

Aula 6

THE AGE OF CHAUCER

META

Apresentar ao estudante o modo como a biografia de Chaucer está intimamente ligada à sua produção literária.

OBJETIVOS

Ao final da aula o(a) aluno(a) deve ser capaz de:
Compreender o modo como a obra de Chaucer se relaciona às várias fases de sua vida.
Familiarizar o estudante com fragmentos da obra de Chaucer.

PRERREQUISITOS

The Middle Ages in England
Medieval literature

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INTRODUÇÃO

In this class, we are going to learn the main aspects of Geoffrey Chaucer's life, in order to relate them with his literary production. First of all, we will remember the social and political context of the period, mentioning some other authors who were equally important in this process of construction of the English canon. He had a brilliant career and an adventurous life. He was first a page at the House of Duke of Lancaster, then a military man. Son of a rich wine merchant, he could enter the noble House of the Lancaster's and there could have education, that's why and how he learned foreign languages and became a man of letters.

He was first a page at the House of Duke of Lancaster, then a military man. Son of a rich wine merchant, he could enter the noble House of the Lancaster's and there could have education, that's why and how he learned foreign languages and became a man of letters.

His literary career is generally divided into three phases: we have the first phase, which was the French one, during the time he was in France for diplomatic purposes, and in which he was influenced by the French authors. He has an Italian phase in which he gets in contact with the works of Boccaccio, for example. We must not forget that Italy is the heart of Renaissance. According to some historians, even in the 14th century, there was already Renaissance in Italy and some authors serve as testimony of this precedence: Boccaccio and Dante Alighieri, artists who are known nowadays as being marks from the Renaissance who come from Italy. And Chaucer had the opportunity of knowing Italy during this time, knowing Italian literature and some authors, that's why the second phase of his career has a strong Italian influence. And finally his English phase, in which he writes his great masterpiece, the **Canterbury Tales**, known as the first realistic narrative in England.

At the end of the class, we are going to read some fragments of the Prologue of the **Canterbury Tales**. The intention of the activity is to develop in the students a critical sense of interpretation of the poem, relating its internal elements with its conditions of production, circulation and reception of the poem.

The reign of Edward III was marked by a period of patriotic enthusiasm, much because of the glorious victories of **Crécy and Potiers**, as well as of economy and material progress. After the establishment of parliament, in 1295, there was an increase of wealth with the development of commerce, which was itself provoked by the beginnings of the woolen industry and the enrichment of the great merchants. The wealth could be seen in the pomp and pageantry of the aristocracy and the garb, architecture and gorgeous tournaments of the time.

Ver glossário no final da Aula



A **tournament**, or **tourney** (from Old French *torneiment*, *tornei[a]*) is the name popularly given to chivalrous competitions or mock fights of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (12th to 16th centuries). It is one of various types of *hastiludes*.



Edward III (13 November 1312 – 21 June 1377) was King of England from 25 January 1327 until his death; he is noted for his military success and for restoring royal authority after the disastrous reign of his father, Edward II. Edward III transformed the Kingdom of England into one of the most formidable military powers in Europe. His long reign of fifty years also saw vital developments in legislation and government—in particular the evolution of the English parliament—as well as the ravages of the Black Death.

It was a time also of travels for pleasure, what resulted in colonial exploitation and power. On the other hand, there were heavy burden of taxation imposed upon the people, not to mention the calamity of the Black Death. Nevertheless, the fourteenth century is remembered today by the incredible quality of the writers of the period, like Langland (see Aula 5), who was already mentioned, **John Wycliffe** and **Jonh Mandeville**.



John Wycliffe (/ ˈwɪklɪf/; also spelled Wyclif, Wycliff, Wiclef, Wicliffe, Wickliffe; c. 1331 – 31 December 1384) was an English Scholastic philosopher, theologian, lay preacher, translator, reformer and university teacher at Oxford in England. He was an influential dissident in the Roman Catholic Church during the 14th century. His followers were known as Lollards, a somewhat rebellious movement, which preached anticlerical and biblically-centred reforms. The Lollard movement was a precursor to the Protestant Reformation.



“**Jehan de Mandeville**”, translated as “**Sir John Mandeville**”, is the name claimed by the compiler of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a book account of his supposed travels, which probably first appeared in Anglo-Norman French, and first circulated between 1357 and 1371.

However, no other author could be as great as Geoffrey Chaucer.



Chaucer has a long and adventurous biography. Like very few English writers his personal life relates to his literary work in a very intricate way. According to Alfred W. Pollard, the name Chaucer was a French form of the Latin **calcearius**, a shoemaker, and it was found in London and the eastern counties as early as the second half of the 13th century. Some of the London Chaucers lived in Cordwainer Street, in the shoemakers' quarter; several of them, however, were wine merchants, like the poet's father, John, and probably his grandfather Robert. In December 1324 John Chaucer was not much over twelve years old, and that he was still unmarried in 1328, the year which used to be considered that of Geoffrey's birth. The poet was probably born from eight to twelve years later, since in 1386, when giving evidence in Sir Richard le Scrope's suit against Sir Robert Grosvenor as to the right to bear certain arms, he was set down as “del age de xl ans et plus, armez par xxvij ans”. Later, and probably at the time of the poet's birth, his father lived in Thames Street.

In 1357 Geoffrey is found, apparently as a lad, in the service of Elizabeth, countess of Ulster, wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence. In 1359, as we learn from his deposition in the Scrope suit, Chaucer went to the war in France. At some period of the campaign, he was taken prisoner. On the 1st of March 1360 the King Edward III contributed £16 to his ransom, and by a year or two later Chaucer must have entered the royal service, since on the 10th of June 1367 Edward granted him a pension of twenty marks for his past and future services. A pension of ten marks had been granted by the king the previous September to a Philippa Chaucer for services to the queen as one of her “domicellae” or “damoiselles” and it seems probable

that at this date Chaucer was already married and this Philippa, a conclusion which used to be resisted on the ground of allusions in his early poems to a hopeless love-affair, now reckoned part of his poetical outfit. It is possible that Philippa was sister to Sir Hugh and sister-in-law to Katherine. In either case the marriage helps to account for the favour subsequently shown to Chaucer by **John of Gaunt**.



John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster, KG (6 March 1340 – 3 February 1399) was a member of the House of Plantagenet, the third surviving son of King Edward III of England and Philippa of Hainault. He was called "John of Gaunt" because he was born in Ghent, then rendered in English as Gaunt. When he became unpopular later in life, scurrilous rumours and lampoons circulated that he was actually the son of a Ghent butcher, perhaps because Edward III was not present at the birth. This story always drove him to fury. His daughter, Philippa, married John of Avis, king of Portugal.

In the grant of his pension Chaucer is called **dilectus vallectus noster: our beloved yeoman**. Before the end of 1368 he had risen to be one of the king's **esquires**. In September of the following year, John of Gaunt's wife, the duchess Blanche, died at the age of twenty-nine, and Chaucer wrote in her honour **The Book of the Duchesse**, a poem of 1334 lines in octosyllabic couplets, the first of his undoubtedly genuine works which can be connected with a definite date. In June 1370 he went abroad but nobody knows where he went to. He was back probably some time before **Michaelmas**, and seems to have remained in England till the 1st of December 1372, when he went to Italy as one of the three commissioners to treat with the Genoese as to an English port where they might have special facilities for trade. The accounts which he delivered on his return on the 23rd of May 1373 show that he had also visited Florence on the king's business, and he probably went also to Padua and there made the acquaintance of Petrarch.

Ver glossário no final da Aula



Francesco Petrarca (Italian pronunciation: [franˈtʃesko peˈtrarka]; July 20, 1304 – July 19, 1374), commonly anglicized as **Petrarch** (/ˈpiːtrɑrk, ˈpɛtrɑrk/), was an Italian scholar and poet in Renaissance Italy, and one of the earliest humanists. Petrarch's rediscovery of Cicero's letters is often credited for initiating the 14th-century Renaissance. Petrarch is often called the "Father of Humanism".[1] In the 16th century, Pietro Bembo created the model for the modern Italian language based on Petrarch's works, as well as those of Giovanni Boccaccio, and, to a lesser extent, Dante Alighieri.

In the second quarter of 1374 Chaucer had some prosperity in politics. On the 23rd of April the king granted him a pitcher of wine daily, subsequently commuted for an annuity of 20 marks. From John of Gaunt, who in August 1372 had granted Philippa Chaucer £10 a year, he himself now received a like annuity in reward for his own and his wife's services. On the 8th of June he was appointed Comptroller of the Custom and Subsidy of Wools, Hides and Woodfells and also of the Petty Customs of Wine in the Port of London. A month before this appointment, and probably in anticipation of it, he took (May 10, 1374) a lease for life from the city of London of the dwelling-house above the gate of Aldgate, where he lived for the next twelve years. In December 1376 he was sent abroad on the king's service in the retinue of Sir John Burley; in February 1377 he was sent to Paris and Montreuil in connexion probably with the peace negotiations between England and France, and at the end of April (after a reward of £20 for his good services) he was again despatched to France.

On the accession of **Richard II** Chaucer was confirmed in his offices and pensions. In January 1378 he seems to have been in France in connexion with a proposed marriage between Richard and the daughter of the French king; and on the 28th of May of the same year he was sent with Sir Edward de Berkeley to the lord of Milan and Sir John Hawkwood

to treat for help in the king's wars, returning on the 19th of September. This was his last diplomatic journey, and the close of a period of his life generally considered to have been so unprolific of poetry that little beyond the Clerk's "Tale of Grisilde," one or two other of the stories afterwards included in the Canterbury Tales, and a few short poems, are attributed to it, though the poet's actual absences from England during the eight years amount to little more than eighteen months.



Richard II (6 January 1367 – c. 14 February 1400), also known as Richard of Bordeaux, was King of England from 1377 until he was deposed on 30 September 1399. Richard, a son of Edward, the Black Prince, was born during the reign of his grandfather, Edward III. Richard was the younger brother of Edward of Angoulême; upon the death of this elder brother, Richard—at four years of age—became second in line to the throne after his father. Upon the death of Richard's father prior to the death of Edward III, Richard, by primogeniture, became the first in line for the throne. With Edward III's death the following year, Richard succeeded to the throne at the age of ten.

During the next twelve or fifteen years Chaucer was constantly involved with much literary work, though for the first half of them he had no lack of official employment. Abundant favour was shown him by the new king. He was paid £22 as a reward for his later missions in Edward III's reign, and was allowed an annual gratuity of 10 marks in addition to his pay of £10 as comptroller of the customs of wool. In fact, he was the first English official poet. In April 1382 the comptrollership of the petty customs in the Port of London was given him, and shortly after he was allowed to

exercise it by deputy, a similar licence being given him in February 1385, at the instance of the earl of Oxford, as regards the comptrollership of wool.

In October 1385 Chaucer was made a justice of the peace for Kent. In February 1386 he and his wife Philippa were admitted to the fraternity of Lincoln cathedral in the company of Henry, Earl of Derby (afterwards Henry IV), Sir Thomas de Swynford and other distinguished noble persons. In August 1386 he was elected one of the two knights of the shire for Kent, and with this dignity his fortune reached its climax. In December of the same year he was superseded in both his comptrollerships because of the absence of his patron, John of Gaunt, in Portugal and Spain, and the supremacy of the Duke of Gloucester. In the following year, the cessation of Philippa's pension suggests that she died. In May 1388 Chaucer surrendered to the king his two pensions of 20 marks each. For the next fourteen months his only source of income was his annuity of £10 from John of Gaunt.

In July 1389, after John of Gaunt had returned to England and the king had taken the government into his own hands, Chaucer was appointed clerk of the works at various royal palaces. To this post was subsequently added the charge of some repairs at St George's Chapel, Windsor. He was also made a commissioner to maintain the banks of the Thames between Woolwich and Greenwich, and was given by the Earl of March (grandson of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, his old patron) a sub-forestership at North Petherton, Devon, one more a sinecure. In February 1394 he was granted a new pension of £20. It is possible, also, that about this time, or a little later, he was in the service of the Earl of Derby.

In 1397 he received from King Richard a grant of a butt of wine yearly, what suggests his was in financial difficulty. In May 1398 he obtained letters of protection against his creditors, a step perhaps necessary by an action for debt taken against him earlier in the year. On the accession of Henry IV a new pension of 40 marks was conferred on Chaucer (13th of October 1399) and Richard II's grants were formally confirmed. Nevertheless, on the 24th of December 1399 he leased a tenement in the garden of St Mary's Chapel, Westminster, where he must have died, on the 25th of the following October. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his tomb became the fundamental stone of what is now known as **Poets' Corner**.



Poets' Corner is the name traditionally given to a section of the South Transept of Westminster Abbey because of the high number of poets, playwrights, and writers buried and commemorated there. The first poet to be interred in Poets' Corner was Geoffrey Chaucer in 1556. Over the centuries, a tradition has grown up of interring or memorialising people there in recognition of their contribution to British culture.



The portrait of Chaucer, which the affection of his disciple, Thomas Hoccleve, was painted in a copy of the latter's **Regement of Princes** (now Harleian MS. 4866 in the British Museum). It shows him as an old man with white hair. His dress and hood are black, and he carries in his hands a string of beads. We may imagine that it was thus that during the last months of his life he used to walk about the precincts of the Abbey.

His first poems were always circumstantial and political. Henry IV's promise of an additional pension was elicited by the **Compleynt to his Purs**, in which Chaucer addresses him as the “conquerour of Brutes Albioun”. In the last fifteen years of life, his literary activity had been overwhelming. With the aid of the lists of his works which he gives in the **Legende of Good Women** (lines 414-431), and the talk on the road which precedes the “Man of Law's Tale” (Canterbury Tales, B. 46-76), the order in which his main works were written can be traced with approximate certainty.

The development of his genius has been attractively summed up as comprised in three stages, French, Italian and English, and there is a rough approximation to the truth in this formula, since his earliest poems are translated from the French or based on French models, and the two great works of his middle period are borrowed from the Italian, while his latest stories have no such obvious and direct originals and in their humour and freedom anticipate the typically English temper of Henry Fielding. But Chaucer's indebtedness to French poetry was no passing phase. For various reasons — a not very remote French origin of his own family may be one of them — he was in no way interested in older English literature or in the work of his English contemporaries, save possibly that of “the moral Gower.” On the other hand he knew the Roman de la rose as modern English poets know Shakespeare, and the full extent of his debt to his French contemporaries, not merely in 1369, but in 1385 and in 1393 (the dates are approximate), is only gradually being discovered.

To be in touch throughout his life with the best French poets of the day was very influential to Chaucer's literary work. He had also important lessons Reading **Boccaccio's Filostrato and Teseide**, as well as from **Dante's Divina Commedia**. He shows familiarity with Petrarch's sonnets.



Giovanni Boccaccio (/boʊˈkɑːtʃi, oʊ, -tʃoʊ, bə-/; Italian: [dʒoˈvanni bokˈkattʃo]; 1313 – 21 December 1375)[1] was an Italian writer, poet, correspondent of Petrarch, and an important Renaissance humanist. Boccaccio wrote a number of notable works, including **The Decameron** and **On Famous Women**. As a poet who wrote in the Italian vernacular, Boccaccio is particularly noted for his realistic dialogue, which differed from that of his contemporaries, medieval writers who usually followed formulaic models for character and plot.



Durante degli Alighieri (Italian: [du 'rante 'deʎʎi ali 'gʝɛ :ri]), simply called Dante (Italian: ['dante], UK /'dænti/, US /'dɑːnteɪ/; c. 1265–1321), was a major Italian poet of the late Middle Ages. His *Divine Comedy*, originally called *Comedia* (modern Italian: *Commedia*) and later called *Divina* by Boccaccio, is widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of western literature.

The most outstanding example of Chaucer's French studies is his translation of **Le Roman de la rose**, a poem written in some 4000 lines by Guillaume Lorris about 1237 and extended to over 22,000 by Jean Cloupinel, better known as Jean de Meun, forty years later. Another translation of his from the French was **the Book of the Lyon**, which must certainly have been taken from Guillaume Machault's **Le Dit du lion**. The strength of French influence on Chaucer's early work can be illustrated by **the Book of the Duchesse**, or, as it is also called, **the Deth of Blaunche**. Here the whole machinery of the poem are taken over from contemporary French conventions. **A.B.C.**, a poem in honour of the Blessed Virgin, of which the stanzas begin with the successive letters of the alphabet, is another early example of French influence. It is taken from the **Pelerinage de la vie humaine**, written by Guillaume de Deguilleville about 1330.

Chaucer also found other materials in popular Latin books. Among his lost works are renderings of **Origenes upon the Maudeleyne** and of Pope Innocent III on **The Wreced Engndring of Mankinde (De miseria conditionis humanae)**. He must have begun his attempts at straightforward narrative with the **Lyf of Seynt Cecyle** (the weakest of all his works, the second Nun's Tale in the Canterbury series) from the **Legenda Aurea**

of Jacobus de Voragine. The story of the patience of Grisilde, in turn, is taken from Petrarch's Latin version of a tale by Boccaccio.

Because of the marriage of Anne of Bohemia to Richard II (i.e. about 1381-1382), Chaucer wrote **the Parlement of Foules**, a charming sketch of 699 lines in which the other birds, on Saint Valentine's day, counsel the "Formel Egle" on her choice of a mate. A more ambitious venture was the **Hous of Fame**, in which the poet shows a curious mixture of the poetic ideals of the **Roman de la rose** and reminiscences of the **Divina Commedia**.

Troilus and Criseyde is a poem which re-tells the tragic story of the lovers Troilus and Criseyde during the Siege of Troy. It was composed using rime royale and it was probably completed during the mid 1380s. Many Chaucer scholars regard it as the poet's finest work. As a finished long poem it is more self-contained than the better known but ultimately uncompleted Canterbury Tales. This poem is often considered the source of the phrase: "all good things must come to an end".

Chaucer's failure to complete **the Legende of Good Women** may have been partly due to the attractions of the Canterbury Tales. The pilgrims whom he imagines to have assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, where Harry Bailey was host, are said to have numbered "wel nyne and twenty in a company" and the Prologue gives full-length sketches of a Knight, a Squire (his son), and their Yeoman; of a Prioress, Monk, Friar, Oxford Clerk, and Parson, with two disreputable hangers-on of the church, a Summoner and Pardoner; of a Serjeant-at-Law and a Doctor of Physic, and of a Franklin, or country gentleman, Merchant, Shipman, Miller, Cook, Manciple, Reeve, Ploughman (the Parson's brother) and the ever-famous Wife of Bath. Five London burgesses are described in a group, and a Nun and Priest are mentioned as in attendance on the Prioress. Each of these, with Chaucer himself making the twenty-ninth, was pledged to tell two tales, but including one second attempt and a tale told by the Yeoman of a Canon, who overtakes the pilgrims on the road, we have only twenty finished stories, two unfinished and two interrupted ones. As in the case of the Legende of Good Women, our loss is not so much that of the additional stories as of the completed framework. The wonderful character sketches of the Prologue are carried yet farther by the Talks on the Road which link the different tales, and two of these Talks, in which the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner respectively edify the company, have the importance of separate Tales, but between the Tales that have come down to us there are seven links missing.

The reference to **the Lyf of Seynt Cecyle** in the Prologue to the **Legende of Good Women** gives external proof that Chaucer included earlier work in the scheme of the **Canterbury Tales**, and mention has been made of other stories which are indisputably early. The dates at which several

of the Tales were composed remain doubtful, while in the case of at least two, the Clerk's tale of Grisilde and the Monk's tragedies, there is evidence of early work being revised and supplemented. It is fortunately impossible to separate the prologue to the charmingly told story of "yonge Hugh of Lincoln" from the tale itself, and, with the "quod sche" in the second line as proof that Chaucer was here writing specially for his Prioress, we are forbidden to limit the new stories to any one metre or tone. Around 1391 Chaucer wrote in prose for an eleven year-old reader, whom he addresses as **Litel Lowis my son**, a treatise on the use of the Astrolabe.

The part played by Chaucer in the development of the English language has often been overrated. He neither corrupted it, as used to be said, by introducing French words, nor bore any such part in "fixing it" as was afterwards played by the translators of the Bible. When he was still a Young man, The English elite was still bilingual. A comparison of Chaucer's language with that of Gower shows that they both used the best English of their day with a special poetic care. Chaucer's great contribution to the English language was making it a suitable idiom for literature, giving it the necessary poetic European dignity.

Chaucer borrowed both his stanza forms and his "decasyllabic" couplets from **Guillaume Machault**, and his music, like that of his French master and his successors, depends very largely on assigning to every syllable its full value, with the due pronunciation of the final -e. Chaucer exerted a Strong influence on Scottish poetry. His disciples Hoccleve and Lydgate, who at first had caught some echoes of his rhythms, gradually yielded to the change in pronunciation. For three centuries his reputation was sustained solely by his narrative power, although he was also a skillful poet.

The **Canterbury Tales** is Chaucer's most popular work. Many other literary Works, as well as movies, comic books and tv series, were influenced and inspired by Chaucer's great masterpiece. The list of adaptations is long. Here are some of them.

The Two Noble Kinsmen, by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, is a retelling of "The Knight's Tale" and was first performed in 1613 or 1614 and published in 1634. In 1961, Erik Chisholm completed his opera, **The Canterbury Tales**. The opera is in three acts: The Wyf of Bath's Tale, The Pardoner's Tale and The Nun's Priest's Tale. Nevill Coghill's modern English version formed the basis of a musical version – first staged in 1964.

A Canterbury Tale, a 1944 film jointly written and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, is loosely based on the narrative frame of Chaucer's tales. The movie opens with a group of medieval pilgrims journeying through the Kentish countryside as a narrator speaks the opening lines of the General Prologue. The scene then makes a now-famous transition to the time of World War II. From that point on, the film follows a group

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of strangers, each with his or her own story and in need of some kind of redemption, who are making their way to Canterbury together.

Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1972 film **The Canterbury Tales** features several of the tales, some of which keep close to the original tale and some of which are embellished. The Cook's Tale, for instance, which is incomplete in the original version, is expanded into a full story, and the Friar's Tale extends the scene in which the Summoner is dragged down to hell. The film includes these two tales as well as the Miller's Tale, the Summoner's Tale, the Wife of Bath's Tale, and the Merchant's Tale.

On April 26, 1986, American radio personality Garrison Keillor opened "The News from Lake Wobegon" portion of the first live TV broadcast of his *A Prairie Home Companion* radio show with a reading of the original Middle English text of the General Prologue. He commented, "Although those words were written more than 600 years ago, they still describe spring."

English rock musician Sting paid tribute to Chaucer and the book with his 1993 concept album **Ten Summoner's Tales**, which he described as ten songs (plus an epilogue number) with no theme or subject tying them together. Sting's real name is Gordon Sumner, hence the reference to the "Summoner" character in the record's title. In essence, the collection of songs was composed as "a musical Canterbury Tales".

Several more recent films, while they are not based on the tales, do have references to them. For example, in the 1995 film **Seven, the Parson's Tale** is an important clue to the methods of a serial killer who chooses his victims based on the seven deadly sins. The 2001 film **A Knight's Tale** took its name from "The Knight's Tale". Although it bears little resemblance to the tale, it does feature what Martha Driver and Sid Ray call an "MTV-generation" Chaucer who is a gambling addict with a way with words. Scattered references to the Tales include Chaucer's declaration that he will use his verse to vilify a summoner and a pardoner who have cheated him.

Television adaptations include Alan Plater's 1975 re-telling of the stories in a series of plays for BBC2: **Trinity Tales**. In 2003, BBC again featured modern re-tellings of selected tales.

The 2014 young adult short novel **Anaheim Tales** by M.L. Millard was inspired by and references *The Canterbury Tales*.



The Canterbury Tales (Italian: *I racconti di Canterbury*) is a 1972 Italian film directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini and based on the medieval narrative poem *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. It is the second film in Pasolini's "Trilogy of Life", the others being *The Decameron* and *Arabian Nights*. It won the Golden Bear at the 22nd Berlin International Film Festival. The adaptation covers eight of the 24 tales and contains abundant nudity, sex and slapstick humour. Many of these scenes are present or at least alluded to in the original as well, but some are Pasolini's own additions.

CONCLUSÃO

As we could see last class, during the medieval period in England a very interesting thing happens: the invention of authorship. Nobody knows who wrote *Beowulf*, because it comes from an oral tradition. Now we can talk about English authors. It is the case of Geoffrey Chaucer, who was born around 1343 and died in 1400, and is known as the Father of English literature. He is widely considered the greatest English poet of the middle Ages and was the first poet to have been buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster's Abbey. He had a brilliant career and an adventurous life. He was first a page at the House of Duke of Lancaster, then a military man. Son of a rich wine merchant, he could enter the noble House of the Lancaster's and there could have education, that's why and how he learned foreign languages and became a man of letters.

His literary career is generally divided into three phases: we have the first phase, which was the French one, during the time he was in France for diplomatic purposes, and in which he was influenced by the French authors. He has an Italian phase in which he gets in contact with the works of Boccaccio, for example. We must not forget that Italy is the heart of Renaissance.

According to some historians, even in the 14th century, there was already Renaissance in Italy and some authors serve as testimony of this precedence: Boccaccio and Dante Alighieri, artists who are known nowadays as being marks from the Renaissance who come from Italy. And Chaucer had the opportunity of knowing Italy during this time, knowing Italian literature and some authors, that's why the second phase of his career has a strong Italian influence. And finally his English phase, in which he writes his great masterpiece, **the Canterbury Tales**, known as the first realistic narrative in England. It deals with customs and the culture of England itself because as a theme it takes Canterbury, the custom that the English people had every spring to visit the Canterbury, which became sacred because it was the place in which Thomas Becket was killed. People still go there nowadays, like in Brazil and many other countries where people visit periodically the sacred places. Thus, Chaucer took this culturally famous episode in England to create his story. He created a story in which a group of travelers from many different parts of England, from many different social classes, with different languages, join in a tavern and decide to go together to Canterbury because it was very dangerous to travel at night on a horse during those days. They then decide to tell, each of them, two tales on their way to Canterbury and two more tales on their way back, but the author cannot finish his plan because he dies before doing so. In the beginning of the tales, we have the introduction in which the author presents to the reader every traveler and the many kinds of traveler: monks, nuns, knights, lawyers, merchants, so that we could see for the first time a social picture of England during the Middle Ages. That is why his work is so important.



RESUMO

Geoffrey Chaucer is known as the Father of English literature. He is also considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages and was the first poet to be buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. He could achieve fame during his lifetime as an author, philosopher, alchemist and astronomer. He also maintained an active career in the civil service as a bureaucrat, courtier and diplomat. Among his many works, which include **The Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame, the Legend of Good Women and Troilus and Criseyde**, he is best known today for **the Canterbury Tales**. Chaucer was a crucial figure in developing the legitimacy of the vernacular, Middle English, at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were French and Latin. The part played by Chaucer in the development of the English language has often been overrated. He neither corrupted it, as used to be said, by introducing French words, nor

bore any such part in “fixing it” as was afterwards played by the translators of the Bible. When he was still a Young man, The English elite was still bilingual. A comparison of Chaucer's language with that of Gower shows that they both used the best English of their day with a special poetic care. Chaucer's great contribution to the English language was making it a suitable idiom for literature, giving it the necessary poetic European dignity. He is one of those poets whose life and lifetime is intrinsically related to his literary work.



Read the fragments below very carefully:

Whan that Aprill with his shoures sote^o
The droghte^o of Marche hath perced to the rote,^o
And bathed every veyne^o in swich licour,^o
Of which vertu^o engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus^o eek with his swete breeth
Inspired^o hath in every holt^o and heeth^o
The tendre croppes,^o and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne;¹
And smale fowles^o maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open yē^o—
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages²—
Than longen^o folk to goon^o on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,³
To ferne halwes,^o couthe^o in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir⁴ for to seke,^o
That hem hath holpen,^o whan that they were seke.^o

Bifel^o that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard^o as I lay^o
Redy to wenden^o on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,^o
At night was come into that hostelrye^o
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure^o y-falle^o
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden^o ryde.

The chambres^o and the stables weren wyde,^o
 And wel we weren esed^o atte beste.^o
 And shortly, whan the sonne was to^o reste,
 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon^o
 That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
 And made forward^o erly for to ryse,
 To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse.^o

But natheles,^o whyl I have tyme and space,
 Er that I ferther in this tale pace,^o
 Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun⁵
 To telle yow al the condicioun⁶
 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,^o
 And whiche^o they weren, and of what degree,^o
 And eek in what array^o that they were inne;
 And at a knight than wol^o I first biginne.

Has run his half-course in the Ram; i.e., has passed through half the zodiacal sign of Aries (the Ram), a course completed on April 11. A rhetorically decorative way of indicating the time of year.

Nature so spurs them in their hearts.

And pilgrims to seek foreign shores.

Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, murdered in 1170 and canonized shortly thereafter. The place of his martyrdom was the greatest shrine in England and much visited by pilgrims.

It seems to me reasonable (proper).

Character, estate, condition.

COMENTÁRIO SOBRE AS ATIVIDADES

According to this prologue, the poet describes the season in which the English people choose to go on pilgrimage to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket. Try to identify elements of the English life of the period, as well as the kind of verse structure the poet uses. Try to answer these questions in English.

The intention of the activity is to develop in the students a critical sense of interpretation of the poem, relating its internal elements with its conditions of production, circulation and reception of the poem. Always use a good dictionay, printed or online.



PRÓXIMA AULA

A invenção das Línguas Nacionais

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GLÓSSARIO

The Battle of **Crécy** (26 August 1346) was an important victory during the Edwardian phase of the Hundred Years' War. Coupled with the later battles of Poitiers (also fought during the Edwardian phase) and Agincourt, it formed the first of three decisive English successes during the conflict. The Battle of Poitiers, in turn, was also a major battle of the Hundred Years' War between England and France. The battle occurred on 19 September 1356 near Poitiers, France. Preceded by the Battle of Crécy in 1346, and followed by the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, it was the second of the three great English victories of the war. A **yeoman** ((US) IPA: /'joʊ.mən/) was a member of a social class in late medieval to early modern England. In early recorded uses, a yeoman was an attendant in a noble household; hence titles such as Yeoman of the Chamber, Yeoman of the Crown, Yeoman Usher, King's Yeoman, Yeomen Warders, Yeomen of the Guard.

Esquire (British English: /ɪ'skwaɪə/; American English: /'ɛs,kwaɪr/, /ɛ'skwaɪr/ or /ɪ'skwaɪr/; abbreviated Esq.) is a courtesy title. Esquire is cognate with the word squire, which in medieval times meant an apprentice to a knight and implied being an armiger. In the United Kingdom, Esquire historically was a title of respect accorded to men of higher social rank, below the rank of knight and above the rank of gentleman. It later came to be used as a general courtesy title for any man in a formal setting, usually as a suffix to his name, as in "John Smith, Esq.", with no precise significance. In certain formal contexts, it remains an indication of a social status.

that is recognised in the formal Order of Precedence. In the United States, Esquire is mostly used to denote a lawyer. In letters, a lawyer is customarily addressed by adding the suffix Esquire (abbreviated Esq.), preceded by a comma, after the lawyer's full name.

Michaelmas / 'mɪkəlˌmɑːs/, the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel (also the Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael, the Feast of the Archangels, or the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels), is a day in the Western Christian liturgical year that occurs on 29 September. In medieval England, Michaelmas marked the ending and beginning of the husbandman's year, George C. Homans observes: "at that time harvest was over, and the bailiff or reeve of the manor would be making out the accounts for the year."

Guillaume de Machaut (French: [ɡi'jom də ma'ʃo]; sometimes spelled Machault; c. 1300 – April 1377) was a medieval French poet and composer. He is one of the earliest composers on whom significant biographical information is available. According to Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Machaut was "the last great poet who was also a composer". Well into the 15th century, Machaut's poetry was greatly admired and imitated by other poets, including Geoffrey Chaucer.