



A STUDY ON CHARACTERS IN THE POEM “THE CANTERBURY TALES” BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER

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Abstract

This paper highlights a study on twenty four characters from the poem “The Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer; Chaucer has excellently brought in several characters in order to highlight the social statues of that time. There are five elements to be focused when it comes to character analysis they are physical description, action, inner thoughts, reactions, and speech. This paper highlights all these five elements in order to bring out the essence of the characters. Character analysis explains the in-depth personality traits of characters. The analysis focuses on the characters behaviour, manner of speaking, how they look, and many other characteristics.

Keywords: Character, Interrogates, Omniscient, Personality traits, Qualities.





Introduction



The Canterbury Tales has used first-person point of view in the General Prologue; the narrator of this poem is Chaucer, he speaks from his own perspective on the events of the story and the pilgrims who tell the tales. The author emphasizes details about each pilgrim that expose the characters' personalities and in particular their flaws. The tales themselves uses third-person omniscient point of view, beginning with a "once-upon-a-time". The pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales started their journey together in south London, the pilgrimage travel roughly for seventy miles.

The Tales takes place in the late 14th century and depicts a time of social upheaval, which includes the decline of chivalry, , rising criticism of the Church and the emergence of the middle class. Chaucer reflects the new social structure by depicting pilgrims of many different classes. Chaucer's portrayal of most of the religious figures as hypocrites also points to a rising swell of dissatisfaction with corruption and abuse in the Catholic Church. This paper has highlighted the characters Unique Qualities, their Representative Qualities, details about each character and their physical appearances.


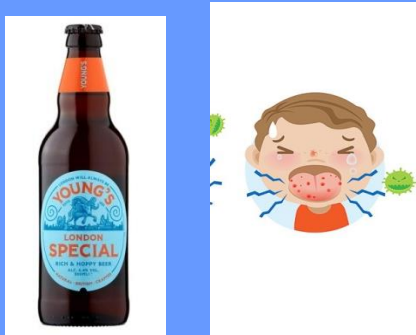



<u>Characters</u>	<u>Unique Qualities</u>	<u>Representative Qualities</u>	<u>About</u>	<u>Physical Appearance</u>
<p>Knigh</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Honorable ❖ Courageous ❖ Helpful ❖ Brave ❖ Wise ❖ Impeccable ❖ Courtliness ❖ Simpleton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Loyal ❖ Gallant ❖ Polite ❖ Good Mannered ❖ Courteous ❖ Knowledgeable ❖ True Guardian ❖ Perfect 	<p>He devoted his life to Chivalry, truth, and Justice. He fought for his king in many wars throughout Europe and the Middle East. He had won many awards for his bravery. He was practical, self-disciplined, and humble. He will never say anything bad about the other person.</p>	<p>He had fine horses, did not wear gaudy apparel. He wore a doublet of coarse cloth.</p> 






<p>Squire</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Young/ Youth ➤ Loyal ➤ Courageous ➤ Great Agility ➤ Great Strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dance ➤ Draw ➤ Write well ➤ Courteous ➤ Modest ➤ Useful 	<p>He is knights own son, He had given a good account of himself in battle and became a good record of fighting. He was a great lover and he loved so hotly that he could hardly sleep at night. He would sing or play on a flute in his leisure time. He used to cut roasted meat into small pieces for his father to eat.</p>	<p>Young man of about twenty with curly hair and an average height. Garments were embodied like a meadow full of fresh flowers, white and red.</p> 
<p>Yeoman</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brilliant Archer ○ Meticulous ○ Wood Worker ○ Forester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Substance ○ Talented ○ Shooter ○ God Believer ○ Sentimental 	<p>He could handle his equipment with great efficiency. His arrows did not drop in their flight and did not fall short of the target. He wore a silver medal of St.Christopher upon his breast. He who accompanied the knight and Squire.</p>	<p>He wore a hood of green, and carried a sheaf of peacock arrows, bright and sharp under his belt. His hair was cut very short and had a brown face.</p> 
<p>Prioress</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Charity ✓ Pity ✓ Simple and sweet in her smile. ✓ Ambiguous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Never let a morsel of food fall from her mouth. ✓ She never dipped her fingers deep in her saucer. ✓ Femininity 	<p>She was a women of religion, being the superior nun holding the charge of a priory, she is depicted here as possessing a number of secular and worldly accomplishments.</p>	<p>She had a very well-shaped nose and eyes gray like grass, her mouth was very small and it was soft and red.</p> 







<p>The Monk</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outrider ▪ Good Hunter ▪ Loved Comfortable Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amusement Lover ▪ Opposite to real Monk 	<p>He was an outsider, he loved hunting and it was his pastime. He did not hide his irritation with those who objected to it.</p>	<p>He keeps gorgeous and portable expensive horses and greyhounds.</p> 
<p>The Friar</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Shrewd bagger + Devious in dealings + Accepts bride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Sells forgiveness + Loves luxurious + Chameleon in life 	<p>He had performed a large number of marriages of young women at his own cost. He was familiar to all the rich farmers and also to the worthy women of the town. He was Immoral and corrupt in his ways. In singing he easily to the price. He had a merry voice he could sing well and play on a fiddle.</p>	<p>He was a gay and Merry fellow. Used fair language to win the favor of women and well language failed you try to win them over with ornamental nights and brooch pins. In the course of his playing on a half his eyes twinkled in his head in the same name as do the stars on the frosty night.</p> 

<p>The Merchant</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money lender • Cosmopolitan • Knowledgeable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashionable • Wealthy • Smart businessman • New class 	<p>He expresses his opinion in a most Solemn manner, always claiming an increase in his business profits. He talked mostly of his commercial Enterprises not unlike some business man of today.</p>	<p>He was wearing a cloak of motley (variegated colourful patterns) a Flemish Beaver hat, has a forked beard bearded, all of which were current fashions at this time period.</p> 
<p>The Clerk</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor Scholar ○ Book lover ○ Philosopher ○ Serious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simplest ○ Finest ○ Briefest eulogy ○ Insightful ○ Moral speeches ○ Eager to learn and eager to teach 	<p>The poor clerk is so poor that he cannot even afford to feed himself. He likes to spend all his money on books rather than food or clothes. He is so serious about his studies that even appear to be studying on his journey. He speaks little. But whatever he says is virtuous.</p>	<p>He was naturally not fat he was hollow-cheeked. His horse too was lean. The cloak was quite-worn out which again was natural in his case.</p> 
<p>Sergeant of the law</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corrupt lawyer ▪ Knowledgeable ▪ Famous criminal judge ▪ Fashionable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perfect legal document ▪ Landowner ▪ Shrewd ▪ Professionally wise 	<p>He had an extensive knowledge of English case law. He could also draw up a date or a draught a document so well that no man could find fault with it. He could reproduce almost every statue. His knowledge and his high reputation but we cannot help feeling that there was an element of</p>	<p>He had acquired a very large number of Robes and much wealth for his clients.</p>



			fraud in his practice of law.	
<p>The Franklin</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Connoisseurs of food and wine ❖ Good entertainer ❖ Powerful member of parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Former Sheriff ❖ Land owner ❖ Tax auditor 	<p>He is a gentry's landowner a member of the nobility. He was a free tenant of the Crown holding his hands without the obligation of Military Service or rent. He began his morning with a rich dish namely a sop of wine. The finest food and drink were available in his horse. He changed his meals in accordance with the change of season.</p>	<p>He had a white beard and a sangwyn (ruddy) complexion.</p> 
<p>The Guildsmen</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ urban middle class ➤ Knowledgeable ➤ Ambitious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fraternity ➤ Burgesses ➤ Civic Wisdom 	<p>The urban middle class is represented by a Haberdasher, a carpenter, a Weaver, a diary and a tapestry Maker. Their girdles and their pouches accorded well with their knives. Their daggers Bells and other equipment are made of the finest materials and richly decorated with silver. They had knives mounted not with brass but with silver rubbed clean and bright.</p>	<p>All the five wore the same livery indicating that the fraternity to which they belong had common social and religious aims. The clothes of all these persons were nearly trimmed.</p> 
<p>The Cook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Knowledgeable ✓ Cleanliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Culinary Expertise ✓ Passion 	<p>The cook works for the Guildsmen, in order to be able to eat</p>	<p>He was fond of drinking London ale. Unfortunately he had</p>

	<p>✓ Creativity</p>	<p>✓ Multitasking</p>	<p>good food on the journey. They took the cook with them in case of any deficiencies in the inns on the road. He was to boil the chickens with a marrow bones and prepare sharp tasting Spice and flavors. He could roast and boil and fry and make a straw and bake a pie. He was such an expert in preparing spiced chicken that he could equal the performance of the best.</p>	<p>and ulcer on his skin.</p> 
<p>The Shipmen</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good fellow ○ Well travelled ○ Business minded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional ○ Tough Physique ○ Little conscience ○ Drunkard 	<p>He has seen every bay and river in England and exotic ports in Spain and Carthage as well. He immediately identifies by his inability to write he rode upon a large horse as well as he could.</p>	<p>He was brown skinned from years of sailing. His beard had been shaken by many storms.</p> 
<p>The Doctor of the Physic</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Wealthy ✚ Knowledgeable ✚ Worldly wise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Learned physician ✚ Astrologer (astrology) ✚ Financially inclined 	<p>The doctor is a very learned man, having read all the important medical authorities of his day. Not only that but he is also something of an Astrologer are relying upon the position of the stars and planets. He was moderate in his diet and took only those food which ware nourishing and digestible. He saved all the money that he had</p>	<p>He was able to afford expensive blue and Scarlet Robes of taffeta and skill. He loved gold because gold was an ingredient in preparing certain medicines.</p>

			<p>made during the time of the plague.</p>	
<p>The Wife of Bath</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ gap-teeth ✓ large hips ✓ heels spurred 	<p>Unique interpretation of Scriptures which gave her control in her marriages</p>	<p>Stereotypical women of the middle ages. She had married 5 husbands besides having had lovers in her youth. She knew remedies of love that is she was well versed in all the devices of love making or perhaps she knew all methods of gratifying love.</p>	<p>She had a great talent for cloth making. She was kept youth she sat upon an ambling horse with ease neatly veiled. Outer skirt and on her feet a pair of sharp spurs.</p> 
<p>The Parson</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good man ✓ Diligent ✓ Patient ✓ Helpful ✓ virtuous rich in holy thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Courteous ✓ Attentive ✓ Benevolent ✓ Finest priest ✓ served the poor ✓ gave own money 	<p>He was poor in a worldly sense but rich in holy thoughts and holy work. He was a man of learning. He truly preached the Gospel of Christ and sincerely looked after the spiritual Welfare of his flock. He was kind hearted and wonderfully industrious. He had proved many times his powers of endurance when overtaken by misfortunes.</p>	<p>He visited the high and the low and he went to them on foot with a staff in his hand. He was soft spoken and sympathetic in giving them advice and instruction he wanted to show people The Way To Heaven by uprightness and good example.</p> 

<p>The Plowman</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good fellow • Simple • Lovely labor • God believer • Loyal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benevolent • Charitable • Pure soul • Hard worker • Selfless 	<p>He was Parsons brother and a good fellow. His love for God with always foremost in his thoughts when he was both happy and sad. He lived a life of peace and charity. He remained devoted to God at all time, in prosperity and in adversity.</p>	<p>He had worked for a long time conveying cart loads of dung from one place to another.</p> 
<p>The Miller</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good fighter ○ Boastful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good story teller ○ Shrewd ○ Bagpipes player 	<p>He proved the strength of his body wherever he went at wrestling matches he always won the price. His portrayal draws heavily upon negative mediaeval stereotype about low class people. He was associated with extreme lustfulness.</p>	<p>He was stout fellow with powerful muscles and large bones. He had broad arms and was thickly built. On the tip of his nose he had a wart on which grew a tuft of red hair. He had a large mouth and large nostrils. He carried a Sword and a buckler by his side.</p> 
<p>The Manciple</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Unethical ❖ Shrewd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Uneducated yet intelligent ❖ Good manager ❖ Powerful protector 	<p>He is in charge of getting provision for a college or Court. Despite his lack of education he is smarter than 30 lawyers he feeds. He was so careful about what he purchased and what he spent that he always saved a lot of money. Whether he brought the provisions in cash or credit he was always the</p>	

<p>The Reeve</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manager ➤ Meticulous ➤ Carpenter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shrewd ➤ Cheater ➤ Skinny 	<p>gainer.</p> <p>He is the manager of his master's estate. He is also a carpenter. As an experienced manager he can estimate the yields of his master's crops and livestock's based on the rainfall from year to year. He is so good at the reckonings that the people with home he works like shepherds and farmers are too afraid to attempt to cheat. But he steals from his lodge property only to loan to the Lord from these ill gotten funds that by gaining himself favor.</p>	<p>He was a slender ill-tempered man with his beard shaped closed and his hair cut around his ears and clipped short in front. His legs were long and lean and looked like two sticks.</p> 
<p>The Summoner</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dishonest ▪ Unethical ▪ Ugly with sores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bailiff in church ▪ Shrewd ▪ Lecherous 	<p>He is someone the mediaeval church hires call people before the ecclesiastical court for their spiritual crimes like ok adultery or heresy, the punishment for which can be excommunication that is expulsion from the church.</p>	<p>His face is covered in Pimple face that no ointment can Heal and his narrow eyes are covered by fierce, bushy eyebrows.</p> 
<p>The Pardoner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Dishonest ✚ unethical ✚ sold official pardons to criminals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Make money by selling relics ✚ Flatterer ✚ Deceitful 	<p>He is someone who travels about the countryside selling official Church pardons. He claims to have Mary's veil and a piece of St. Peter's sail. The song which the</p>	<p>His hair yellow as wax and smooth as a coil of flax. His concern for his clothes and his wish to be in the new mode of fashion confirms this. His is where a sign of Folly and</p>

			<p>pardoner Sang was a popular love-ditty but it has been suggested by some Scholars that the pardoner sang this song to the summoner because of his effeminate nature.</p>	<p>immodesty.</p> 
<p>Chaucer as a Pilgrimage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Knowledgeable ✓ Intelligent ✓ Values social hierarchy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Happy in company ✓ Observer ✓ Critical analyzer ✓ Persona creator 	<p>He is the most significant poet to write in middle English. He is the first great painter of character because he is the first great observer of it among English writers. The Prologue to Canterbury Tales is his great work. It looks as if we are visiting a portrayal gallery and it is also called as a picture gallery. In this Prologue to Canterbury Tales all character drawn are from different classes of society represent the 14th century very clearly.</p>	
<p>The Host</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Owner of Tabard Inn ○ Jolly fellow ○ Modest yet shrewd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adjustable yet professional ○ Knowledgeable ○ Attentive 	<p>The leader of the group the house is large, loud and Merry. He processed a quick temper. He mediates along the pilgrims and facilitates for the tales.</p>	

Conclusion

This poem The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer is a frame narrative a large story that contains many other stories. Chaucer has used General Prologue to introduce the pilgrims, who are the storytellers, which provides a circumstance for the tales. Chaucer interrogates a varied collection of literary genres such as allegorical tale, fabliau, courtly romance and more. This paper has given importance to the each character and has brought in the essence of the character. A further research can be done on the themes from this poem.