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THE PARDONER'S TALE



PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

Prepare to think about the poem and its Central One Idea by drawing upon your prior knowledge, experience, or interests.

1. Without using a dictionary, define **greed**.
2. Consider the role of greed in the United States. Is America a land of greed or charity, or both?
3. Are corporations greedy by nature? How so? Identify a corporation(s) that you feel is motivated inordinately by greed – and state why.
4. How does greed affect a person's choices and the trajectory of his or her life?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

Discover essential facts, elements, and features of the poem through the Reading Notes, Words to Be Defined, and Comprehension Questions.



*Read Murphy's Introduction to *The Pardoner's Tale* (pp. 60-63), marking the text in key places. Then read the Reading Notes here in their entirety, and complete as many Words to Be Defined as you can.*

READING NOTES

Note: Murphy's italicized scene headings in the text appear here, italicized, followed by useful reading notes for that particular section. For example, his first italicized heading appears here in #19, and the next in #21, etc.

1. **pardoner** – in the Middle Ages, an ecclesiastic authorized to sell indulgences, thereby "pardoning" one's sins
2. **indulgences** – In the medieval church, one who committed a sin and repented would be forgiven an eternal punishment through the sacrament of penance. Yet, the penitent would still be obligated to pay for his or her sin in this life (or in purgatory). Thus indulgences such as fasting, private prayers, almsgiving, or monetary payments to the church were required as a kind of temporary penance. It is the selling of indulgences for money that is the sole interest of the Pardoner.
3. **literary confession** – The Pardoner's Prologue is a sort of "apologia" or "literary confession," in which a character reveals intimate or hidden details of his or her life. The model for the Pardoner's confession is thought to be the long confession of Faux Semblant in *Le Roman de la Rose*.
4. **monologue** – an extended speech by a single character who presents his or her thoughts aloud to another character(s) and/or the audience
5. **exemplum** – a story told to illustrate a point
6. **allegory** – a form of extended metaphor in which objects and persons in a narrative, either in prose or verse, are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative

LOGIC | Dialectic

*Reason with the facts, elements, and features of the poem;
sort, arrange, compare, and connect ideas – and begin
to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.*

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

1. The Pardoner begins with a confessional **monologue**, then follows with a **tale** about the three young gamblers, then digresses into a **sermon** about gluttony, gambling, etc., and then resumes his tale again. How does the Pardoner's use of a variety of **literary conventions** contribute to his **rhetorical** persuasion? Do you find this effective? Are you more convinced of his message as a result?
2. How does the Pardoner make use of **apostrophe** in his sermon on gluttony? How does the **personification** enhance the persuasive nature of his sermon?
3. Do you think the Pardoner's digressive sermon on gluttony has anything to do with himself? How so? Support your answer with a couple lines from the text.
4. Quote two **metaphors** from the "Excessive drinking" section. How do they contribute to the Pardoner's point?
5. The Pardoner also digresses into a sermon on gambling. In what way(s) might the Pardoner also be a gambler?
6. How is the rioters' search for Death both a kind of **situational irony** and a form of **foreshadowing**?
7. Could the mysterious old man be viewed as a **symbolic "wise old man"** figure? How so? What does he say that is instructive or wise? Quote a line or two from the text in your answer.
8. *And then shall all this gold departed be,
My dearè friend, betwixtè thee and me.
Then may we both our lustès all fulfill
And play at dice right at our ownè will.* (ll. 831-834)
What is the driving motive(s) of these two rioters as they hatch their plan? Is it just to have more gold? Or something more?

9. From lines 895ff., quote the lines which you feel could encompass the **Central One Idea**. Why did you choose these lines?

10. *And lo, sirs, thus I preach.
And Jesus Christ, that is our soulè's leech,
So grantè you His pardon to receive,
For that is best, I will you not deceive.* (ll. 915-918)

The Pardoner's words here seem forthright and truthful. Yet his comments in the following lines, 919-930, create a level of **irony** with regard to this quote. Explain.

RHETORIC | Expression

Express in your own words the Central One Idea with supporting points.

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION:

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

1. In a paragraph, **summarize** The Pardoner's Tale.
2. Write the **Central One Idea** of The Pardoner's Tale in a precise, eloquent sentence.
3. List three or four points that **support** your determination of the Central One Idea.
4. Write a **lead** (1-2 sentences) that grabs the reader's attention—such as a *quote, question, startling fact or statistic, scenario, piece of dialogue*, etc.
5. Write an **amplification/importance** (1-2 sentences) that explains why your thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.

◆ **Central Quote:** *Choose a quote from anywhere in The Pardoner's Tale that you think best embodies the Central One Idea and copy it down.*

❶ **Write the Central One Idea as expressed by the teacher.**

ESSAY OPTION

Choose a topic below and respond with a 3-5 paragraph essay that includes an Introduction with a clear thesis; a Body with organized, logical, and specific support of the thesis; and a Conclusion with an amplification of the thesis/support.

The essay should feature appropriate tone, voice, and point of view; correct grammar, usage, and mechanics; a variety of sentence structures enhanced by subordination and parallelism; a balance of general and specific detail; and enhanced rhetorical effect through transition words, appropriate diction, strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, and other rhetorical devices.