon de Roet, a French Knight. John of Gaunt, who would later become an influential figure in Chaucer's own political career, as well as serving to inspire one of his first poems. "The Book of the Duchess", written around 1368, was one of Chaucer's first major poems, and it commemorated the death of Blanche de Lancaster, Gaunt's late wife. In the poem

there are various references to the word “white”, referring to the name Blanche and it ends with the phrase “long castel”, a link to the House of Lancaster. The poem itself has hints of traditional French poetry although Chaucer developed his own style through the relationship between the fictionalized narrator of the poem and the mourner, representative of Gaunt. Chaucer continued to develop this originality of style in his later writing career.

Meanwhile, in serving as a member of the royal court of Edward III, Chaucer undertook various roles which involved diplomatic missions across Europe. His travels took him to France, Genoa and Florence. These experiences allowed him to familiarize himself with the work of esteemed authors such as Boccaccio and Dante, who had an enriching impact on his work. His poem “Troilus and Criseyde”, influenced by Italian language and literature, tells a story of medieval romance doomed to fail against a backdrop of the historic scene of the Battle of Troy. The poem took its inspiration from Dante’s love for Beatrice as told in “Convito” (1307) and from Petrarch’s love for Laura as manifested in the sonnets.

In the 1370’s, Chaucer played an important role in domestic politics. In 1374 he was granted the important post of controller of customs taxes on hides, skins, and wool. Chaucer had to keep the records himself as well as oversee the collectors. By 1386 he had become a member of parliament in Kent and attended the famous “Wonderful Parliament” of November 1386, a parliamentary session which attempted to reform King Richard II’s administration. He continued to hold important roles in politics and served in various positions ranging from customs control to Justice of the Peace, an MP and in 1389 a clerk of the king’s work. Eventually, his work involved administrating and managing royal building projects. In his lifetime he ended up serving Edward III and Richard II whilst holding a variety of royal posts.

Unfortunately, in 1390, he was robbed of both his and the king’s money three times in four days. Though there was no direct punishment, in 1390 or 1391 he was eased out of his clerk’s job. Chaucer eventually got into financial trouble; his last poem, “the Complaint to his Purse”, is a letter asking King Henry for money. Nonetheless, Chaucer moved to a house in the Westminster Abbey because a house on church grounds granted him sanctuary from creditors. Chaucer died in 1400, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey. And then comes the tradition of burying poets, or erecting memorials to them, in Westminster Abbey.

Excerpt

(General Prologue)
When in April the sweet showers fall
That pierce March’s drought to the root and all
And bathed every vein in liquor that has power
To generate therein and sire the flower;
When Zephyr[1]also has with his sweet breath,

Filled again, in every holt and heath,
The tender shoots and leaves, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the Ram 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 folk do long to go on pilgrimage[2],
And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,
To distant shrines well known in distant lands.
And specially from every shire's end
Of England they to Canterbury went,
The holy blessed martyr there to seek
Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak
It happened that, in that season, on a day
In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay
Ready to go on pilgrimage and start
To Canterbury, full devout[3] at heart,
There came at nightfall to that hostelry[4]
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
That toward Canterbury town would ride.
The rooms and stables spacious were and wide,
And well we there were eased, and of the best.
And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,
So had I spoken with them, every one,
That I was of their fellowship anon[5],
And made agreement that we'd early rise
To take the road, as I will to you apprise[6].
But none the less, whilst I have time and space,
Before yet further in this tale I pace,
It seems to me in accord with reason
To describe to you the state of every one
Of each of them, as it appeared to me,
And who they were, and what was their degree,
And even what clothes they were dressed in;
And with a knight thus will I first begin.
A KNIGHT there was, and what a gentleman,

Who, from the moment that he first began
To ride about the world, loved chivalry,
Truth, honour, freedom and all courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his sovereign's war,
And therein had he ridden, no man more,
As well in Christendom as heathenesse,
And honoured everywhere for worthiness.
At Alexandria, in the winning battle he was there;
Often put in the place of honour, a chair.
Above all nations' knights in Prussia.
In Latvia raided he, and Russia,
No christened man so oft of his degree.
In far Granada at the siege was he
Of Algeciras, and in Belmarie.
At Ayas was he and at Satalye
When they were won; and on the Middle Sea
At many a noble meeting chanced to be.
Of mortal battles he had fought fifteen,
And he'd fought for our faith at Tramissene
Three times in duels, always killed his foe.[7]
This self-same worthy knight had been also
At one time with the lord of Palatye
Against another heathen[8] in Turkey:
And always won he widespread fame for prize.
Though so strong and brave, he was very wise
And of temper as meekly as a maid.
He never yet had any vileness[9] said,
In all his life, to whatsoever wight.
He was a truly perfect, noble knight.
But now, to tell you all of his array,[10]
His steeds[11] were good, but he was not gaily dressed.
A tunic[12] of simple cloth he possessed
Discoloured and stained[13] by his habergeon;[14]
For he had lately returned from his voyage
And now was going on this pilgrimage.
With him there was his son, a young SQUIRE,
A lover and a lively bachelor,
With locks well curled, as if they'd laid in press.

Some twenty years of age he was, I guess.
In stature he was of average length,
Wondrously active, agile, and great of strength.
He'd ridden sometime with the cavalry
In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy,
And conducted well within that little space
In hope to win thereby his lady's grace.
Embroidered he was, as if he were a meadow bright,
All full of fresh-cut flowers red and white.
Singing he was, or whistling, all the day;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleeves both long and wide.
Well could he sit on horse, and fairly ride.
He could make songs and words thereto indite,
Joust, and dance too, as well as sketch and write.
So hot he loved that, while night told her tale,
He slept no more than does a nightingale.
Courteous he, and humble, willing and able,
And carved before his father at the table.
A YEOMAN[15] had he at his side,
No more servants, for he chose so to ride;
And he was clothed in coat and hood of green.
A sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen
Under his belt he bore very carefully
(Well could he keep his gear yeomanly:
His arrows had no drooped feathers low),
And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
A cropped head had he and a sun-browned face.
Of woodcraft he knew all the useful ways.
Upon his arm he bore a bright bracer,
And at one side a sword and a buckler,[16]
And at the other side a dagger bright,
Well sheathed and sharp as a spear's point in the light;
A Christopher medal on his breast of silver sheen.
He bore a horn, the baldric all of green;
A forester he truly was, I guess.
There was also a nun, a PRIORESS,[17]
Who, in her smiling, modest was and coy;

Her greatest oath was but "By Saint Eloy!"
And she was called Madam Eglantine.
Very well she sang the service divine,
Intoning through her nose, becomingly;
And she spoke French fairly and fluently,
After the school of Stratford-at-the-Bow,
For French of Paris style she didn't know.
At table her manners were well taught withal,[18]
And never let morsels[19] from her lips fall,
Nor dipped her fingers deep in sauce, but ate
With so much care the food upon her plate
That no drop could fall upon her breast.
In courtesy she had delight and zest.
Her upper lip was always wiped so clean
That on her cup no speck or spot was seen
Of grease, when she had drunk her draught of wine.
Graciously she reached for food to dine.
And certainly delighting in good sport,
She was very pleasant, amiable—in short.
She was in pains to imitate the cheer
Of courtliness, and stately manners here,
And would be held worthy of reverence.
But, to speak about her moral sense,
She was so charitable and solicitous[20]
That she would weep if she but saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, whether it were dead or bled.
She had some little dogs, that she fed
On roasted flesh, or milk and fine white bread.
But sorely she wept if one of them were dead,
Or if men smote[21] it with a stick to smart:
Then pity ruled her, and her tender heart.
Very seemly her pleated wimple was;
Her nose was fine; her eyes were grey as glass;
Her mouth was small and therewith soft and red;
But certainly her forehead was fairly spread;
It was almost a full span broad, I own,
To tell the truth, she was not undergrown.
Her cloak, as I was well aware, had a graceful charm

She wore a small coral trinket on her arm
A string of beads and gauded[22] all with green;
And therefrom hung a brooch of golden sheen
Whereon there was engraved a crowned "A,"
And under, Amor vincit omnia.[23]

Notes

1. zephyr: a soft gentle wind
2. pilgrimage: a journey to a holy place for religious reasons
3. devout: believing strongly in a particular religion
4. hostelry: hostel
5. anon: quite soon
6. apprise: tell or inform
7. foe: enemy
8. heathen: a person who has no religion or who believes in a religion that is not one of the world's main religions
9. vileness: morally objectionable things or behavior
10. array: an impressive display
11. steed: a horse to ride on
12. tunic: a tightly fitting jacket worn as part of a uniform by police officers, soldiers, etc.
13. stain: to leave a mark that is difficult to remove on something
14. habergeon: (Middle Ages) a kind of armor
15. yeoman: (in the past) a farmer who owned and worked on his land
16. buckler: armor carried on the arm to fend off blows
17. prioress: a nun who is in charge of a convent
18. withal: in addition
19. morsel: a small amount something, especially food
20. solicitous: full of anxiety and concern
21. smite: (Smote is the past tense of smite) to strike sharply or heavily especially with the hand or an implement held in the hand
22. gaud: to decorate with
23. Amor vincit omnia: Love conquers all.

Commentary

Before Shakespeare, Chaucer dominated British literary scene, most famous for his work *The Canterbury Tales*. Enlightened by Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer came up with the

ingenious literary device of having a pilgrimage, a technique that allowed him to bring together a diverse group of people. Chaucer's narrators have a wide spectrum of society with various ranks and occupations, including a knight, a clerk, a landowner, a monk, a carpenter, a merchant, a miller, a seamstress, a pardoner, a prioress, among others.

Written between 1387 and his death in 1400, *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of 24 stories within a frame story. The collection comprises the stories of 30 pilgrims traveling from London to Canterbury Cathedral to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. Each character is intended to tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two more stories on the way back to London. The reward for telling the best story is a free meal upon their return. Since the collection contains only 24 stories, some historians believe *The Canterbury Tales* remained unfinished upon his death.

The Middle Ages were a period of religious tyranny and intellectual ignorance. *The Canterbury Tales* is considered the most prominent literary work in the Middle Ages in Great Britain, and the reasons for this are manifold.

The Canterbury Tales constitutes a historical and sociological introduction to the life and times of the late Middle Ages. *The Canterbury Tales* is a hidden voice expressing medieval values and beliefs through its historical, religious and political contexts. Writing from so many different perspectives, Chaucer touched on a wide variety of subjects, including religion, politics, social economy, military, gender, social changes, etc. Chaucer was familiar with and was accepted by the lower classes as well as by the higher classes; thus, throughout his life, he was able to observe and present the life of both the highest and the lowest. His gifted mind made the best of these opportunities to censure the vices of the higher classes. Religion is one of the most important themes of *The Canterbury Tales*, as is indicated in the title and the fact that several characters are church people. *The Canterbury Tales* manifests that religion affected the Middle Ages life and medieval literature deeply. The church people were portrayed in a derogatory manner. The friar, the Pardoner and the Summoner in *The Canterbury Tales* are deeply corrupt, avaricious and abusive, although they were traditionally considered as holy men. *The Canterbury Tales* displays the conflicts between the different classes. By the late fourteenth century, the Catholic Church governing England had become extremely wealthy. The cost to build the luxury Catholic Churches and the supply for the extravagant church people were exorbitant. In an age of plague and famine, the sight of a church ornamented with gold seemed exasperating to some people, and the Church's preaching against greed and covetousness suddenly seemed hypocritical. Distaste for the Churchmen can be seen by the portrayal of the Pardoner and the Summoner who takes bribes and bribes others, and indulges themselves sensually and gastronomically.

The first teller of the first tale is the Knight, who represents the ideal of a medieval chivalry, covering prowess, fidelity, honour, generosity, etc. He has widely traveled and battled victoriously, participating in no less than fifteen of the great crusades of his era. Apart from

battling in formal duels, the Knight has fought against the Muslims in Egypt, Spain, and Turkey, and the Russian Orthodox in Lithuania and Russia. The Knight with glory is a noble man who fights for truth and for Christ. The Knight is not even proud or arrogant because of his accomplishments; rather, he is modest and humble, wearing his stained cloak without pretensions. Gallant, experienced, rational and prudent, the Knight is admirable and almost flawless. If the Knight is idealistic, the Squire, son and apprentice of the Knight, represents the realistic. The Squire can sing, compose poetry, and ride a horse very well. He is curly-haired, handsome, burly, vigorous and loves dancing and courting.

The Pardoner works for the Church, giving reprieves to the sinners from penance in exchange for charitable donations to the Church. He can preach a good sermon, but he is not a good person, hypocritical, untrustworthy and avaricious. He sings a ballad—"Com hider, love, to me!" but what he does impairs the already challenged virtue of his profession. The Pardoner carries with him a bag of pardons and fake relics from Rome, including a brass cross filled with stones to make it seem as heavy as gold and a glass jar full of pig's bones. He even says to have the veil of the Virgin Mary. The Pardoner uses the counterfeit relics to cheat the credulous parishioners into giving him money. To the Pardoner, visiting relics on pilgrimage had become a tourist industry. He sells tangible objects such as slips of paper that promise forgiveness of sins or animal bones that people can string around their necks to deter the devil. The Pardoner tells a tale about how he talks the gullible people into indulging, which exemplifies the vice condemned in his sermon.

The Wife of Bath is one of two female storytellers (the other is the Prioress). She is a middle-aged woman with a gap between her front teeth, which was considered attractive in Chaucer's time. She is showy in appearance, wearing bright scarlet red stockings. Bath is the name of a town on the Avon River, rather than the name of this woman's husband. She is a successful seamstress with her own business. Bath was a major English cloth-making town in the Middle Ages, fighting for a place among the great European exporters of cloth with cities in Netherlands and Belgium, which can be reflected in both her talent as a seamstress and her stylish attire and ornaments. The Wife of Bath is experienced on pilgrimages, having traveled to Jerusalem three times and elsewhere in Europe. She's experienced in love and sex, too, having had five husbands and talking unabashedly about her prowess in bed.

Chaucer created a wide variety of characters from all different levels of late-14th-century society. Chaucer's use of such a wide range of classes and types of people was unprecedented in English literature. His descriptions of their occupations and clothing provide historians with valuable insight into how people lived at that time. Chaucer knew the world from many aspects, and his genius at understanding basic human nature made him the great poet he was. The readers would find it difficult not to like such characters as the knight with his love of ideals of chivalry, honor, fidelity and freedom; the Wife of Bath, even with all her bawdiness; or the Miller with his vulgarity that amuses rather than offends readers. The attractive characters make

it a delight to read *The Canterbury Tales.*

The society was moving into a social system with a growing middle class at the time Chaucer composed the tales. The pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales* are from every class, including both traditional and emerging classes. The diverse social classes of the pilgrims are an important part of *The Canterbury Tales*. When describing the pilgrims, Chaucer introduces emphatically their occupations, for little is known beyond these descriptions. The stereotypes about these classes appear in the Prologue and in the individual tales. Morality is still connected with the top class; the Knight, is treated as an honest and upright person, as is the poorest member of the clergy, the Parson. However, not all members of the top class meet this high moral standard, as the Friar and the Pardoner demonstrate.

The stories in *The Canterbury Tales* range from humorous, rustic, obscene and bawdy to moral and contemplative. Various genres were employed, including religious legends, romances, allegories, fables, sermons, and sometimes mixtures of these. *The Canterbury Tales* is highly regarded also because it was written in English. In the late 14th century, French was still the primary literary language. *The Canterbury Tales* became one of the first notable works of literature to be written in English. The greatest contribution of *The Canterbury Tales* to English literature was the popularization of the English vernacular in mainstream literature, as opposed to French, Italian or Latin. In *The Canterbury Tales*, the technique of the heroic couplet and the iambic-pentameter were employed, in which Chaucer achieved his consummate artistic power.

The Canterbury Tales consists of the General Prologue, The Knight's Tale, The Miller's Tale, The Reeve's Tale, The Cook's Tale, The Man of Law's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale, The Friar's Tale, The Summoner's Tale, The Clerk's Tale, The Merchant's Tale, The Squire's Tale, The Franklin's Tale, The Second Nun's Tale, The Canon's Yeoman's Tale, The Physician's Tale, The Pardoner's Tale, The Shipman's Tale, The Prioress's Tale, The Tale of Sir Thopas, The Tale of Melibeus (in prose), The Monk's Tale, The Nun's Priest's Tale, The Manciple's Tale, and The Parson's Tale (in prose), and ends with "Chaucer's Retraction".

Questions

1. How many pilgrims does the narrator claim he meets at the Tabard inn?

2. Why does the narrator begin his discussion of the various pilgrims by describing the knight first? Why does the narrator greatly admire him?

3. In what way is the Pardoner evil in *The Canterbury Tales*?

4. Why can *The Canterbury Tales* be considered as a microcosm of the medieval world?

5. Why is Chaucer considered "the father of English poetry"?