

Canterbury Tales Character List

The Pilgrims

The Host (Harry Bailey) The owner of the Tabard Inn, who volunteers to travel with the pilgrims. He promises to keep everyone happy, be their guide and arbiter in disputes, and judge the tales.

The Knight Socially the most prominent person on the pilgrimage, epitomizing chivalry, truth, and honor. He stands apart from the other pilgrims because of his dignity and status.

The Miller A drunken, brash, and vulgar man who rudely interrupts the Host, demands that his tale be next, and warns everyone that his tale about a carpenter will be vulgar because it is true.

The Reeve A very old and irritable man who was once a carpenter. He resents the Miller's tale about a stupid old carpenter.

The Man of Law (or Sergeant of Law) A lawyer and one of the high justices of the court. He is cautious, suspicious, and wise, and one of the more cultivated men among the pilgrims.

Roger, the Cook Known for his cooking and characterized by a chancre sore that runs with pus. His story is incomplete.

The Wife of Bath (Alisoun) Characterized as gat-toothed, somewhat deaf, and wearing bright scarlet red stockings. She has had five husbands (the last half her age), enjoys her freedom, and is openly sensual.

Hubert, the Friar A sensual, licentious man who seduces young girls and then arranges their marriages. He loves money and knows the taverns better than the poor houses.

The Summoner An officer of the church who calls people for a church trial. He is as ugly as his profession; he frightens children with his red complexion, pimples and boils, and skin infected with scales.

The Clerk A sincere, devout student at Oxford University who loves learning and is respected by all the pilgrims. He is very poor because he spends all his money on books.

The Merchant A shrewd and intelligent man who knows how to strike a good bargain and is a member of the rich rising middle class.

The Squire A vain, lusty young man and a candidate for knighthood. He can sing, write poetry, and ride a horse very well, and considers himself a lady's man.

The Franklin A large and wealthy landowner who enjoys fine living and good companionship.

The Shipman A huge, uncouth man who can steer a ship but flounders on his horse.

The Prioress (Madame Eglantine) A very genteel lady who is coy and delicate. She has precise manners, eats as an aristocrat would, and wears a gold brooch with "Love conquers all" inscribed in Latin.

The Physician A doctor who can speak knowingly of medicines, drugs, and humours, and who knows astrology as well. He is fond of gold and makes a lot of money during the plague season.

The Pardoner The most complex of all the pilgrims. He is an intellect and uses advanced psychological means to gain his objective. Although he is not a good person, he can preach a good sermon.

The Monk A man who tends the property of the monastery. He is fat and happy, loves good food and wine, and finds the taverns more to his liking than the cold, severe monastery.

The Nun's Priest The priest of the church who accompanies the nuns so that they may offer up their confessions.

The Second Nun A very devout nun who, because she believes that idleness leads to sin, begins her story immediately.

The Canon and the Canon's Yeoman Although not one of the pilgrims, the Canon appears with his servant (the Yeoman) but leaves when his Yeoman begins a tale.

The Manciple The steward for a law school. Although not as intelligent as the law students, he is clever and shrewd enough to be able to put away some money for himself.

The Parson A very poor but very holy and virtuous religious man who tells a highly moral tale. He gives his scant money to his poor parishioners and tries to live the perfect life and set an ideal for others.