

# A tale through the eyes of the wife of bath essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



The Wife of Bath uses reasoning and logic to justify that it should not be looked down upon for a woman to have multiple marriages throughout her lifetime. Allison, the Wife of Bath, argues that God “ bade us all to wax and multiply” (277). Essentially, Allison is claiming that God is the controller of the universe and by marrying multiple men she is simply following his instruction. In addition, the Wife of Bath disputes that there is a double standard about having several marriages. She reasons that while women are looked down upon for having multiple marriages, men throughout history have often married many women and are not shamed. For example, she envies King Solomon for the number of women he had slept with and married. Alison references a counter- point that the Apostle made in which he recommends that women maintain their virginity. She makes the logical point that if all women were abstinent, there would be no one to create more virgins. Her point is made using deductive reasoning because her logic is derived from the fact that without reproduction, the population would die out. Alison claims that St. Paul advocated virginity, but he did not make it an obligation.

In addition, The Wife of Bath discusses that God would not have molded the female and male genitals to be so perfectly fit for one another if they were not meant to be used in harmony. She is reasoning that God gave men and women genitals to use them, and doing so should be endorsed rather than disgraced. The counter- argument to her theory is that nuns and priests commonly argue that genitals are for business rather than pleasure. She then states that it is stated “ in books: ‘ A man must yield his wife her debt’” (280). This quote portrays that it is a man’s duty to satisfy his woman in bed.

The Wife of Bath uses this quote to prove that using genitals should not be used strictly for “ the purguration of urine” and “ to know a male from a female” (279). Rather, genitals should be used for these instances as well as for satisfying sexual desires. Alison describes several of her past five marriages and it appears that she was the authority figure in all but her last. She would often insult her husbands and blame them for things that they did not do.

By making her husbands feel that she was unsatisfied, they worked harder to please her. She attempts to justify her actions by stating that she was not in love with any of the first four men she married and was simply using them for their money. The only marriage in which she actually loved her husband, her fifth marriage, was the only marriage in which her husband dominated. He also treated her terribly by beating her and telling her stories of women who were awful to their husbands. Just as Alison had tried to make her husbands feel shameful by scolding them, her fifth husband, Jonny, made her feel guilty by constantly discussing the vile nature of women. The Wife of Bath wants to justify her multiple marriages because without them, she would not have been able to take expensive vacations and see the world.

The Wife of Bath's tale is a reflection of Alison's opinion and characteristics that were portrayed in her prologue. In the tale, a knight ventures on a journey to save his life and learn what women want most. At the end of his voyage he learns from an old woman that what women desire most is power over their husbands. It is clear in the prologue to the tale that this is Alison's opinion. For instance, Alison enjoys manipulating her husbands. She does so

by holding out on them sexually, scolding them, and blaming them for things that they did not do. Due to her wickedness, any slight act of kindness she portrayed towards her husbands resulted in their complete happiness and satisfaction. She enjoyed keeping her husbands wrapped around her finger and gave them virtually no power. In addition, the knight in the tale marries the old woman in return for her knowledge.

He is entirely upset and disgusted by her. The old woman allows her husband to decide whether he would like her to be beautiful with the risk of her disloyalty or ugly and old but forever faithful to him. When he gives her the power to decide for herself, she is so overjoyed that she becomes both beautiful and loyal. This story contains some parallels to the story of Jonny and Alison. Jonny treated Alison horribly until the day he punched her so hard in her ear that it went deaf. She made him feel so guilty that he gave her all the power she desired. The Wife of Bath uses the old lady as a hint to men that if women are given power, they will become good wives. The knight is also a parallel character to Jonny. At the beginning of the story, the knight violently rapes a woman. Similarly, Alison, in an attempt to make Jonny think she is smitten with him, tells Jonny that she had a dream that he violently raped her. Both the knight and Jonny learn that it is best to allow their wives to be given freedom and power. Alison intentionally leaves the manipulation aspect of gaining power out of her tale in order to fool men into thinking that their wives will be perfect if they are given dominance.

Chaucer aims to establish a clear character through the Wife of Bath's tale and prologue. He begins by giving Alison a clear opinion and characteristics.

These include a need for power in relationships, marrying for money rather than love, and scolding her husbands in order to manipulate them. Chaucer allows the reader to examine Alison's perspective further throughout her tale. The tale is a representation of the Wife of Bath's opinion. The moral of the story was that men should give their wives freedom and power in marriage. This was a clever way for Chaucer to demonstrate the Wife of Bath's character because it is clear that the moral of the tale was Alison's opinion as well. The Wife of Bath's tale is one example of Chaucer's pattern of using the tales in order to help the reader learn more about the character telling them.