

Example of canterbury tales essay

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



Introduction

The Canterbury tales are a compilation of 20 stories written by Geoffrey Chaucer. The tales cover different themes written in the Middle English language of the 14th century. Most of the tales were written in parts. The manner in which Geoffrey Chaucer describes the characters as well as the incorporation of elements such as sarcasm and irony portrays a critic of the English society, specifically the church (Ackroyd, Peter & Chaucer 2). This essay explores two of the Canterbury tales: “ The Clerks Tale” and “ The Franklin’s Tale”. The aim of the essay is to provide the similarities and the differences between the ideas and the artistic devices employed in the two tales. One particular area in which the paper will emphasize on is the institution of marriage.

The Clerk’s tale and Franklin’s tale both depict romance, and the theme of romance and love is prevalent in both stories. In the Clerk’s tale, Griselda is a dedicated wife who loves her husband and takes every opportunity to show this love. The same cannot however be said for her husband. The husband constantly tests his wife love for him by exposing her to different types of temptations.

In the Franklins tale, Arviraguas and Dorigen are a couple who agree to have a marriage based on equality (Ackroyd, Peter & Chaucer 19). There is no one who is on a higher level than the other. This marriage, however has its own challenges.

In Franklin’s tale, Arviraguas and Dorigen are love birds who are happily married. Aurelius who courts Dorigen when her husband is away and shows his love for her as he serenades her with a song. In the Clerks tale, Griselda

shows her deep love for her husband despite his cruel deeds. She loses her two children and her marriage in spite of her deep love. However, even after her husband leaves her, she still takes charge of making the wedding arrangements involving her husband who is marrying somebody else (Lynch 11). In the end, her love is finally reciprocated by her husband who returns their children and ultimately embraces his wife back

The two marriages also exhibit some surprising and perhaps even shocking aspects. In Franklin's tale, the two main parties to the marriage come from the noble class of the society. They both agree to stay married and keep their vows to one another. However, when Arvagus allows the wife to go and keep his promise to Aurelius, this comes across as very shocking. It is quite unlikely and indeed unimaginable that any husband would willingly allow his wife to and be with another man irrespective of the situation or the circumstances at the hand.

In the Clerk's Tale, Griselda is depicted as an over submissive wife who allows the husband to kill her children after birth. Her failure to question the husband actions is a rare character to find in any woman.

In the two tales, marriage is depicted differently. The two marriages in the two tales are significantly different from each other. In Franklin's tale, the marriage is between two people from the same class- noble class. This marriage is based on the fact that both spouses are equal. The couple is shown to be happily married. Their happiness is because both are equal in their marriage. In the Clerk's story, the marriage is between people from different social classes. The husband comes from a noble class or a class that ranks higher in the society while the wife is from a poor family of

peasants (Ackroyd, Peter & Chaucer 32). Walter, the husband, desires a wife who will be submissive and who will honor all his wishes. In this tale, the husband and wife are not equal.

The role played by the wives in both stories is also quite different. In Franklin's tale, the wife Dorigen, has the freedom to make active decisions that concern the marriage since the marriage with her husband is marriage is based on the principle of equality (Lynch 18). Things are quite different in the other marriage deposited in the Clerk's take. As mentioned earlier, the partners in this marriage come from different social classes and therefore from the onset, the marriage is not based on equality. Therefore, the wife has a diminished role. She obeys her husband promptly without any questions and has no freedom to make decisions.

Conclusion

The two tales from Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" described above that presents a critical view of the life in the society, particularly the institution of marriage as well as elements of romance. The two tales reflected how marriages work in the society and how their structures adopt different patterns. In the first tale (The Franklin Tale), Chaucer describes a marriage that is relative based on equality. On the other hand, the Clerk's Tale represent a marriage where the husband is the absolute head, and the wife has almost no say in the marriage. The latter was, in fact, the most prevalent kind of marriage in the olden days where women were supposed to be submissive to their husbands and leave all matters related to decision making to their husbands.

Works Cited

Ackroyd, Peter, and Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales*. New York:

Viking, 2009. Print.

Lynch, Jack. *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer. Pasadena: Salem Press, 2011. Print.