

Feminists in the wife of bath



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Wife of Bath is a woman who has had a total of five husbands and is in the process of finding a sixth. She declares that experience exceeds knowledge and examines her background with her previous failed marriages. Her initial three marriages were old men who she married during a young age; they died and left her with a considerable amount of property, making her rather wealthy.

She then chose to marry her fourth husband right after the death of her third husband. She was hurt that although they were married, her husband kept a mistress and refused to cease the relationship. As her husband was often going on business trips, she used that time that he was gone to cultivate a potential relationship with her fifth husband, Jankyn. Eventually her fourth husband dies and she marries Jankyn, her fifth. Despite claiming she married Jankyn for love, the relationship did not go as planned as he always scolded her and compared her to wicked wives from a book. Finally fed up with the scolding, the Wife of Bath tears a page from her husbands book which he responds by hitting her in the side of the head, so hard that she becomes deaf in one ear.

Jankyn then apologizes for doing so and promises he will obey her from now on. She proceeds by burning his book and they begin to live happily after that. Antifeminism is strongly showed in the Wife of Bath's character by the way she gains dominance and authority by inserting sexual attributes to each of her husbands. She never makes an effort to be on an equal standing with any of her husbands and resorts to violence as a way to obtain what she wishes. Her initial three husbands are prosperous and old and she even admits to going as far as teasing her husbands in bed in order to receive

money from them. Her sexuality is the only authority she has over her husbands and she later realizes that it is slowly dying out. She is brash about her deeds and her actions are carried out of negative stereotypes based on women in that time period. Jankyn is the only husband who treats her abusively and inserts dominance in the relationship, making her submissive like her previous husbands, is ironically the only husband she truly loves.

A true feminist would not strike on men just for personal gain and would demonstrate that she is independent. She also does not do much to do that is anything remotely revolutionary or impactful to women in that time period. She advocates her atrocious behavior with the bible by saying "Had God commanded maidenhood to all / Marriage would be commended beyond recall / And certainly if seed were never sown / How could virginity ever be grown?" (page 260). She misinterprets it and it makes her appear irrational. This validates the stereotype of women in that time period that they are not competent enough to grasp in depth meanings that are said in the Bible and if they were to be educated on it, they would only twist the words and use it for their sinful benefits, which further leads her to not doing anything empowering for women. Rather than being a radical character with a feminist aim, The Wife of Bath only pursues men who will grant her anything in exchange for sexual acts. I would strongly recommend this book to people who view medieval times as a time period where women were not allowed to completely act freely, because they will be proven wrong.