“The Pardoner’s Tale is an **exemplum**, or parable, of a text taken from St. Paul’s “Epistle to Timothy” (6:10) which says, *Radix malorum est cupiditas* - the root of evil is desire, or, the more familiar “Money is the root of all evil”

II. 58-60 - **setting** - the tale opens in a tavern - the three central characters are rioters who partake of the tavern’s sins.

I. 70 - the man “slain” by Death was excessively drunk - hints here that his Death is probably his own fault.

I. 72 - **personification** - Death is personified as a thief who steals life

I. 78 - Death is treated as if were a practical and physical, not a spiritual problem

II. 89 ff. - the rioters curse throughout the tale - they take God’s name in vain through common medieval oaths in which God is personified, then “dismembered”

II. 95-96 - **irony** - they vow to kill Death and to live and die for each other

II. 100-101 - again, **ironic,** because while the rioters swear to die for one another, they will actually kill each other because cupidity (greed) is the root of all evil

I. 106 - Since the body was considered to be holy, these are particularly evil oaths.

I. 114-116 - they are disrespectful to the old man.

II. 125-137 - extended **imagery** is something of an allusion to the story of Oedipus, blindly wandering through wold in Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus*

II. 114-145 - **symbol** - the old man preaches to them to do unto others as they would have others do unto them - some scholars suggest that he represents wisdom and virtue

I. 149 - again, disrespectful of the old man - plus, the rioter swears “by God” as well - **foreshadowing** that bad things will happen soon.

II. 154 -158 - **characterization** - the rioters misinterpret everything; they assume the old man is a spy for Death - they look everywhere but within themselves to find clues to the truth

II. 167-169 - the old man sends the rioters to a tree in search of Death - they find gold and the gold reveals their **greed** - greed leads to Death.

I. 171 - the rioters forget Death when they see the gold, unaware that gold can lead to death - they see only the surface of things not the underlying spiritual truths.

I 178 - “It’s clear that Fortune... this treasure...” - this philosopher Boethius argued that good fortune is always bad because it makes one trust in worldly things and forget God.

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ll. 181-182 – irony – good fortune will lead to Death – the moral of the tale is Radix

malorum est cupiditas – “The root of evil is desire”

l. 207 – the rioter’s speaking of “trust” is especially ironic

ll. 223-230 – greed manifests itself as one rioter suggests murder of another.

l. 231 – irony – the rioter says one thing but means quite the opposite!

ll. 243-245 – in Medieval theology, if a person closes his heart to charity, the Devil is

free to tempt one to sin.

ll. 250-251 – irony – the young rioter is unaware of the plot against him.

l. 277 – metaphor – man is often described as “clay” in Medieval literature.

l. 280 – the Pardoner probably asks these two rhetorical questions because the

outcome is inevitable, as it was from the beginning – death can only be slain

in a “spiritual” sense.

l. 285 – irony – there will be more than one corpse to bury all to soon!

ll. 294-295 – their desires have destroyed the rioters – the point is not merely that they

died, but that they died because they placed all their faith in wealth and

trickery.

ll. 299-end – the Pardoner ends his tale with some truly impressive and quite shame-

less self-promotion! He encourages any and all (but, particularly those

with the most sin) to come forward, kiss his religious relics, and, most

importantly, to “unbuckle your purse!” and purchase a pardon.