

# General Prologue To The Canterbury Tales



General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales is an essential framework that establishes the context for Geoffrey Chaucer's monumental work, revealing the social fabric of 14th-century England. This prologue introduces a diverse group of pilgrims embarking on a journey to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Each character is vividly portrayed, providing insights not only into their individual stories but also into the broader societal norms, values, and issues of the time. This article explores the significance of the General Prologue, its characters, themes, and the literary techniques employed by Chaucer.

## The Context of The Canterbury Tales

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written by Geoffrey Chaucer in Middle English during the late 14th century. The work is composed of various tales told by a group of pilgrims traveling to Canterbury Cathedral, where they seek to pay homage to Saint Thomas Becket. Chaucer's innovative narrative structure allows for a multitude of voices and perspectives, reflecting the complexity of medieval English society.

# The Historical Background

- The Pilgrimage Tradition: Pilgrimages were a common practice in medieval Christianity, serving as a form of penance and devotion. The journey to Canterbury was particularly popular due to its association with Saint Thomas Becket, the archbishop who was martyred in 1170.
- Social Structure of the Time: The 14th century was marked by significant social changes, including the rise of the middle class, the effects of the Black Death, and shifting religious attitudes. Chaucer's work captures this transformation by showcasing characters from various social strata.