

Pardoner's tale

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



" But let me briefly make my purpose plain; I preach for nothing but for greed of grain and use the same old text, as bold as brass, the root of evil is desire." (Pardoner's Tale, 1-5, p. 129) In the narrative poem " Pardoner's Tale" the author Geoffrey Chaucer warns his audience the dangers of evil, greed, and desire. The short excerpt from the story above is true because all evil actions committed by criminals are done because of avarice or desire for something better than what they have. A great example of evil can be read in the epic tale of " Beowulf". The monstrous being Grendel, who plays one of the evil characters in the story, kills and feast upon the blood of humans because he has a desire to be fully human. In the Pardoner's Tale Chaucer's three main characters can fall under the category of evil because they all have the desire of greed and are willing to kill each other for money. Avaricious is defined as " immoderately desirous of wealth or gain; greedy." (American Heritage Dictionary) In Chaucer's tale the three main characters all have avarice or a desire for a better life. The question is what exactly makes these characters evil? What actions have they done that guarantee that their souls are condemned? Well through careful analyzation the answer can be found easily. So what makes the three main characters in Pardoner's Tale evil? Well lets analyze the youngest of the three men. " And so the Fiend, our common enemy, was given power To put it in his thought that there was always poison to be Bought and that with poison he could kill his friends."(Elements of Literature 238-240, p. 135) In the story the youngest of the three is manipulated by the devil to kill his friends for money that could have easily been divided amongst all three of the men. But the youngest avarice for wealth and fame was seen by the devil and the character then

was basically possessed by the devil and forced to poison the drinks of his comrades. The youngest character allowed the devil to corrupt him and put evil thoughts and actions into his mind. If the youngest character hadn't had the desire for wealth and gain then just maybe the devil wouldn't have had the power to possess him. This young man allows his soul and mind to be consumed by evil thoughts because he had the desire to get more money than his comrades under any circumstances. His other comrades on the other hand didn't even need the devil to convince them. The other two characters in Chaucer's narrative are older and wiser than the third but also have that dangerous desire to become rich and powerful. In the story when the gold is found the older rioters send the youngest to get supplies so that they may camp out for the night and be able to sneak their treasure back to their homes unseen and hidden by the night. As soon as the youngest leave the oldest of the three suggest to the second oldest that they kill the third and take the gold for themselves. " As soon as he had gone the first sat down and thus began to parley With the other: " You know that you can trust me as a brother; now Let me tell you where your profit lies; you know our friend has gone To get supplies and here's a lot of gold that is to be divided us three Nevertheless, if I could shape things thus so that we shared it out- The two of us- wouldn't you take it as a friendly act?"(Elements of Literature, 200-209, p. 134) The first and oldest of the three is considered evil because he manipulates the second into a scheme that will eventually kill the youngest of them and leave them with all the gold to split between the two instead of the three. In the quote the first of the three can easily be seen as the devil. Like what the devil did to the youngest, the first of the three

manipulates and puts the evil thought of killing their friend and taking the gold for themselves in his mind. Now let's look at the behavior of the first of the three through the perspective sociology. Sociology is defined as "the study of human social behavior, especially the study of the origins, organization, institutions, and development of human society." (American Heritage Dictionary) Now by studying the first character's behavior you can see that he has the mentality that money, fame, and wealth is the key to all. Knowing this the first of the characters has an avarice or desire for money, fame, and wealth. As Chaucer said in the beginning, "desire is the root of all evil", this character is the root of evil of the three. When the gold is found he manipulates the three that they should take it for themselves. Instead of doing the right thing and sharing it with their home town he also suggests that they take the money back home under the cover of night so that no one can see them and think that they stole it. The first character is the ultimately the devil in the story. If it wasn't for his desire for money, fame, and wealth then maybe, just maybe the other two would have had a chance. But instead because of their greediness, desire, and selfishness they all faced the same fate for their evil acts; an eternity in the fiery pits of hell. In the quote by Chaucer, "the root of all evil is desire", and through research it has been found that this quote is nothing but true. Want another example or more proof? Okay then, why does a thief steal? Why does a murderer kill? For what reason do people do these evil acts? Well it is so easy to understand now. A thief steals because of a desire for what another person has or possess. A murderer kills because of either a desire for something that a person has or because of hatred for that person. The main reason that these people

commit these evil acts is because they have a desire for it. When someone is desperate and want something they will go to any extent to try and retrieve it. To prevent evil thoughts or actions from happening it as simple as eliminating desire. I credit Mr. Chaucer for his great work on the Pardoner's tale because not only has it opened my eyes but it has also given me a new perspective on evil. Chaucer created a unique concept that can be still used today and in fact still use today. " The root of all evil is desire." Works Cited Holt, Ryhnhert, and Winston. Elements of Literature: Pardoner's Tale A Harcourt Education Company, 2003 Houghton Mifflin Company. American Heritage Dictionary. InfoSoft International, Inc, 1994