

# Essay on the canterbury tales

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There are many characters in the poem *The Canterbury Tales*, and some of them are more important than others. The Prioress, The Wife of Bath, and the Pardoner are some of the most important characters. They have some similarities and some differences, though they all have a purpose in the story. The Prioress is a bashful, sensitive, emotional woman. She overreacts over any small tragedy such as the death of a small animal. She is compassionate and proper. The Prioress wears a brooch with the inscription *All things are subject unto love*.

She is foolishly sentimental and pays harsh attention to manners. She struggles to be well mannered and sophisticated but it is all phony. Chaucer describes her as the image of absolute beauty and righteousness of the day. She is a gentlewoman with a simple and coy smile (91). Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-gray, her mouth small, soft and red, and her forehead fair of spread (93). She likes to eat, and she will not let any morsel go untouched. She speaks French very well, has perfect table manners, and likes being proper.

The Prioress's behavior is scarcely nun-like, although it is not evil or exactly disobedient. She maintains some of the vainness of her pre-convent days, but this is because she is such a well-bred young woman. The Wife of Bath is the most flamboyant of the travelers and she thinks very highly of herself. She was a plump, elaborate, jolly, bold, lusty, and voluptuous woman. She symbolizes Chaucer's grandmother. The Wife of Bath has been married five times and is looking for her next husband. She is a weaver and makes fine cloth.

She wears bright red clothing of different variations, meant to catch the attention of others. The Wife of Bath is opinionated and energetic. She is the most noteworthy of the travelers low on the social scale. Chaucer indicates that she is quite promiscuous. The Wife of Bath shows off her body, mainly her legs. She displays her Sunday clothes with immense pride and makes sure to announce herself conceitedly. She speaks of ten of the upper hand a woman must maintain in marriage, and claims to know the remedies of love, or the rules of the game (100).

The Wife of Bath appears to be a controlling wife, who wants nothing but authority over all men. She is a very envious woman, who desires only a few simple things in life. The Wife of Bath desires the obvious in life, but what she most desires above all is being more powerful than her man, her spouse, and her lover. The Pardoner is an audaciously dishonest man. He is extremely self-loathing yet loyal to his task of swindling people of their money by making them believe that they have sinned and need to buy pardons.

Chaucer compares him to a gelding or a mare (104). Chaucer makes it clear that it is difficult to tell if the Pardoner is a man or a woman. He could not grow a beard, he did not wear a hat, and his hair was fairly long. He is a hypocrite. He tells people they have sinned and need to purchase a pardon from him, while the whole time he is sinning. He is one of the worst and disrespectable of all the travelers. He was very graceful and in church he was a noble ecclesiast (104). He liked to sing and he would sometimes get tips for it so he sang a lot more.

These three characters do not act like they are suppose to. The Prioress does not keep her vowels of the convent well, the Wife of Bath does not keep her commitment to her husbands, and the Pardoner does not keep his vowel to do justice. They are all self-centered and don t care about anyone else. The Wife of Bath and the Pardoner are worried about having money and being in control (power). The Wife of Bath and the Pardoner are evil and do wrong things. The Prioress and the Wife of Bath both want a man, though the Prioress isn t allowed to have one.

The Prioress is quieter than the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner. She also is has not done bad things like the other two have. The Wife of Bath is more controlling than the other two because she wants to be in control of everything. The Pardoner tries to get money out of people by lying to them about their sins. Although these three characters have a lot in common, they have differences too. Though they are some of the lowest in society, they are some of the most important characters in this poem.