

# The nun's priest's tale essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

“ Even within the predictable fable structure, Chaucer is still able to entertain an audience and create comic tension. ” To what extent would you agree with this judgement in relation to The Nun's Priest's Tale? Your discussion should include close reference to Chaucer's narrative methods. As The Nun's Priest's tale is a predictable fable structure, Chaucer needs to use comedy to entertain his audience. Comedy combined with tension helps create an entertaining tale with a moral meaning.

There is a moment of comic tension near the end of the tale, when we see the scene between Chauntecleer and the Fox. As an audience, we know Chauntecleer's fate because of the dreams etc, as does obviously the Fox. We are waiting for Chauntecleer to be snatched by the Fox and therefore the conversation between the naïve cock and the sly fox makes us tense.

Chauntecleer then sings: ‘ and strecche forth his nekke long and small’, giving the Fox the perfect opportunity to snatch Chauntecleer. Its comical because the proleteriats on the pilgrimage who are listening to the tale probably view the upper class as pompous and stuck up, and they see Chauntecleer as typically symbolic of the upper class when he'll do everything to let himself be seen as better than everyone else.

In a way, this is an attack at the higher class, as they see themselves, and their appearance as the most important thing, however the way they are has consequences, and leads Chauntecleer to come close to being eaten! This could be seen as quite comical. Another moment of comic tension is in the scene between Chauntecleer and Madam Pertelote when they are discussing

Chauntecleer's dream. Chaucer builds up tension by short, sharp sentences, and in a way stichomythia is used between the two birds.

We imagine Chauntecleer getting worked up whilst telling the story because of Chaucer's language, for example: " my heart yet jumps with sore affright. ? Now God," cried he, " my vision read aright and keep my body out of foul prison! " Words such as ' cried', ' sore affright' and ' foul prison' create tension because the audience want to know what's happened in the dream for Chauntecleer to be so aggravated.

However the comical aspect of the tension comes when Pertelote shows her response to this pathetic un-manly cock who she loved so dearly: " Alas! cried she, " for by that God above, ? Now have you lost my heart and all my love; ? I cannot love a coward, by my faith. " It still has a sense of tension because the audience are still engaged with the tale, wondering what is going to happen between Chauntecleer and Pertelote and their relationship. However there is a sense of comic here because it's the stereotypical woman who wants her man to be nothing more than brave and courageous, yet Chauntecleer proves himself to be a coward.

The audience may find it comical because they can relate to the tale as it being a human instinct, yet it's portrayed through animals. To conclude, it could be said that although The Nun's Priest's tale is a beast fable, this by no means stops it from being a comical poem with elements of tension throughout. As examined, there are two clear moments of comic tension, and most probably more which are portrayed as tragic, but have a deeper meaning, that of comic tension.