

# A critique of geoffrey chaucer's the canterbury tales assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Tale Geoffrey Saucer's The Canterbury Tales is a collection of tales from a pilgrimage of travelers. The Host is an innkeeper who asked of these travelers to tell stories along the way to pass the time and whoever could tell the best their meal would be taken care of. The General Prologue is a description of these travelers. The tales these pilgrims provide to the rest of the group fit with the type of person they are described as. The Knight, the Nun's Priest, the Merchant, the Wife of Bath, and the Miller are just a few to show the teller fits the tale.

J. R. Hilbert discusses the tales in The Canterbury Tales to those of their narrators. He states that Chaucer provides evidence to suggest that he did have the narrator in mind when he was writing the tales (567). In The General Prologue, the narrator recounts every person he has met that is traveling on this pilgrimage to Canterbury: it seems to me in order to tell you all about each of them, as they seemed to me and who they were, and of what rank in life, and also what they wore and with a knight, then, I will begin (37-42).

The narrator spoke of the Knight first and "whether it was by luck, or fate, or chance, / he truth is that the lot fell to the Knight" to start the pilgrimage with a tale he knew (846-847). To respect the narrator, the order will reflect the order in which they were presented in The General Prologue; therefore, the Knight will be the first. When using The Knight's Tale as an example, J. R. Hilbert states "To me, however, it seems suitable only in so far as the narrator is a knight; it is certainly a knightly story," which shows he believes that this tale could be the actual tale of the Knight (575).

The Knight is described in The General Prologue as a noble and valiant man but "not ally dressed" most likely due to his returning from an expedition (74). This shows that though he is noble and of higher status, he does not show it in his outer persona. His tale talks of two prisoners loving one woman and fighting over her, so in regards to his clothes this outlook does not suggest anything towards the tale. However, one connection I can see is that it has a happily ever after and Pullman is forgiven by society and by King Theses, which fits the teller due to his aspect of honor and love.

Charles Mitchell states that the Knight is described as courteous and rotor which gives evidence to Huller's claim. Mitchell discusses the description of the Knight in The General Prologue in relation to the Knight having two sides to him. Mitchell states that the characters in the Knight's tale relate to the duality of his personality, "Arctic and Pullman are the projections of the two sides of the Knight's hardness of war and the gentleness of the manners of courtly love" (70).

The General Prologue claims this suggestion further by stating "never in all his life had he been / rude to anyone at all, / He was a true, perfect, gentle knight" (70-72). Since Pullman is he one who is victorious in the end of the tale, this shows that the Knight's courteous and worthy side won as well. The Knight's Tale fits the Knight by showing the Knight on a deeper level. On the other hand, the deeper level is not seen from the Nun's Priest, which is barely mentioned in the prologue.

In the introduction to The Nun's Priest's Tale, the narrator states that readers can surmise that the Priest is there to protect the Prioress, which conveys

[https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-  
tales-assignment/](https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-tales-assignment/)

him as being a strong man. R. M. Luminously discusses the notion that critics have stated that the Nun's Priest is "a brawny and usurious man with stature and muscles" based on two aspects (896). These aspects include the thought that since he is a bodyguard for the Nun he needs to be strong as well as the tough terrain in which the pilgrimage is set, his strength would be needed to not only protect the Nun but to be able to withstand the duration.

However, Luminously believes the Nun's Priest to be timid and scrawny because the Host presents himself to the Nun's Priest as someone who is not afraid of him and therefore cannot be a "brawny and vigorous man."

Another aspect is the idea that the Nun's Priest uses his story to show that he does not like the idea of being under the control of woman which shows to the host he is actually trying to be more than what he is by relating to the Host and appeasing him.

John Financial states, "in the Nun's Priest's Tale the target is not man's failure to live up to his heroic responsibilities but rather his grandiose conception of his own importance... The comedy lies initially in the ludicrousness of a cook seeing himself as a learned, heroic figure, like a human, but the satiric bite is in the close identity of man and cook" (497).

Does Chaucer portray the cook thinking he is more important than he seems a direct correlation to the teller?

In the since that he cannot stand his own ground to the Host, and is overlooked by Chaucer himself, then one can see how a tale that is considered a mock epic is given to such an unimportant person, therefore showing that Chaucer could be portraying the Nun's Priest at the cook.

[https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-  
tales-assignment/](https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-tales-assignment/)

Saucer's reason to give a tale such as a beast fable, which is designed to show aspects of human life, to The Nun's Priest, can be taken as he was allowing the Priest to try to show some importance for him Ewing there.

Though the meaning behind the story is to not trust flatterers, the other tales seem to have more of a predominant issue or theme to the stories. Theme such as the want of a woman is seen in all but The Nun's Priest's Tale. The Merchant's Tale furthers this theme by telling of an old knight wanting to get married to the young maiden, May. The Merchant fits his tale due to two aspects. In the General Prologue, Chaucer states the Merchant "was indeed a worthy man," which fits the main character of his tale, January, who the Merchant states is "a worthy knight" (285, 2).

The General Prologue also makes a comment on the Merchant's wits, "This worthy man made good use of his wits; / no one knew he was in debt," while the Merchant remarks on January's wits as well: For when he himself had come to a decision, he thought that every other man's wit was so lacking that it would be impossible to object These remarks give consideration that Chaucer related the delusions the Merchant led the others to believe to his character that had delusions about his decisions too.

In the Merchant's prologue, he talks of his horrible wife and the tale talks about the betrayal of a wife. On the contrary, Albert Bough discusses the idea the tale from the Merchant to the other pilgrims might not have actually been meant for him which goes against J. R. Huller's notion that Chaucer did have the narrators in mind for the tales he wrote.

His reasoning behind this notion is the idea of the prologue where the Merchant speaks of his horrible marriage and wishes he could be free of it, "The Merchant's Prologue is a woeful complaint by a man who has married a whirlwind" (Bough 16). The prologue differs from his tale in that he talks about the happiness a woman can bring to a marriage by using January to say "it is a glorious hinge to take a wife, / especially when a man is old and hoary: / then a wife is the best of his treasure" (24-26).

Bough also suggests that the Friar would be the most likely candidate since it would take someone with the skills of preaching a sermon as well as holding to the Jest of the story, which the Friar is said to be able to pull off due to his not taking his Job seriously from the description from The General Prologue: He knew the taverns well in every town, and every innkeeper and barmaid better than a leper or a beggaring; for it is not fitting for such a respectable man as he, in his position, to be acquainted with sick lepers:

Though Bough offers a new perspective on the aspect of the Friar being able to manage the expressed opinions of the tale, which exhibits a new understanding for the relation between the Merchant and January, he fails to capture the overall theme of the story in regards to the Merchant's outlook on women. The relation from The General Prologue to the Merchant and the Merchant's story, as well as, the Merchant's prologue in relation to the aspects of the price one pays for wanting a woman, furthers the theme and the comparison of the teller to the tale.

Having to pay a price as well for wanting a woman, The Wife of Bath's Tale shows the Wife of Bath's prologue to be accurate in her belief that woman

[https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-  
tales-assignment/](https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-tales-assignment/)

want to control their husbands. The General Prologue first confirms the impressions of the Wife of Bath by stating " She knew the remedies of love, as it happened, / for she knew that art's old dance" (477-478). Her individual prologue tells how woman need to be loved and in control of the marriage too. Additionally, she is stated to be worthy woman with five husbands who had a very wanted skill.

She tells of a knight who needed something from a woman as well and upon receiving this much needed item to save his life he then concedes to his wife to let her choose their fate. This gives claim to what the teller really wants in relation to what the ending to her story gives her. Adversely, Kemp Malone conveys that the Wife of Bath's prologue and her story differ in relations to the teller and the tale: It is all the more striking, then, to find in the Wife of Bath's tale (as distinguished from her prologue) that the lady, after winning complete sovereignty over the hero, yields it up to him in marriage and becomes an obedient wife.

This way of behaving most empathetically does not agree with the Wife epilogue (483). What he suggests is that the Wife of Bath and the old hag in the tale have different principles on marriage because the woman gave into her husband even after having the power over him. His point can be seen as contradictory. His example is in her prologue when she states, " And when I had got for myself, all the sovereignty, '... So God help me, I was as kind to him / as any wife... And as true, and so was he to me," which can be seen as her not giving it up, but being happy because of this new power (817-825). With her happiness came the husband's happiness. Though his point is

reached, Malone took the importance of the tale away. The teller fits the tale on the principle that women want power over their husbands. Instead of accepting the power, one woman embarrasses her husband. The Miller's Tale is a tale of a carpenter who is tricked by his wife along side a young boy who is sleeping with the carpenter's wife.

Since the carpenter fell victim to this trickery, he can be portrayed as the stereotypical macho, muscle, tough, dumb guy due to the Miller remarking on the carpenter's strength, " and seized him strongly by the shoulders and on more than one occasion calling him a " foolish carpenter" (289, 41 5, 28). The General Prologue's description of the Miller can be seen in relation to the Miller's description of the carpenter: The Miller was a stout fellow indeed; he was huge-?? brawny, and large-boned, too; There was no door that he could not heave from its hinges Or break at a run with his head. " (547-548, 552-553).

With this knowledge of the Miller's strength, Joshua Euler and John Sexton portray a sense of duality with this side of the Miller in connection to the carpenter's servant, Robin. One stance is that the Miller's name is Robin, which is mentioned by the Host n The Miller's Prologue and the other is the image that the Miller has the strength to heave a door from its hinges. In The Miller's Tale, when Nicholas carries out his plan by acting insane in his locked room, John, the carpenter, and Robin have no trouble getting the door open: Get a staff, so that I can pry underneath while you, Robin, heave up the door.

And he began to apply himself to the chamber door. His servant was a strong fellow for the purpose, and he heaved it up at once by the hasp: the door

<https://assignbuster.com/a-critique-of-geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-ales-assignment/>



then fell on the floor (279-280, 282-285). They accomplished their task due to the strength both of them possessed. Euler and Sexton suggest the door scene in *The Miller's Tale* is foreshadowed from this description of the Miller in *The General Prologue*. Beyond this, they noticed, " In addition to this foreshadowing, the door's double position is framed within the context of a doubled character" (3).

Their statement is accurate when in *The Miller's Tale* it is written " Nicholas shut his door tight," which shows Nicholas shutting the door when talking privately with John (313). This scene, therefore, leads to confusion on how Nicholas was able to do this when it took both John and Robin to open the door and the door collapsed to the ground. This duality that Euler and Sexton correlates *The General Prologue*, *The Miller's Prologue*, and *The Miller's Tale* to the teller fitting the tale.