

## Fragment I (Group A) || General Prologue

When April's gentle rains have pierced the drought  
Of March right to the root, and bathed each sprout  
Through every vein with liquid of such power  
It brings forth the engendering of the flower;  
5 When Zephyrus too with his sweet breath has blown  
Through every field and forest, urging on  
The tender shoots, and there's a youthful sun,  
His second half course through the Ram now run,  
And little birds are making melody  
10 And sleep all night, eyes open as can be  
(So Nature pricks them in each little heart),  
On pilgrimage then folks desire to start.  
The palmers long to travel foreign strands  
To distant shrines renowned in sundry lands;  
15 And specially, from every shire's end  
In England, folks to **Canterbury** wend:  
To seek the blissful martyr is their will,  
The one who gave such help when they were ill.  
*Now in that season it befell one day  
20 In Southwark at the Tabard where I lay,  
As I was all prepared for setting out  
To Canterbury with a heart devout,  
That there had come into that hostelry  
At night **some twenty-nine**, a company  
25 Of sundry folk whom chance had brought to fall  
In fellowship, for pilgrims were they all  
And onward to Canterbury would ride.  
The chambers and the stables there were wide,  
We had it easy, served with all the best;  
30 And by the time the sun had gone to rest  
I'd spoken with each one about the trip  
And was a member of the fellowship.  
We made agreement, early to arise  
To take our way, of which I shall advise.  
35 But nonetheless, while I have time and space,  
Before proceeding further here's the place  
Where I believe it reasonable to state  
Something about these pilgrims—to relate*

*Their circumstances as they seemed to me,  
Just who they were and each of what degree 40  
And also what array they all were in.  
And with a Knight I therefore will begin.*

There with us was a **KNIGHT**, a worthy man  
Who, from the very first time he began  
To ride about, loved honor, chivalry, 45  
The spirit of giving, truth and courtesy.  
He was a valiant warrior for his lord;  
No man had ridden farther with the sword  
Through Christendom and lands of heathen creeds,  
And always he was praised for worthy deeds. 50  
He helped win Alexandria in the East,  
And often sat at table's head to feast  
With knights of all the nations when in Prussia.  
In Lithuania as well as Russia  
No other noble Christian fought so well. 55  
When Algaciras in Granada fell,  
When Ayas and Attalia were won,  
This Knight was there. Hard riding he had done  
At Benmarin. Along the Great Sea coast  
He'd made his strikes with many a noble host. 60  
His mortal battles numbered then fifteen,  
And for our faith he'd fought at Tramissene  
Three tournaments and always killed his foe.  
This worthy Knight was ally, briefly so,  
Of the lord of Palathia (in work 65  
Performed against a fellow heathen Turk).  
He found the highest favor in all eyes,  
A valiant warrior who was also wise  
And in deportment meek as any maid.  
He never spoke unkindly, never played 70  
The villain's part, but always did the right.  
He truly was a perfect, gentle knight.  
But now to tell of his array, he had  
Good horses but he wasn't richly clad;  
His fustian tunic was a rusty sight 75  
Where he had worn his hauberk, for the Knight

Was just back from an expedition when  
His pilgrimage he hastened to begin.  
There with him was his son, a youthful **SQUIRE**,  
80 A lover and knight bachelor to admire.  
His locks were curled as if set by a press.  
His age was twenty years or so, I guess.  
In stature he was of an average height  
And blest with great agility and might.  
85 He'd ridden for a time with cavalry  
In Flanders and Artois and Picardy,  
Performing well in such a little space  
In hopes of standing in his lady's grace.  
He was embroidered like a flowerbed  
90 Or meadow, full of flowers white and red.  
He sang or else he fluted all the day;  
He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
His gown was short, his sleeves were long and wide.  
And well upon a horse the lad could ride;  
95 Good verse and songs he had composed, and he  
Could joust and dance, drew well, wrote gracefully.  
At night he'd love so hotly, without fail,  
He slept no more than does a nightingale.  
He was a courteous, humble lad and able,  
100 And carved meat for his father at the table.  
Now he had brought one servant by his side,  
A **YEOMAN**—with no more he chose to ride.  
This Yeoman wore a coat and hood of green.  
He had a sheaf of arrows, bright and keen,  
105 Beneath his belt positioned handily—  
He tended to his gear most yeomanly,  
His arrow feathers never drooped too low—  
And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.  
His head was closely cropped, his face was brown.  
110 The fellow knew his woodcraft up and down.  
He wore a bracer on his arm to wield  
His bolts. By one side were his sword and shield,  
And on the other, mounted at the hip,  
A dagger sharply pointed at the tip.  
115 A Christopher of silver sheen was worn  
Upon his breast; a green strap held his horn.

He must have been a forester, I guess.  
There also was a Nun, a **PRIORESS**,  
Her smile a very simple one and coy.  
Her greatest oath was only "By Saint Loy!" 120  
Called Madam Eglantine, this Nun excelled  
At singing when church services were held,  
Intoning through her nose melodiously.  
And she could speak in French quite fluently,  
After the school of Stratford at the Bow 125  
(The French of Paris wasn't hers to know).  
Of table manners she had learnt it all,  
For from her lips she'd let no morsel fall  
Nor deeply in her sauce her fingers wet;  
She'd lift her food so well she'd never get 130  
A single drop or crumb upon her breast.  
At courtesy she really did her best.  
Her upper lip she wiped so very clean  
That not one bit of grease was ever seen  
Upon her drinking cup. She was discreet 135  
And never reached unseemly for the meat.  
And certainly she was good company,  
So pleasant and so amiable, while she  
Would in her mien take pains to imitate  
The ways of court, the dignity of state, 140  
That all might praise her for her worthiness.  
To tell you of her moral consciousness,  
Her charity was so great that to see  
A little mouse caught in a trap would be 145  
Enough to make her cry, if dead or bleeding.  
She had some little dogs that she was feeding  
With roasted meat or milk and fine white bread;  
And sorely she would weep if one were dead  
Or if someone should smite it with a stick.  
She was all tender heart right to the quick. 150  
Her pleated wimple was of seemly class,  
She had a well formed nose, eyes gray as glass,  
A little mouth, one that was soft and red.  
And it's for sure she had a fair forehead—  
It must have been a handbreadth wide, I own, 155  
For hardly was the lady undergrown.

The beauty of her cloak I hadn't missed.  
She wore a rosary around her wrist  
Made out of coral beads all colored green,  
160 And from it hung a brooch of golden sheen  
On which there was an A crowned with a wreath,  
With *Amor vincit omnia* beneath.  
She brought along **another NUN**, to be  
Her chaplain, and her **PRIEST**, who made it three.  
165       A **MONK** there was, a fine outrider of  
Monastic lands, with ventry his love;  
A manly man, to be an abbot able.  
He had some dainty horses in the stable,  
And when he rode, his bridle might you hear  
170 Go jingling in the whistling wind as clear  
And loud as might you hear the chapel bell  
Where this lord not too often kept his cell.  
Because Saint Maurus and Saint Benedict  
Had rules he thought were old and rather strict,  
175 This mounted Monk let old things pass away  
So that the modern world might have its day.  
That text he valued less than a plucked hen  
Which says that hunters are not holy men,  
Or that a monk ignoring rules and order  
180 Is like a flapping fish out of the water  
(That is to say, a monk out of his cloister).  
He held that text not worth a single oyster,  
And his opinion, I declared, was good.  
Why should he study till he's mad? Why should  
185 He pore through books day after day indoors,  
Or labor with his hands at all the chores  
That Austin bids? How shall the world be served?  
Let such works be to Austin then reserved!  
And so he was a pricker and aright;  
190 Greyhounds he had as swift as birds in flight,  
For tracking and the hunting of the hare  
Were all his pleasure, no cost would he spare.  
His sleeves, I saw, were fur-lined at the hand  
With gray fur of the finest in the land,  
195 And fastening his hood beneath his chin  
There was a golden, finely crafted pin,

A love knot in the greater end for class.  
His head was bald and shinier than glass.  
His face was shiny, too, as if anointed.  
He was a husky lord, one well appointed. 200  
His eyes were bright, rolled in his head and glowed  
Just like the coals beneath a pot. He rode  
In supple boots, his horse in great estate.  
Now certainly he was a fine prelate,  
He wasn't pale like some poor wasted ghost. 205  
Fat swan he loved the best of any roast.  
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.  
          A **FRIAR** there was, a wanton one and merry,  
Who begged within a certain limit. None  
In all four orders was a better one 210  
At idle talk, or speaking with a flair.  
And many a marriage he'd arranged for fair  
And youthful women, paying all he could.  
He was a pillar of his brotherhood.  
Well loved he was, a most familiar Friar 215  
To many franklins living in his shire  
And to the worthy women of the town;  
For he could hear confessions and played down  
The parish priest. To shrive in every quarter  
He had been given license by his order. 220  
He'd sweetly listen to confession, then  
As pleasantly absolve one of his sin.  
He easily gave penance when he knew  
Some nice gift he'd receive when he was through.  
For when to a poor order something's given, 225  
It is a sign the man is truly shriven.  
If someone gave, the Friar made it clear,  
He knew the man's repentance was sincere.  
For many men are so hard of the heart  
They cannot weep, though grievous be the smart; 230  
Instead of tears and prayers, they might therefore  
Give silver to the friars who are poor.  
He kept his cape all packed with pins and knives  
That he would give away to pretty wives.  
At merriment he surely wasn't middling; 235  
He sang quite well and also did some fiddling,

And took the prize with all his balladry.  
His neck was white as any fleur-de-lis,  
His strength like any wrestler's of renown.  
240 He knew the taverns well in every town,  
Each hosteler and barmaid, moreso than  
He knew the leper and the beggarman.  
For anyone as worthy as the Friar  
Had faculties that called for something higher  
245 Than dealing with those sick with leprosy.  
It wasn't dignified, nor could it be  
Of profit, to be dealing with the poor,  
What with the rich and merchants at the store.  
Above all where some profit might arise  
250 Was where he'd be, in courteous, humble guise.  
No man had greater virtue than did he,  
The finest beggar in the friary.  
252A (He paid a fee for his exclusive right:  
252B No brethren might invade his begging site.)  
And though a widow shoeless had to go,  
So pleasant was his *In principio*  
255 He'd have a farthing when he went away.  
He gained much more than what he had to pay,  
And he could be as wanton as a pup.  
He'd arbitrate on days to settle up  
In law disputes, not like a cloisterer  
260 Dressed in a threadbare cope as students were,  
But rather like a master or a pope.  
He wore a double-worsted semicope  
As rounded as a church bell newly pressed.  
He lisped somewhat when he was at his best,  
265 To make his English sweet upon his tongue.  
And when he fiddled and his songs were sung,  
His eyes would twinkle in his head as might  
The stars themselves on any frosty night.  
Now Hubert was this worthy Friar's name.  
270       A **MERCHANT** with a forked beard also came,  
Dressed in a motley. Tall and proud he sat  
Upon his horse. A Flemish beaver hat  
He wore, and boots most elegantly wrought.  
He spoke with pomp on everything he thought,  
And boasted of the earnings he'd collected. 275  
He felt the trade route had to be protected  
Twixt Middleburgh and Orwell by the sea.  
He speculated in French currency.  
He used his wits so well, with such finesse,  
That no one guessed the man's indebtedness, 280  
So dignified he was at managing  
All of his bargains and his borrowing.  
He was a worthy fellow all the same;  
To tell the truth, I do not know his name.  
          There also was an **Oxford STUDENT**, one 285  
Whose logic studies long since had begun.  
The horse he rode was leaner than a rake,  
And he was hardly fat, I undertake,  
But looked quite hollow, far from debonair.  
And threadbare was the cloak he had to wear; 290  
He had no benefice as yet and, most  
Unworldly, wouldn't take a secular post.  
For he would rather have at his bed's head  
Some twenty books, all bound in black or red,  
Of Aristotle and his philosophy 295  
Than finest robes, fiddle or psaltery.  
Philosopher he was, and yet his coffer  
Had little of the gold that it should offer.  
But all that from his friends he could acquire  
He spent on books and learning, didn't tire 300  
Of praying for the souls of all those who  
Would give to help him see his schooling through,  
For study was the foremost thing he heeded.  
He never spoke one word more than was needed,  
And then he spoke with formal reverence; 305  
He'd make it short but make a lot of sense.  
Of highest moral virtue was his speech,  
And gladly he would learn and gladly teach.  
          A wise and prudent **SERGEANT OF THE LAW**,  
One who at Saint Paul's porch one often saw, 310  
Was with us too, a man of excellence.  
Discreet he was, deserving reverence  
(Or so it seemed, his sayings were so wise).  
He often was a judge in the assize

- 315 By virtue of his patent and commission. In county sessions he was lord and sire, 355  
He had with his renown and erudition  
Gained many fees and robes in his career. And often he had been Knight of the Shire.  
A purchaser of land without a peer, A dagger and a purse made out of silk  
His holdings were fee simple in effect; Hung from his belt, as white as morning milk.  
320 No one could prove one purchase incorrect. There wasn't a more worthy vavasor. 360  
Nowhere was there a busier man, yet he  
Seemed busier than even he could be. **A HABERDASHER, DYER, CARPENTER,**  
He knew each court decision, every crime **TAPESTRY MAKER,** and a **WEAVER** were  
Adjudicated from King William's time. All there as well, clothed in the livery  
325 He'd execute a deed with such perfection Of guildsmen, of one great fraternity. 365  
No man could call its writing into question,  
And every statute he could state by rote. Their gear was polished up till it would pass  
He wore a simple multicolored coat For new. Their knives were mounted not with brass  
Girt by a striped silk belt. Enough to tell, But all with silver. Finely wrought array  
330 On what he wore I will no longer dwell. Their belts and pouches were in every way.  
Each one looked like a burgess, one whose place  
Would be before the whole guild on a dais. 370  
There was a **FRANKLIN** in his company  
Whose beard was lily-white as it could be, They had the means and wits, were it their plan,  
Though his complexion was a healthy red; Each of them to have been an alderman;  
In wine he loved to sop his morning bread; They had enough income and property  
335 A devotee of all delights that lure us, And wives who would to such a plan agree,  
He truly was a son of Epicurus Or else they'd have to blame themselves alone. 375  
(Who thought the life that's pleasure-filled to be  
The only one of true felicity). It's very nice as "Madam" to be known,  
And lead processions on a holy day  
And have one's train borne in a royal way.  
340 Made him Saint Julian to those in his county. They brought along a **COOK** with them to fix  
His bread and ale were always fresh and fine, Their meals. He boiled their chicken in a mix 380  
And no one had a better stock of wine. Of marrowbones, tart herbs and galingale.  
Baked meat was always in his house, the best He knew right off a draught of London ale,  
Of fish and flesh, so much that to each guest Knew how to boil and roast and broil and fry,  
345 It almost seemed to snow with meat and drink Whip up a stew as well as bake a pie.  
And all the dainties of which one could think. It seemed a shame, and caused me some chagrin, 385  
His meals would always vary, to adhere  
To all the changing seasons of the year. To see he had an ulcer on his shin.  
The coop was partridge-filled, birds fat as any, He made blancmange that I'd rank with the best.  
350 And in the pond the breams and pikes were many. There was a **SKIPPER** hailing from the west,  
Woe to the cook unless his sauce was tart As far away as Dartmouth, I'd allow.  
And he had all utensils set to start! He rode a nag as best as he knew how. 390  
His table would stay mounted in the hall  
All set and ready at a moment's call. A woolen gown down to his knees he wore,  
And round his neck and neath his arm he bore  
A strap from which a dagger dangled down.  
The summer sun had turned his color brown.

- 395 He surely was a festive sort of fellow;  
Many a pilfered wine draught made him mellow  
While sailing from Bordeaux, the merchant snoring.  
He had no use for conscience, thought it boring.  
In battle, when he gained the upper hand,  
400 By plank he'd send them home to every land.  
As for his skill in reckoning the tides  
And all the dangers of the sea besides,  
By zodiac and moon to navigate,  
From Hull to Carthage there was none as great.  
405 Hardy and shrewd in all he'd undertaken,  
His beard by many tempests had been shaken;  
And he knew well the havens everywhere  
From Gotland to the Cape of Finisterre,  
And every creek in Brittany and Spain.  
410 The Skipper's ship was called the Maudelayne.  
    There also was among us a **PHYSICIAN**,  
None like him in this world, no competition,  
To speak of medicine and surgery.  
He was well grounded in astrology:  
415 He tended patients specially in hours  
When natural magic had its greatest powers,  
For he could tell by which stars would ascend  
What talisman would help his patient mend.  
He knew the cause of every malady  
420 Whether from hot, cold, wet, or dry it be,  
And of each humor what the symptoms were.  
He truly was a fine practitioner.  
And once he knew a malady's root cause  
He'd give the cure without a further pause,  
425 For readily apothecaries heeded  
When there were drugs or medicines he needed,  
That profit might be shared by everyone  
(Their fellowship not recently begun).  
The ancient Aesculapius he knew,  
430 And Dioscorides and Rufus too,  
Hali and Galen, old Hippocrates,  
Serapion, Avicenna, Rhazes,  
Gaddesden, Damascenus, Constantine,  
Bernard and Averroes and Gilbertine.
- His diet was as measured as could be, 435  
Being not one of superfluity  
But greatly nourishing as well as prudent.  
He hardly could be called a Bible student.  
He decked himself in scarlet and in azure,  
440 With taffeta and silk. Yet he'd demure 440  
If something might necessitate expense;  
He saved his gains from times of pestilence,  
For gold's a cordial, so the doctors say.  
That's why he loved gold in a special way.  
    **From near the town of BATH a good WIFE came;** 445  
She was a little deaf, which was a shame.  
She was a clothier, so excellent  
Her work surpassed that of Ypres and Ghent.  
When parish wives their gifts would forward bring,  
450 None dared precede her to the offering— 450  
And if they did, her wrath would surely be  
So mighty she'd lose all her charity.  
The kerchiefs all were of the finest texture  
(And must have weighed ten pounds, that's no conjecture)  
455 That every Sunday she had on her head. 455  
The fine hose that she wore were scarlet red  
And tightly laced, she had a nice new pair  
Of shoes. Her face was ruddy, bold and fair.  
She was a worthy woman all her life:  
460 At church door with five men she'd been a wife, 460  
Not counting all the company of her youth.  
(No need to treat that now, but it's the truth.)  
She'd journeyed to Jerusalem three times;  
Strange rivers she had crossed in foreign climes;  
465 She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne, 465  
To Galicia for Saint James and to Cologne,  
And she knew much of wandering by the way.  
She had the lover's gap teeth, I must say.  
With ease upon an ambling horse she sat,  
470 Well wimpled, while upon her head her hat 470  
Was broad as any buckler to be found.  
About her ample hips a mantle wound,  
And on her feet the spurs she wore were sharp.  
In fellowship she well could laugh and carp.

475 Of remedies of love she had good notions,  
For of that art's old dance she knew the motions.  
There was a good man of religion, too,  
A **PARSON** of a certain township who  
Was poor, but rich in holy thought and work.  
480 He also was a learned man, a clerk;  
The Christian gospel he would truly preach,  
Devoutly his parishioners to teach.  
Benign he was, in diligence a wonder,  
And patient in adversity, as under  
485 Such he'd proven many times. And loath  
He was to get his tithes by threatening oath;  
For he would rather give, without a doubt,  
To all the poor parishioners about  
From his own substance and the offerings.  
490 Sufficiency he found in little things.  
His parish wide, with houses wide asunder,  
He'd never fail in either rain or thunder,  
Though sick or vexed, to make his visitations  
With those remote, regardless of their stations.  
495 On foot he traveled, in his hand a stave.  
This fine example to his sheep he gave:  
He always did good works before he taught them.  
His words were from the gospel as he caught them,  
And this good saying he would add thereto:  
500 "If gold should rust, then what will iron do?"  
For if a priest be foul in whom we trust,  
No wonder that the ignorant goes to rust.  
And it's a shame (as every priest should keep  
In mind), a dirty shepherd and clean sheep.  
505 For every priest should an example give,  
By his own cleanness, how his sheep should live.  
He never set his benefice for hire,  
To leave his sheep encumbered in the mire  
While he ran off to London and Saint Paul's  
510 To seek a chantry, singing in the stalls,  
Or be supported by a guild. Instead  
He dwelt at home, and he securely led  
His fold, so that the wolf might never harry.  
He was a shepherd and no mercenary.

A holy, virtuous man he was, and right 515  
In showing to the sinner no despise.  
His speech was never haughty or indignant,  
He was a teacher modest and benignant;  
To draw folks heavenward to life forever,  
By good example, was his great endeavor. 520  
But if some person were too obstinate,  
Whether he be of high or low estate,  
He would be sharply chided on the spot.  
A better priest, I wager, there is not.  
He didn't look for pomp or reverence 525  
Nor feign a too self-righteous moral sense;  
What Christ and his apostles had to tell  
He taught, and he would follow it as well.  
With him his brother came, a **PLOWMAN** who  
Had carted many a load of dung. A true 530  
And well-intentioned laborer was he,  
Who lived in peace and perfect charity.  
The Lord his God with whole heart he loved best,  
When times were good as well as when distressed,  
And loved his neighbor as himself, for which 535  
He'd gladly thresh, or dig to make a ditch,  
For love of Christ, to help the poor in plight  
Without a wage, if it lay in his might.  
He paid his proper tithes religiously,  
Both of his labor and his property. 540  
He wore a tunic and he rode a mare.  
A **MILLER** and a **REEVE** also were there,  
A **SUMMONER**, also a **PARDONER**,  
A **MANCIPILE** and **me**, no more there were.  
The **MILLER** was as stout as any known, 545  
A fellow big in brawn as well as bone.  
It served him well, for everywhere he'd go  
He'd win the ram at every wrestling show.  
Short-shouldered, broad he was, a husky knave;  
No door could keep its hinges once he gave 550  
A heave or ran and broke it with his head.  
His beard like any sow or fox was red,  
And broad as any spade it was, at that.  
He had a wart upon his nose, right at

<p>555 The tip, from which a tuft of hairs was spread                  Like bristles on a sow's ears, just as red;                  The nostrils on the man were black and wide.                  He had a sword and buckler at his side.                  Great as a furnace was his mouth. And he                  560 Could tell some jokes and stories, though they'd be                  Mostly of sin and lechery. He stole                  Much corn, charged three times over for a toll;                  Yet he'd a golden thumb, I do declare.                  A white coat and a blue hood were his wear.                  565 He blew the bagpipe, knew it up and down,                  And played it as he brought us out of town.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">From an Inn of Court a gentle <b>MANCIPLE</b></p> <p>Was with us, one who set a fine example                  In buying victuals wisely. Whether he                  570 Would buy with credit or with currency,                  He took such care in purchases he made                  He'd come out well ahead for what he paid.                  Now is that not a sign of God's fair grace,                  That such a simple man's wit can displace                  575 The wisdom of a heap of learned men?                  His masters numbered more than three times ten,                  All lawyers of a very skillful sort;                  A dozen of them in that Inn of Court                  Were worthy to be stewards of the treasure                  580 Of any lord in England, that in pleasure                  He might live, enjoying all that he had                  Without a debt (unless he had gone mad),                  Or live as simply as he might desire;                  If need be, they could help an entire shire                  585 Through any circumstance that might befall.                  And yet this Manciple could shame them all.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The <b>REEVE</b> was a slender, choleric man.                  He shaved his beard as closely as one can;                  His hair was shortly clipped around the ears                  590 And cropped in front just like a priest's appears.                  The fellow's legs were very long and lean,                  Each like a staff, no calf was to be seen.                  Well could he keep a granary and bin                  (No auditor could challenge that and win),</p>	<p>And he could augur by the drought and rain                  595 The true yield of his seed and of his grain.                  His master's sheep, his cattle, milk cows, horses,                  His poultry, swine, and all his stored resources                  Were wholly left to this Reeve's governing,                  For by contract his was the reckoning                  600 Since first his lord had grown to twenty years.                  No man could ever put him in arrears;                  There was no bailiff, herdsman, not one servant                  With sleight unknown—the Reeve was too observant,                  And feared like death itself by all beneath.                  605 He had a lovely dwelling on a heath                  Where green trees stood to shade it from the sun.                  In gaining goods his lord he had outdone,                  He stored up many riches privately.                  To please his lord, he'd give him subtly                  610 A gift or loan out of the lord's own goods,                  Receiving thanks and things like coats and hoods.                  He'd learnt a good trade as a youth, for he                  Was quite a gifted man at carpentry.                  He rode a steed with quite a sturdy frame,                  615 A dapple gray (the horse was Scot by name).                  He wore a long surcoat of bluish shade,                  And at his side he had a rusty blade.                  From Norfolk was this Reeve of whom I tell,                  Nearby a town that's known as Bawdeswell.                  620 His coat was tucked up like a friar's. He                  Rode always last among our company.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A <b>SUMMONER</b> was with us in the place                  Who like a cherub had a fire-red face,                  625 So pimply was the skin, eyes puffed and narrow.                  He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow.                  With black and scabby brows and scanty beard,                  He had a face that all the children feared;                  There's no quicksilver, litharge or brimstone,                  Borax, ceruse, no tartar oil that's known—                  630 No ointment that could cleanse, to keep it simple,                  And rid his face of even one white pimple                  Among the wheelks that sat upon his cheeks.                  He loved his garlic, onions and his leeks,</p>
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<p>635 And strong wine red as blood once he had eaten.                  Then he would speak and cry out like a cretin,                  And when with wine he was quite well infused,                  Some Latin words were all the words he used.                  He knew a few good phrases, two or three,                  640 Which he had learnt to say from some decree.                  (No wonder, what with hearing it all day;                  And after all, as you well know, a jay                  Can call out "Walt!" as well as any pope.)                  But once a question came to test his scope,                  645 He had no learning left to make reply,                  So <i>Questio quid juris!</i> was his cry.                  He was a gentle, kindly rascal, though;                  A better fellow men may never know.                  Why, he'd be willing, for a quart of wine,                  650 To let some rascal have his concubine                  For one whole year, excusing him completely.                  He well could "pluck a bird" (always discreetly),                  And if he found a fellow rogue wherever                  He'd teach him that he should in his endeavor                  655 Not be afraid of the archdeacon's curse—                  Unless the fellow's soul was in his purse,                  For that is where his punishment would be.                  "The purse is the archdeacon's hell," said he.                  (I know that was a lie; a guilty man                  660 Should be in dread of Holy Church's ban,                  It slays as absolution saves. He best                  Beware also a writ for his arrest.)                  The Summoner controlled, himself to please,                  All of the young girls of the diocese;                  665 He knew their secrets, counseled them and led.                  A garland he had set upon his head                  As great as any ale sign on a stake.                  He'd made himself a buckler out of cake.                  With him there rode a gentle <b>PARDONER</b>                  670 Of Rouncivalle (comrades and friends they were),                  Who'd come straight from the court of Rome. And he                  Would loudly sing "Come hither, love, to me!"                  The Summoner bore him a stiff bass staff;                  No trumpet ever sounded so by half.</p>	<p>The Pardoner's hair was as yellow as wax, 675                  But hung as smoothly as a hank of flax;                  In little strands the locks ran from his head                  Till over both his shoulders they were spread                  And thinly lay, one here, another there.                  In jolly spirit, he chose not to wear 680                  His hood but kept it packed away. He rode                  (Or so he thought) all in the latest mode;                  But for a cap his long loose hair was bare.                  Such glaring eyes he had, just like a hare!                  A veronica was sewn upon his cap. 685                  He had his bag before him in his lap,                  Brimming with pardons hot from Rome. He'd speak                  In voice as dainty as a goat's. From cheek                  To cheek he had no beard and never would,                  So smooth his face you'd think he'd shaved it good. 690                  I think he was a gelding or a mare.                  But speaking of his craft, Berwick to Ware                  There was no pardoner could take his place.                  For in his bag he had a pillowcase                  That used to be, he said, Our Lady's veil; 695                  He claimed he had a fragment of the sail                  That took Saint Peter out upon the sea                  Before Christ called him to his ministry;                  He had a cross of latten set with stones,                  And in a glass he had some old pig's bones; 700                  And with these relics, when he saw at hand                  A simple parson from the hinterland,                  He'd make more money in one day alone                  Than would the parson two months come and gone.                  So he made apes, with all the tricks he'd do, 705                  Of parson and of congregation too.                  And yet I should conclude, for all his tactic,                  In church he was a fine ecclesiastic,                  So well he read a lesson or a story,                  And best of all intoned the offertory. 710                  For well he knew that when the song was sung,                  He then must preach, and not with awkward tongue.                  He knew how one gets silver from the crowd;                  That's why he sang so merrily and loud.</p>
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<p>715 As briefly as I could I've told you now Degree, array, and number, and of how This company of pilgrims came to be In Southwark at that pleasant hostelry Known as the Tabard, which is near the Bell. 720 And so with that, it's time for me to tell Exactly what we did that very night When at this inn we'd all come to alight; And after that I'll tell you of our trip, Of all that's left about our fellowship. 725 But first I pray that by your courtesy You will not judge it my vulgarity If I should plainly speak of this assortment, To tell you all their words and their deportment, Though not a word of theirs I modify. 730 For this I'm sure you know as well as I: Who tells the tale of any other man Should render it as nearly as he can, If it be in his power, word for word, Though from him such rude speech was never heard. 735 If he does not, his tale will be untrue, The words will be invented, they'll be new. One shouldn't spare the words of his own brother, He ought to say one word just like another. Christ spoke broad words himself in Holy Writ, 740 And you know well no villainy's in it. And Plato says, to all those who can read Him, that words must be cousin to the deed. I also pray that you'll forgive the fact That in my tale I haven't been exact 745 To set folks in their order of degree; My wit is short, as clearly you may see.</p>	<p>Our <b>HOST</b> made welcome each and every one, And right away our supper was begun. He served us with the finest in good food; 750 The wine was strong to fit our festive mood. Our Host performed, so it seemed to us all, As well as any marshal in a hall. A robust man he was, and twinkle-eyed, As fine as any burgess in Cheapside,</p>	<p>Bold in his speech, one wise and educated, A man whose manhood could not be debated. He also was a merry sort of bloke, As after supper he began to joke And spoke to us of mirth and other things When we had finished with our reckonings. 760 "My lords," he then addressed us, "from the start You've been most welcome here, that's from the heart. In faith, this year I've truly yet to see Here at this inn another company As merry as the one that's gathered now. 765 I'd entertain you more if I knew how. Say, here's a thought that just occurred to me, A way to entertain you, and it's free. "You go to Canterbury—may God speed, The blissful martyr bless you for the deed! 770 And well I know as you go on your way, You plan to tell some tales, to have some play. There won't be much amusement going on If everybody rides dumb as a stone. So as I said, I would propose a game 775 To give you some diversion, that's the aim. If it's agreed, by everyone's assent, That you'll stand by the judgment I present, And strive to do exactly as I say Tomorrow when you're riding on your way, 780 Then by my father's soul, who now is dead, You'll have some fun or you can have my head! Let's have a show of hands, no more to say." We let our will be known then right away; 785 We didn't think it worth deliberation And gave him leave without a hesitation To tell us what his verdict was to be. "My lords," he said, "then listen well to me, And may this not, I pray, meet your disdain. Now here's the point, speaking short and plain: 790 <b>Each one of you, to pass the time of day, Shall tell two tales while you are on the way To Canterbury; then each one of you On the return shall tell another two,</b></p>	<p>755 760 765 770 775 780 785 790</p>
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- 795 **About adventures said once to befall.**  
**And he who bears himself the best of all—**  
**That is to say, the one who's judged to tell**  
**The tales that in both aim and wit excel—**  
**Shall win a supper paid for by the lot,**
- 800 **Here in this place, right at this very spot,**  
**When we return again from Canterbury.**  
For in my wish to make your journey merry,  
I will myself most gladly with you ride—  
And at my own expense—to be your guide;
- 805 And if my judgment one disputes, he'll pay  
For all that we shall spend along the way.  
If you will grant me that it's to be so,  
Then tell me in a word that I may know  
To make my preparations for the start.”
- 810       It was so granted, each with happy heart  
Gave him his oath. We therefore asked our Host  
To vouchsafe that indeed he'd take the post  
And function as our governor, to hear  
Our tales and judge, and make his judgment clear,
- 815 And set the supper at a certain price;  
Then we would all be ruled by his device,  
Come high or low. And so it was agreed  
By one assent, his judgment we would heed.  
With that, more wine was fetched for every guest.
- 820 We drank it, then were ready for some rest  
And went to bed with no more tarrying.  
      Next morning, when the day began to spring,  
Up rose our Host and roused us like a cock.  
He gathered us together in a flock,
- 825 Then forth we rode at but a walking pace  
Out to Saint Thomas's watering place.  
Our Host there checked his horse and said to all:  
“My lords, now listen, if you will. Recall  
The pact, as I remind you, made with me.
- 830 If evensong and matins both agree,  
Let's see now who shall tell us the first tale.  
And if I've ever drunk of wine or ale,  
Whoso resists the judgment I present  
Shall pay along the way all that is spent.
- Draw lots before we travel farther, then, 835  
And he who draws the shortest shall begin.  
Sir Knight,” he said, “my master and my lord,  
Now draw a lot, to keep with our accord.  
Come here,” said he, “my Lady Prioress,  
And you, Sir Student—quit your bashfulness 840  
And studies too. Lay hand to, everyone!”  
And so the drawing was at once begun.  
I'll keep it short and tell you how it went:  
Whether by chance or fate or accident,  
The truth is that the lot fell to the Knight— 845  
A fact in which the rest all took delight.  
As was required, then tell his tale he must,  
By the agreement that was made in trust  
As you have heard. What more is there to know?  
And when this good man saw that it was so, 850  
As one with wisdom and obedient  
To that to which he'd given free assent,  
He said, “Since I'm the one to start the game,  
The lot I drew is welcome, in God's name!  
Now let us ride, and hear what I've to say.” 855  
And with that word we rode forth on our way,  
As he began at once with merry cheer  
To tell his tale, and spoke as you may hear.