

# How the book canterbury tales reflects its time



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of the of the Concerned 13 May How the Book Canterbury Tales reflects it's Time? In a way most of the s try to reflect some aspects of their contemporary life and the prevailing feeling and thought. In that context Chaucer's Canterbury Tales has almost a documentary value for whoever desires to reconstruct the actual life of 14th century England (Daiches 91). Chaucer as a person hated insularism (Daiches 90). All his life he was in the thick of men and affairs. He lived in no ivory tower of his own. He saw much of life. He was well acquainted with all classes and conditions (Daiches 90). He also travelled abroad (Daiches 89). All these experiences trained him to be a poet of men as he appeared eventually in the Canterbury Tales. In the Canterbury Tales he fixed up the spirit of his age for future generations to observe and appreciate. In the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer is almost silent about the very stirring historic and political events of his age (Phillips 27). Chaucer does of course casually refer to some of these events, but there is no full length treatment of any of them. The Peasant's Revolt is referred to in the Nun's Priest's Tale. The Battles of Crecy and Poitiers are glanced at elsewhere. The allusion to the Black Death comes in Chaucer's character sketch of the Doctor of Physic in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. There is then a latent reference to Lollardism in the delineation of the Poor Parson who like a Lollard believed in simple living and high thinking. Chaucer's subtlety with the treatment of historical events could be attributed to his concern as a poet, with the dateless and universal aspects of human nature. The Canterbury Tales gives us a fairly authentic and equally extensive picture of the socio-political conditions prevailing in England in the age of Chaucer (Schoeck & Taylor 31). Each of the thirty pilgrims hails from a different walk of life, and among themselves they build up an epitome of

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their age (Schoeck & Taylor 34). Each of them is a representative of a section of the society as well as an individual. The thirty pilgrims provide the reader with the taste of life in the England of Chaucer. Chaucer's England was predominantly medieval in spirit and the most outstanding feature of the Middle Ages was chivalry (Daiches 89). Chaucer's Knight is a true representative of the medieval chivalry. Even the tale he tells, is like him, imbued with the spirit of medieval chivalry. For the first time in history the trading and artisan sections of society were getting prosperous owing to expansion in trade and commerce in the age of Chaucer (Daiches 97). Chaucer does tell in the Canterbury Tales that the Haberdasher, the Carpenter, the Weaver, the Dyer, and the Tapicer were well clothed and equipped. Chaucer's portrait of the Doctor of Physic is fairly representative of the theory and practice of medicine in his age. In the times of Chaucer the Church had become a hotbed of profligacy, corruption, and rank materialism (Daiches 101). Thus the ecclesiastical characters in Canterbury Tales that are the Monk, the Friar, the Summoner, the Pardoner, and the Prioress are all shown to be corrupt, pleasure loving and materialistic in outlook. Hence the Canterbury Tales, vividly and elaborately reflects the varied aspects of the society of its times. Works Cited Daiches, David. A Critical History of English Literature (Volume One). New York: The Ronald Press Company, 2000. Phillips, Helen. An Introduction to the Canterbury Tales. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. Schoeck, Richard J & Taylor Jerome. Chaucer Criticism: Canterbury Tales. London: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010.