

# Righteous individual in the "wife of bath's" tale



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Wife of Bath's tale begins by introducing a knight who commits a disgraceful sin when he decides to rape a woman. After the incident, a huge riot overwhelms King Arthur and it is concluded that the knight's choices were unforgivable, however, a queen intrudes and convinces King Arthur to pardon his actions. The queen does not intend to liberate the knight so easily, instead she gives him one year and day to try and discover what is it that women want most in life. The knight is then discouraged but comes across an old woman that is willing to save his life by loaning him the answer. She admits that women want to feel empowered over their husbands the most, since she tells him the answer she forces him to marry her even though he feels disgusted towards the idea of being her husband rather than love and affection.

Although most of the time female characters are viewed as vulnerable and cynical human beings the tale exposes a woman's true capabilities. For instance, the tale focuses on a knight who makes poor choices and attempts to seek refuge. The knight however cannot look for the answer he was assigned to from a man perspective, so he must go to a woman to save his life. The stereotypical man is expected to be physically stronger than women, but this specific tale stresses the idea that women are more dominant because they are wiser.

The knight's situation demonstrates that men are undignified and can only save themselves by begging a woman for help. The knight realizes that women have the answers men do not, even if he has to beg for salvation there is no other choice but to go to a woman. The queen purposely makes the knight feel like he is trapped, and that he has the decision to whether

feel vulnerable and live, or to allow his hypocrisy to destine his death. In addition, the old woman had to save his life in order for him to escape the reality of his consequences. The knight implores the old woman to have “mercy...before the court dispenses, and to do [him] right” (Chaucer 286).

At first, the knight is unfamiliar with the true meaning of nobility and the benefits of living in poverty. For that reason the old woman explains to him what it truly takes to be considered a righteous individual despite low class. With that in mind, the old woman teaches the knight that being born wealthy does not pronounce nobility and that being underprivileged is best because one will not be need nor want anything. Typically, a person is wealthy they will constantly desire more and more, while never being satisfied for what they have.