

Contents

The Canterbury Tales	I
<i>Fragment I (Group A)</i>	3
GENERAL PROLOGUE	3
THE KNIGHT'S TALE	25
THE MILLER'S TALE	79
THE REEVE'S TALE	98
THE COOK'S TALE	110
<i>Fragment II (Group B1)</i>	115
THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE	115
<i>Fragment III (Group D)</i>	149
THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE	149
THE FRIAR'S TALE	180
THE SUMMONER'S TALE	190
<i>Fragment IV (Group E)</i>	207
THE CLERK'S TALE	207
THE MERCHANT'S TALE	241
<i>Fragment V (Group F)</i>	271
THE SQUIRE'S TALE	271
THE FRANKLIN'S TALE	290
<i>Fragment VI (Group C)</i>	313
THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE	313
THE PARDONER'S TALE	320
<i>Fragment VII (Group B2)</i>	339
THE SHIPMAN'S TALE	339
THE Prioress's TALE	350
SIR THOPAS	358
THE TALE OF MELIBEE	367
THE MONK'S TALE	404
THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE	429

<i>Fragment VIII (Group G)</i>	447
THE SECOND NUN'S TALE	447
THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE	463
<i>Fragment IX (Group H)</i>	487
THE MANCIPLE'S TALE	487
<i>Fragment X (Group I)</i>	497
THE PARSON'S TALE	497
<i>Extra Material</i>	567
Geoffrey Chaucer's Life	569
Geoffrey Chaucer's Works	574
Select Bibliography	600
Note on the Text	600

The Canterbury Tales

Fragment I (Group A)

GENERAL PROLOGUE

HERE BYGYNNETH THE BOOK OF
THE TALES OF CAUNTERBURY

WHAN that Aprill with his shoures soote¹
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek² with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt³ and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye 10
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages⁴);
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes,⁵ kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir⁶ for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.⁷
 Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay 20
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed⁸ atte beste.

1 sweet. • 2 also. • 3 grove, woodland. • 4 hearts. • 5 distant shrines. • 6 St Thomas Becket. • 7 sick. • 8 accommodated, entertained.

And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, 30
 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon
 That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
 And made forward erly for to ryse,
 To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.¹

But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
 Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
 Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
 To telle yow al the condicioun
 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
 And whiche they weren, and of what degree, 40
 And eek in what array that they were inne;
 And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.

A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan
 To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
 And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,²
 As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
 And evere honoured for his worthynesse. 50
 At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne³
 Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;⁴
 In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,⁵
 No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.
 In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
 Of Algezir,⁶ and riden in Belmarye.⁷
 At Lyeys⁸ was he and at Satalye,⁹
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
 At many a noble armee hadde he be. 60
 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
 And foughen for oure feith at Tramysse¹⁰
 In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.¹¹
 This ilke¹² worthy knyght hadde been also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye¹³
 Agayn another hethen in Turkye.
 And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys;

1 tell. • 2 farther. • 3 had sat in the seat of honour. • 4 Prussia. • 5 he had made military expeditions in Lithuania and Russia. • 6 he had also taken part in the siege of Algeciras (a Moorish citadel) in Granada's territory. • 7 Benmarin (a Moorish state in modern-day Morocco). • 8 Ayas, or Laiazzo (a small city in southern Turkey, now called Yumurtalik). • 9 Antalya (a city and port in south-western Turkey). • 10 Tlemcen (a city in north-western Algeria). • 11 thrice in lists, and always killed his enemy. • 12 same. • 13 Balat (a village in south-western Turkey, the site of the ancient city of Miletus).

And though that he were worthy,¹ he was wys,
 And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
 He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde 70
 In all his lyf unto no maner wight.²
 He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.
 But, for to tellen yow of his array,
 His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
 Of fustian he wered a gypon³
 Al bismotered with his habergeon,
 For he was late ycome from his viage,⁴
 And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.
 With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,
 A lovyere and a lusty bachelor, 80
 With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.⁵
 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
 And wonderly delyvere,⁶ and of greet strengthe.
 And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie⁷
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
 And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 Embrouded was he, as it were a meede⁸
 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede. 90
 Synginge he was, or floytynge,⁹ al the day;
 He was as fressh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gowne, with slevs longe and wyde.
 Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.
 He koude songes make and wel endite,¹⁰
 Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
 So hoothe¹¹ he lovede that by nyghtertale¹²
 He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
 Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,
 And carf¹³ biforn his fader at the table. 100
 A YEMAN¹⁴ hadde he and servantz namo
 At that tyme, for hym liste¹⁵ ride so,
 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
 A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily
 (Wel koude he dresse his tawkel¹⁶ yemanly:
 His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
 And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.

1 eminent. • 2 any sort of person. • 3 surcoat, tunic. • 4 expedition. • 5 as if they had been pressed in a curling iron. • 6 nimble, agile. • 7 cavalcade, cavalry raid. • 8 meadow. • 9 playing a flute. • 10 compose. • 11 hotly. • 12 by night. • 13 carved. • 14 attendant. • 15 wished to. • 16 prepare his tackle.

A not¹ heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
 Of wodecraft wel koude² he al the usage. 110
 Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,³
 And by his syde a sword and a bokeler,⁴
 And on that oother syde a gay daggere
 Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
 A Cristopher on his brest of silver sheene.
 An horn he bar, the bawdryk⁵ was of grene;
 A forster⁶ was he, soothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
 That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
 Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy;⁷ 120
 And she was cleped⁸ madame Eglentyne.
 Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
 Entuned in hir nose ful semely,
 And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,⁹
 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,¹⁰
 For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
 At mete¹¹ wel ytaught was she with alle:¹²
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
 Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe¹³ 130
 That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.
 In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.¹⁴
 Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
 That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
 Ful semely after hir mete she draughte.¹⁵
 And sikerly¹⁶ she was of greet desport,
 And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
 And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
 Of court, and to been estatlich of manere, 140
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.
 But, for to speken of hire conscience,
 She was so charitable and so pitous,
 She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
 Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
 Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.¹⁷
 But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,

1 close-cropped. • 2 knew. • 3 guard (for the bow arm) • 4 buckler. • 5 baldric. • 6 forester. • 7 St Eligius. • 8 called. • 9 elegantly. • 10 The Benedictine nunnery of St Leonard's Priory in Stratford-at-Bow (better known as Bromley-by-Bow, in east London). • 11 table. • 12 moreover. • 13 take good care. • 14 pleasure, interest. • 15 she reached for her food. • 16 certainly. • 17 fine wheat bread.

Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;¹
 And al was conscience and tendre herte. 150
 Ful semyly hir wymphul pynched was,
 Hir nose tretys,² hir eyen greye as glas,
 Hir mouthful smal, and therto softe and reed;
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
 It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;³
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
 Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.⁴
 Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
 A peire of bedes, gauded⁵ al with grene,
 And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene, 160
 On which ther was first write a crowned A,⁶
 And after *Amor vincit omnia*.⁷
 Another NONNE with hire hadde she,
 That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.
 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,⁸
 An outridere,⁹ that lovede venerie,¹⁰
 A manly man, to been an abbot able.
 Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
 And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
 Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere 170
 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle.
 Ther as this lord¹¹ was kepere of the celle,¹²
 The reule of Seint Maure or of Seint Benoit,
 By cause that it was old and somdel¹³ streit,
 This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
 And heeld after the newe world the space.¹⁴
 He yaf nat¹⁵ of that text a pulled¹⁶ hen,
 That seith¹⁷ that hunters ben nat hooly men,
 Ne that a monk, whan he is reccheles,¹⁸
 Is likned til¹⁹ a fissh that is waterlees – 180
 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
 But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
 And I seyde his opinion was good.
 What²⁰ sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood,²¹
 Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
 Or swynken²² with his handes, and labour,

1 vigorously with a stick. • 2 graceful, well formed. • 3 think. • 4 I noticed. • 5 a pair of rosaries with gauds (the larger beads placed between the decades of "aves" in a rosary). • 6 capital A. • 7 "Love conquers all" (Latin). A famous phrase from Virgil's *Ecloques* (x, l. 69). • 8 a most excellent one. • 9 "An officer of an abbey or convent who attends to the external domestic requirements of the community, esp. the running of its manors" (*OED*). • 10 hunting. • 11 where this lord. • 12 subordinate monastery. • 13 somewhat. • 14 the while. • 15 gave not. • 16 plucked. • 17 says. • 18 careless. • 19 to. • 20 Why. • 21 mad, insane. • 22 work.

As Austyn bit?¹ How shal the world be served?
 Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!
 Therefore he was a prikasour² aright:
 Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight; 190
 Of prikyng³ and of huntyng for the hare
 Was at his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
 I seigh his sleeves purfild at the hond⁴
 With grys,⁵ and that the fyneste of a lond;
 And, for to festne his hood under his chyn,
 He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
 A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
 His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
 And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
 He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;⁶ 200
 His eyen stepe,⁷ and rollynge in his heed,
 That stemed as a forneys of a leed;⁸
 His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
 Now certainly he was a fair prelaat;
 He was nat pale as a forpynd⁹ goost.
 A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
 His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.
 A FRERE ther was, a wantowne¹⁰ and a merye,
 A lymytour,¹¹ a ful solempne¹² man. 210
 In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
 So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
 He hadde maad ful many a mariage
 Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.¹³
 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
 With frankeleyns¹⁴ over al in his contree,
 And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
 For he hadde power of confessioun,
 As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
 For of his ordre he was licenciat.¹⁵ 220
 Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
 And plesaunt was his absolucioun:
 He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,
 Ther as he wiste¹⁶ to have a good pitaunce.¹⁷
 For unto a povre ordre for to yive
 Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;¹⁸

1 As St Augustine (of Hippo) urged. • 2 a rider, a mounted huntsman. • 3 galloping. • 4 trimmed at the cuff. • 5 grey fur. • 6 condition. • 7 large, prominent. • 8 cauldron. • 9 tormented. • 10 jovial. • 11 limiter, a "friar licensed to preach, hear confessions and beg within a defined area, usually within the territory of the convent to which he belongs" (*OED*). • 12 dignified. • 13 pillar. • 14 franklins. • 15 licensed. • 16 knew. • 17 gift of alms. • 18 shriven.

For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,¹
 He wiste that a man was repentaunt;
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,
 He may nat wepe, althogh hym soore smerte. 230
 Therfore in stede of wepyng and preyeres
 Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
 His typet² was ay farsed³ ful of knyves
 And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
 And certeinly he hadde a murye note:⁴
 Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;⁵
 Of yeddynges⁶ he baar outrelly⁷ the pris.
 His nekke whit was as the flour-do-lys;
 Therto he strong was as a champioun.⁸
 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun 240
 And everich hostiler and tappestere⁹
 Bet than a lazar¹⁰ or a beggestere;
 For unto swich a worthy man as he
 Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
 To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.
 It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce,¹¹
 For to deelen with no swich poraille,
 But al¹² with riche and selleres of vitaille.¹³
 And over al, ther as¹⁴ profit sholde arise,
 Curteis he was and lowely of servyse. 250
 Ther nas¹⁵ no man nowher so vertuous.
 He was the beste beggere in his hous;
 For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,¹⁶
 So plesaunt was his "*In principio*,"¹⁷
 Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente.
 His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
 And rage¹⁸ he koude, as it were right a whelp.
 In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,¹⁹
 For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer
 With a thredbare cope,²⁰ as is a povre scoler, 260
 But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
 Of double worstede was his semycupe,²¹
 That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
 Somwhat he lipped, for his wantownesse,
 To make his Englishh sweete upon his tonge;

1 he dared to assert. • 2 tippet. • 3 stuffed. • 4 pleasant voice. • 5 a stringed musical instrument. • 6 romances in verses. • 7 utterly. • 8 fighter. • 9 barmaid. • 10 leper. • 11 be profitable. • 12 only. • 13 victuals, provisions. • 14 And wherever. • 15 wasn't. • 16 shoe. • 17 "In the beginning" (Latin). The opening words of the Gospel of John, used in medieval times as a charm against evil. • 18 be playful. • 19 He could be of so much help during lovedays (as an umpire in settling disputes). • 20 cloak. • 21 short cloak.

And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.

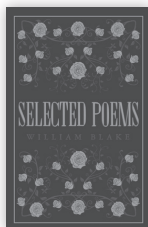
A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd, 270
In mottelee,¹ and hye on horse he sat;
Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bever hat,
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownynge² alwey th' encrees of his wynnyng.³
He wolde the see were kept for any thyng⁴
Bitwixe Middelburgh⁵ and Orewelle.⁶
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes⁷ selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:⁸
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette, 280
So estatly was he of his governaunce
With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.⁹
For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot¹⁰ how men hym calle.

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.¹¹
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;¹² 290
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office.
For hym was levere¹³ have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fithele,¹⁴ or gay sautrie.¹⁵
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,¹⁶
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente, 300
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.¹⁷
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.
Noight o word spak he moore than was neede,

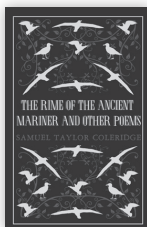
1 motley (a cloth woven from threads of two or more colours). • 2 proclaiming, trumpeting. • 3 profits. • 4 guarded at all costs. • 5 Middelburg (in Holland). • 6 the River Orwell (in Suffolk). • 7 écus. The merchant's dealings were illegal, as only royal money changers were allowed to exchange foreign currency at a profit. • 8 employed. • 9 loans. • 10 don't know. • 11 grave, sombre. • 12 short outer coat. • 13 He would rather. • 14 fiddle. • 15 psaltery. • 16 take. • 17 study.

GREAT POETS SERIES

Each volume is based on the most authoritative text, and reflects Alma's commitment to provide affordable editions with valuable insight into the great poets' works.



Selected Poems
Blake, William
ISBN: 9781847498212
£7.99 • PB • 288 pp



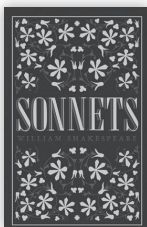
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
ISBN: 9781847497529
£7.99 • PB • 256 pp



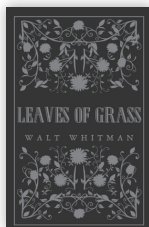
Complete Poems
Keats, John
ISBN: 9781847497567
£9.99 • PB • 520 pp



Paradise Lost
Milton, John
ISBN: 9781847498038
£7.99 • PB • 320 pp



Sonnets
Shakespeare, William
ISBN: 9781847496089
£4.99 • PB • 256 pp



Leaves of Grass
Whitman, Walt
ISBN: 9781847497550
£8.99 • PB • 288 pp

MORE POETRY TITLES

Dante Alighieri: *Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise, Rime, Vita Nuova, Love Poems*;
Alexander Pushkin: *Lyrics Vol. 1 and 2, Love Poems, Ruslan and Lyudmila*;
François Villon: *The Testament and Other Poems*; Cecco Angiolieri: *Sonnets*;
Guido Cavalcanti: *Complete Poems*; Emily Brontë: *Poems from the Moor*;
Anonymous: *Beowulf*; Ugo Foscolo: *Sepulchres*; W.B. Yeats: *Selected Poems*;
Charles Baudelaire: *The Flowers of Evil*; Sándor Márai: *The Withering World*;
Antonia Pozzi: *Poems*; Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli: *Sonnets*; Dickens: *Poems*

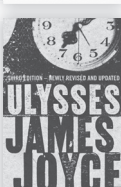
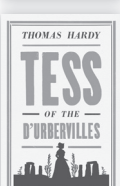
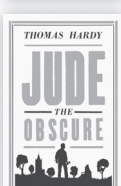
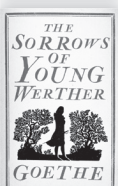
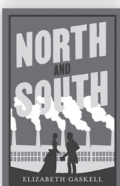
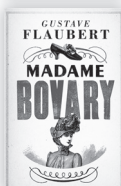
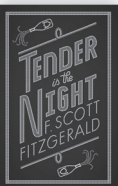
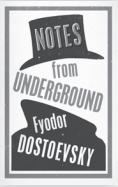
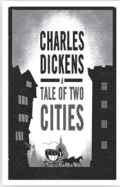
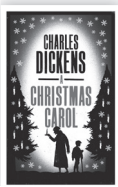
WWW.ALMABOOKS.COM/POETRY

EVERGREENS SERIES

Beautifully produced classics, affordably priced

Alma Classics is committed to making available a wide range of literature from around the globe. Most of the titles are enriched by an extensive critical apparatus, notes and extra reading material, as well as a selection of photographs. The texts are based on the most authoritative editions and edited using a fresh, accessible editorial approach. With an emphasis on production, editorial and typographical values, Alma Classics aspires to revitalize the whole experience of reading classics.







For our complete list and latest offers

visit

almabooks.com/evergreens