

CONTENTS

How to Use This Study Guide With the Text.....	4	QUIZZES, TESTS, & ANSWER KEY	
Notes & Instructions to Teacher.....	5	Test: The General Prologue.....	139
Introduction.....	11	Quiz: The Pardoner’s Tale.....	142
Basic Features & Background.....	14	Quiz: The Nun’s Priest’s Tale.....	144
THE GENERAL PROLOGUE		Test: The Franklin’s Tale.....	146
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....	18	Test Key: The General Prologue.....	149
Grammar Presentation.....	19	Quiz Key: The Pardoner’s Tale.....	152
Logic Dialectic.....	19	Quiz Key: The Nun’s Priest’s Tale.....	154
Rhetoric Expression.....	59	Test Key: The Franklin’s Tale.....	156
THE PARDONER’S TALE			
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....	66		
Grammar Presentation.....	67		
Logic Dialectic.....	75		
Rhetoric Expression.....	78		
THE NUN’S PRIEST’S TALE			
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....	84		
Grammar Presentation.....	85		
Logic Dialectic.....	93		
Rhetoric Expression.....	97		
THE FRANKLIN’S TALE			
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....	104		
Grammar Presentation.....	105		
Logic Dialectic.....	115		
Rhetoric Expression.....	121		
APPENDIX			
Memorization & Recitation.....	128		
Final Memorized Poem.....	130		
Master Words-to-Be-Defined List.....	131		
<i>In Chaucer Tale, a Clue to an Astronomic Reality</i>	136		

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David M. Wright is the Director and Writer of the Upper-School Literature Curriculum at Memoria Press. He has taught AP Literature and English with a focus on the Great Books for the last ten years. He received his master’s degree in English Literature from DePaul University in Chicago, and holds a Classical Teacher certificate from the CiRCE Institute. He is currently working on a PhD in literature at the University of Louisville. He is the Founder and Director of the annual Climacus Conference in Louisville. His greatest blessings are his wife and five kids, ages 3-12.

2. Now that you've developed a portrait gallery of our society, if you were to write more lengthy sketches of these individuals, whom would you satirize or be critical of, and why? Whom would you elevate or grant special appreciation to?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

LOGIC | Dialectic

The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the poem. The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the poem, and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.

The Opening, Lines 1-42

READING NOTES (GRAMMAR | Presentation)

Note: Most of the archaic and difficult words are explained in the marginal glosses of Murphy's reader-friendly edition; thus, the Reading Notes will feature some of the words, but not all.

1. **Lines 1-18** – *The opening is a long, elaborate sentence about the effects of Spring on the vegetable and animal world, and on people. The style of the rest of the Prologue and Tales is much simpler than this opening.*¹

2. **Murphy's paraphrase of lines 1-18** –

When April with its sweet showers has pierced the drought of March to the root and bathed every rootlet in the liquid by which the flower is engendered; when the west wind also, with its sweet breath, has brought forth young shoots in every grove and field; when the early sun of spring has run half his course in the sign of Aries, and when small birds make melody, birds that sleep all night with eyes open, (as Nature inspires them to) – then people have a strong desire to go on pilgrimages, and pilgrims long to go to foreign shores to distant shrines known in various countries. And especially they go from every country in England to seek out the shrine of the holy blessed martyr who has helped them when they were sick.

3. **So pricketh them Nature in their courages** (11) – as Nature inspires them to

1. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales: The General Prologue & Three Tales, A Reader-Friendly Edition*, Ed. Michael Murphy (Louisville, KY: Memoria Press, 2013), 15. All subsequent italicized text in the Reading Notes are direct quotations of Michael Murphy's explanatory headings throughout the text.

4. **longen folk** (12) – people long
5. **fernè hallows couth** (14) – distant shrines known
6. **Lines 19-42** – *At the Tabard Inn, just south of London, the poet-pilgrim falls in with a group of twenty-nine other pilgrims who have met each other along the way.*
7. **Thomas Becket** – Also known as St. Thomas of Canterbury and later Thomas à Becket. He was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162-1170, at which time he was murdered in the Canterbury Cathedral by knights of Henry II due to a conflict with the king over the rights and privileges of the Church. By appointing Becket as Archbishop, King Henry hoped Becket would put the government before the Church. Instead Becket became an ascetic and put the interests of the Church first. Edward Grim, who was also wounded in the attack by the assassins, reported that Becket, “at the third blow, fell on his knees and elbows, offering himself a living sacrifice, and saying in a low voice, ‘For the name of Jesus and the protection of the Church, I am ready to embrace death.’”
8. **Canterbury** – Historic English cathedral city in the district of Kent in southeast England. Becket’s murder in 1170 enlisted Canterbury as a popular destination for Christian pilgrimages.
9. **The Tabard Inn** – The Tabard was an inn that stood on the east side of Borough High Street in Southwark, established in 1307. It was built, in part, to accommodate the numerous pilgrims headed on the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. In *The Canterbury Tales* the Tabard is owned by the host Harry Bailey.
10. **That I was of their fellowship anon** (32) – And was soon one with them in fellowship
11. **Ere that I further in this talè pace** (36) – Before my tale takes a further pace
12. **condition** (38) – circumstances
13. **And which they weren, and of what degree** (40) – And who they were and of what social rank
14. **eke** (41) – also

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank

a period of dryness with little or no rain

apparel; clothing

brought into being

various; several

1. The **drought** of March hath piercèd to the root (2) _____ a period of dryness with little or no rain
2. Of which virtúe **engendered** is the flower (4) _____ brought into being
3. To fernè hallows couth in **sundry** lands (14) _____ various; several
4. And eke in what **array** that they were in (41) _____ apparel; clothing



Read the Short Introduction to the General Prologue (pp. 20-21), and then the General Prologue, lines 1-42, marking the text in key places.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the distinction between March and April in the opening lines?

April provides the rain for the drought of March.

2. List three effects of spring on the natural world found in the lines 1-11.

The showers pierce the drought of March; the rain waters the roots to engender flowers; the wind blows on the tender shoots; the birds make melody; nature spurs birds in their spirits.

3. What other major thing does spring bring about in lines 12ff.?

Any one of these: It inspires folk to long to go on pilgrimages and pilgrims to seek distant shrines on strange shores. And it especially inspires people from all over England to go to Canterbury to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket.

4. The speaker falls in with whom on his pilgrimage? Where does he meet them?

29 pilgrims at the Tabard Inn

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (LOGIC | Dialectic)

1. Notice that the opening lines feature a movement from the sky to the roots, from the cosmic to the earthly. Why might this be significant?

This is a challenging question, meant more to point out the poet's opening direction of focus. A variety of answers (or guesses) should be accepted here. I believe that the poet is hinting that his subject matter will not be so much the lofty, heavenly, or theological, but rather the humanistic. His tales will feature humans in all of their intricacies and complexities.

2. The opening lines about spring suggest the concept of rebirth. What might Chaucer be hinting needs to be born anew?

This is a challenging question, meant more for conjecture and discussion. Probably literary/poetic rebirth—as Chaucer was doing several innovative things, like using iambic pentameter (though he didn't invent it, he made it renowned) and rhyme royal (which he did invent). Also, a rebirth of language, as he chose to write in English instead of Latin. And finally, a rebirth in culture, as several characters and their perspectives are given ironic and satirical treatment.

2. What does the Host propose to the pilgrims? Include a line or phrase from the text in your answer.

To help make the journey enjoyable, each pilgrim will tell two tales on the way to Canterbury, and two tales on the way back. "In this viage, shall tellen talès tway / To Canterbury-ward, I mean it so, / And homeward he shall tellèn other two ..." (792-794).

3. Who draws the shortest lot to tell the first tale? the Knight

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (LOGIC | Dialectic)

1. *That each of you to shorten with our way
In this viage, shall tellèn talès tway* (ll. 791-792)

Briefly explore how telling and hearing stories can "shorten the way." Why do stories have the power to make time pass faster, lessen suffering, or even transcend time? How can stories allow us to better understand a principle or a truth? Answers will vary here. This little phrase is a testament to the power of story. Humans respond to stories. They engage our imagination, allow us to escape our time and place, and travel to another time and place. They can relieve the dryness and regularity of our present lives and allow us to momentarily exist in a colorful, exciting place. They can also relieve suffering by taking the mind away from the pain. Engaging the imagination through story leads to a full and rich mental and emotional experience, opening one's mind and heart to truth. Humans can better receive and understand truth through stories. This is why Christ so often delivered his axioms in the form of parables.

RHETORIC | Expression

The student expresses in his or her own words the Central One Idea with supporting details.

1 CENTRAL ONE IDEA

1. In a few sentences, **summarize** the General Prologue.

The General Prologue features the portraits of various members in the various classes of English society in the fourteenth century. Chaucer attempts to portray the members of his society accurately and honestly, with their good qualities as well as their many flaws. He also uses the General Prologue as a good set-up and explanation of the tales that will follow and comprise the majority of the work.

2. Write the **Central One Idea** of the story in a complete sentence.

3. List three or four points that support your determination of the Central One Idea.

Answers will vary. These points support the Teacher’s Central One Idea:

- Chaucer writes about the characters that comprise his society in a very forthright, honest way—often treating them with a heavy dose of satire and sarcasm.
- Many of the tales the characters tell deal with “*gentleness, morality, and holiness*,” as Chaucer says himself.
- Chaucer is surely intent on uncovering what it truly is to be gentle, moral, and holy—not just seemingly so!

4. Choose a quote from the story that you think best embodies the Central One Idea – and with good penmanship, write it in the Central Quote section at the beginning of the General Prologue lesson.

1 CENTRAL ONE IDEA (as expressed by the teacher)

Society needs to change—and the power of story and verse can bring us together, help us to see ourselves more truthfully, and help us to change.

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.

1. Write an essay in which you analyze and describe Chaucer’s use of irony and/or sarcasm in the portraits of the General Prologue. How does he make use of this device, and why does he use it so often? Include some specific examples from the portraits in your explanation.
2. Write an essay in which you analyze Chaucer’s view of human nature and morality in the General Prologue. What makes a person good or not so good? How should humans behave? What virtues and vices does Chaucer feel are particularly important or necessary? Include some particular portraits or specific examples from portraits to support what you feel is Chaucer’s view of human nature and morality.

