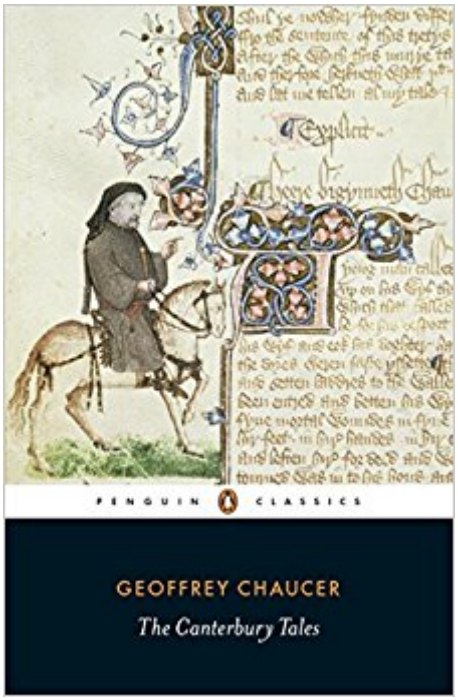
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The Canterbury Tales (original-spelling Middle English Edition) (Penguin Classics)



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Synopsis

One of the greatest and most ambitious works in English literature, in the original Middle EnglishThe Canterbury TalesÃ Â depicts a storytelling competition between pilgrims drawn from all ranks of society. The tales are as various as the pilgrims themselves, encompassing comedy, pathos, tragedy, and cynicism. The Miller and the Reeve express their mutual antagonism in a pair of comic stories combining sex and trickery; in Ã¢â ¬Å“The ShipmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Tale,Ã¢â ¬Â• a wife sells her favors to a monk. Others draw on courtly romance and fantasy: the Knight tells of rivals competing for the love of the same woman, and the Squire describes a princess who can speak to birds. In these twenty-four tales, Chaucer displays a dazzling range of literary styles and conjures up a wonderfully vivid picture of medieval life. This is a freshly established Middle English text with standardized spelling and punctuation and on-page glossing. ItÃ Â Features an introduction by Jill Mann, a chronology of Chaucer's life and works, detailed explanatory notes, suggestions for further reading, a full glossary, and a bibliography. For more than sixty-five years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,500Ã Â titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust theÃ Â series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-dateÃ Â translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“A delight . . . [RaffelÃ¢â ¬â„¢s translation] provides more opportunities to savor the counterpoint of ChaucerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s earthy humor against passages of piercingly beautiful lyric poetry.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus ReviewsÃ¢â ¬Å“Masterly . . . This new translation beckons us to make our own pilgrimage back to the very wellsprings of literature in our language.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Billy CollinsÃ¢â ¬Å“The Canterbury Tales has remained popular for seven centuries. It is the most approachable masterpiece of the medieval world, and Mr. RaffelÃ¢â ¬â„¢s translation makes the stories even more inviting.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Wall Street Journal

Geoffrey ChaucerÃ Â was born in London, the son of a wine-merchant, in about 1342, and as he spent his life in royal government service his career happens to be unusually well documented. By 1357 Chaucer was a page to the wife of Prince Lionel, second son of Edward III, and it was while in the prince's service that Chaucer was ransomed when captured during the English campaign in France in 1359-60. Chaucer's wife Philippa, whom he married c. 1365, was the sister of Katherine Swynford, the mistress (c. 1370) and third wife (1396) of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, whose first wife Blanche (d. 1368) is commemorated in Chaucer's ealrist major poem,Ã Â The Book of the Duchess.From 1374 Chaucer worked as controller of customs on wool in the port of London, but between 1366 and 1378 he made a number of trips abroad on official business, including two trips to Italy in 1372-3 and 1378. The influence of Chaucer's encounter with Italian literature is felt in the poems he wrote in the late 1370's and early 1380s Ã¢â ¬â œÃ Â The House of Fame,Ã Â The Parliament of FowlsÃ Â and a version ofÃ Â The Knight's TaleÃ Â Ã¢â ¬â œ and finds its fullest expression inÃ Â Troilus and Criseyde.In 1386 Chaucer was member of parliament for Kent, but in the same year he resigned his customs post, although in 1389 he was appointed Clerk of the King's Works (resigning in 1391). After finishingÃ Â TroilusÃ Â and his translation into English prose of Boethius'Ã Â De consolatione philosophiae, Chaucer started hisÃ Â Legend of Good Women. In the 1390s he worked on his most ambitious project,Ã Â The Canterbury Tales, which remained unfinished at his death. In 1399 Chaucer leased a house in the precincts of Westminster Abbey but died in 1400 and was buried in the Abbey.Jill MannÃ Â is a fellow of the British Academy, an Honorary Fellow of St. AnneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s College, Oxford, and a Life Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge.

Here is a brief synopsis.At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of

twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the NunÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.) The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the CookÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at BaileyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims.I won't go into detail about all the tales that are told except to say that I found them witty, entertaining, and thoughtful.

Let's get this clear at the start: This is a review of Jill Mann's edition of the Canterbury Tales in its Kindle version. (It's a shame that can't distinguish between different editions of the classics when posting reviews! -- hint!) About the Tales themselves, I'll say only that they are both a classic and a blast, and if you can handle the Middle English, you have to read them in that language. Jill Mann's editorial work is smart and thorough, too. The print edition is a bargain at the price -- again, if you're OK reading Middle English. The Kindle edition, though was a little clumsy to use -- though, to be fair, I don't see how all the glosses and notes could have been presented better in a e-book. Wait, yes I can. The glosses on individual words and expressions are easy to find; the more extensive notes, which are very valuable, are not. It shouldn't have been hard to add a marginal symbol to reference a Note. Hence it's only four stars, not five. But it may well be the best e-book version on the market.

This review is for the Broadview Edition of the Tales, edited by Boenig and Taylor. (Sadly, throws together reviews of ALL editions which is incredibly confusing.) I've looked at several editions of the Tales (Riverside, Modern Library, Penguin, ET Donaldson) and this is by far the best edition for actually reading the text of any I've found. The reason lies in the way the words and ideas are glossed. Both are done on the same page as the text. Words that are glossed are marked with a super-scripted circle (small "o"). Those words are glossed in the MARGIN, not at the bottom of the page. So you know what word is being defined in the margin and because it is defined in the margin your eyes don't have to leave the line to find the definition. Perfect. No other version BOTH marks the word and then defines it on the same line in the margin. I have seen an edition or two (ie, Modern Library) that defines in the margin but it does not mark the word being defined so you have

to work at finding out. Second, ideas or phrases in the text that require more space to elucidate are marked with a superscripted NUMBER and discussed at the bottom of the page. This makes it easy to know what is being explained and where to find the explanation. Other versions have such explanations but they are NOT marked on the line so you have to look at the bottom of the page, find the line, find the explanation, go back to the text, and try to figure out what is being explained. Sorry, there is no other word for that but stupid. This edition gets it right. Now, I'm not saying there is no place for the other editions; both the Riverside and the Penguin have more explanatory text than the Broadview (though the Broadview has plenty). Both the Riverside and Penguin are more scholarly. (I also recommend Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Canterbury Tales by Helen Cooper as being particularly helpful though the GradeSaver Canterbury Tales--a "Cliff's Notes" type book written by Harvard Students--is surprisingly helpful for such a short book.) So there is room for all these and more, of course. But for a READING copy where the notes are marked well and located right where you want them, this is the one to get. It looks like there's a new edition coming out though it doesn't say when. Worry not. If you want to read the Tales now, I heartily recommend this edition even if published a while ago.

Another review had mentioned this edition includes the full tales in Middle English. It does not. I couldn't get past the first sentence of the Prologue before deleting the whole from my Kindle.There is a bait and switch going on here. The listing for the Jill Mann ed includes a $.99 Kindle Version. Click on the Kindle Version and you're sent to a Modern Language edition. Search for the Jill Mann edition on your Kindle, and the Mann edition costs $12.78 -- not 99 cents. make sure you know what you're actually purchasing before hitting the purchase button.

This version of The Canterbury Tales is fantastic. It is in the original Middle English so it is mostly understandable. For words that are significantly different from their Modern English counterparts, it contains not only a glossary in the back, but also picks out some of the more challenging words to gloss as footnotes. It contains extensive notes in the back that help you understand the references the text makes and the world in which the book was written.The reason this book is a 4 and not a 5 is because of the physicality of the book. It is the size of a small brick, which is fine, but it is not made out of materials that are particularly durable. I am careful with my possessions, but ripped the cover on the first day. I am afraid that since it has so many pages but is not bound well or with a more durable softcover that it will get really beaten up. Still, the pages are thicker than ultra thin "Bible pages" so I am at least not worried about ripping them.I would highly recommend purchasing

this edition over other versions of Canterbury Tales, but be aware that is a particularly fragile softcover.

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