

Middle English

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Drop in hour: Thursdays 3-4pm, Zoom joining link on Moodle





University of Glasgow | School of
Critical Studies

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

LEVEL 1

Geoffrey Chaucer

The Miller's Prologue and Tale

from *The Canterbury Tales*

2020-21

Edited, with interpretative notes and commentary, by Graham D. Caie

(revised, and with accompanying Middle English grammar, by Jeremy J. Smith)



GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S CV



Address / contact details:

Date of Birth:

Marital Status:

Education:

Career / employment record:

Salary and bonuses:

Languages:

Foreign travel experience:

Criminal Convictions:

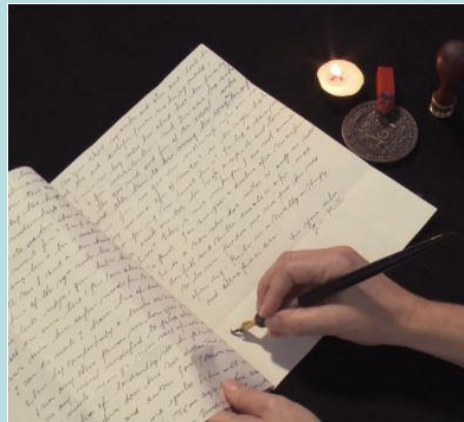
Hobbies and interests:

References:

Middle English

What is Middle English?:

The name given to the varieties of the English language in use between c.1150 – c.1500.



My first quill
My second quill
My third quill
My fourth quill
My fourth quill
My fifth quill



Middle English and Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* – *overview of the lectures:*

1. Levels of language (i.e. spelling and pronunciation. Vocabulary, style and register. Discourse, pragmatics and grammar)
2. *The Miller's Tale*, by Geoffrey Chaucer (i.e. Chaucer's use of Middle English; historical and cultural contexts; Chaucer's decision to write in English)

Middle English and Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*

Lecture topics:

1. Middle English + Chaucer's life
2. Spelling and sounds + the portrait of Alisoun
3. Style and lexicon + the portraits of Nicholas and Absolon
4. Syntax and morphology + the fabliau plot and the trick
5. Narrative viewpoints + preparing for the exam

Level 1B: English Language & Linguistics

Language, Society and Change

Assessment overview

- Online quizzes (25%)
- Essay (25%) Essay titles and instructions will be released in Week 5 (deadline for submission will be in Week 10). You will write 1 essay (chosen from the 3 topics covered in Weeks 1-5 this semester). For the Middle English topic, the question set will relate to an aspect of Chaucer's use of Middle English.
- Examination (50%) April/May. The question for the Middle English topic will ask you to write a commentary on a passage from Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*.

Full information about assessment is in the Handbook, available on the Level 1B Moodle site.

Who was Geoffrey Chaucer?





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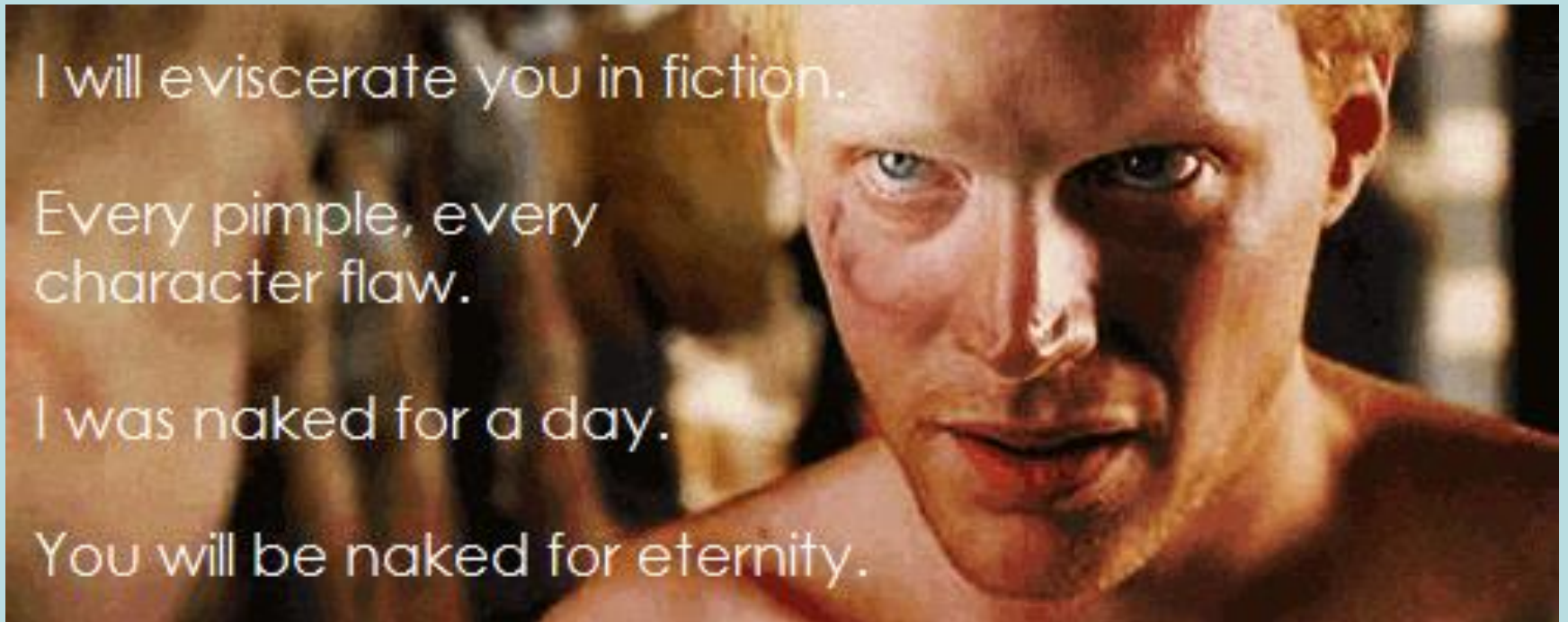
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Who was Geoffrey Chaucer?



Who was Geoffrey Chaucer?



Who was Geoffrey Chaucer?



Why did Chaucer chose to write in English?

Timeline

- 1066 Norman Conquest and a new French-speaking ruling class in England
- 1337 Hundred Years War with France begins (ends 1453)
- 1340? Chaucer born
- 1346 English victory at Crecy in France
- 1348-50 The Black Death
- 1356 English victory at Poitiers in France
- 1359-60 Chaucer serves in the war in France
- 1361-62 Recurrence of the Black Death
- 1362 English becomes the official language of the courts and parliament in England
- 1381 The Peasants' Revolt
- 1382 The Bible is translated into English ('Wycliffite Bible' – banned by the authorities)
- 1387-92 Chaucer begins *The Canterbury Tales*
- 1400 Chaucer dies

More detail at: <https://1381.online/>

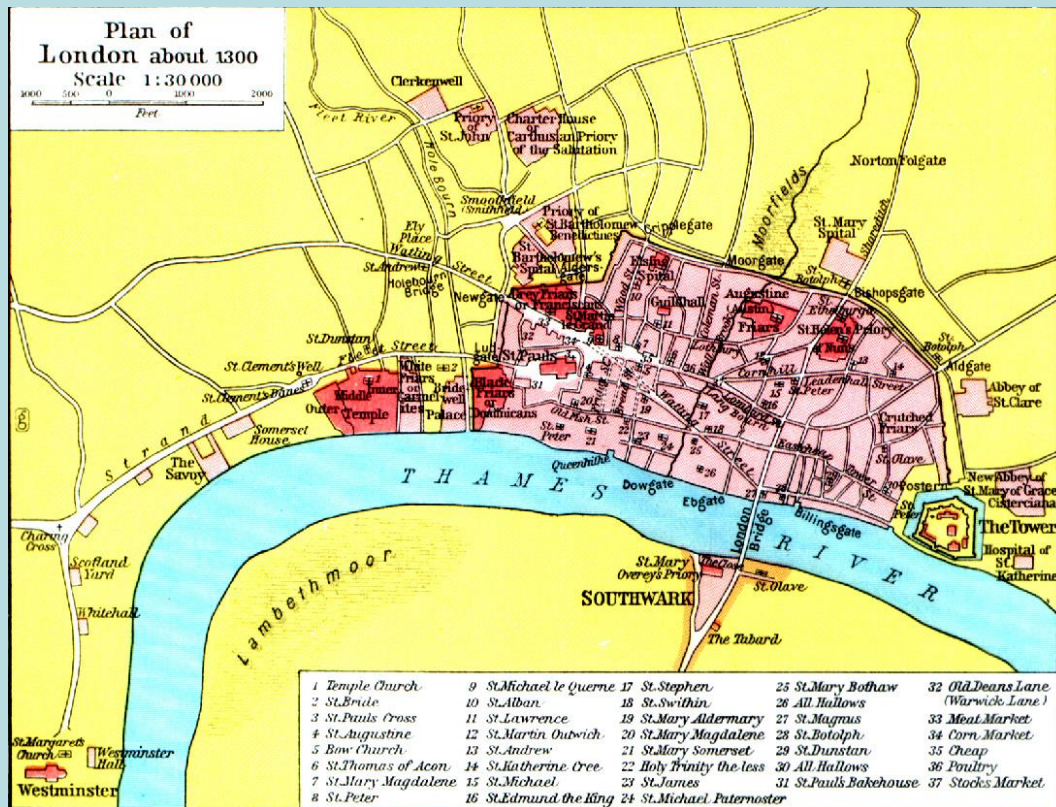
Suggested reading: *Chaucer: A European Life*, Marion Turner (Oxford, 2019)

and 'Middle English – An Overview' by Philip Durkin, OED

<http://public.oed.com/aspects-of-english/english-in-time/middle-english-an-overview/>

When was Chaucer born?
Where was he from?

- Born: 1340-45
- Upper Thames Street



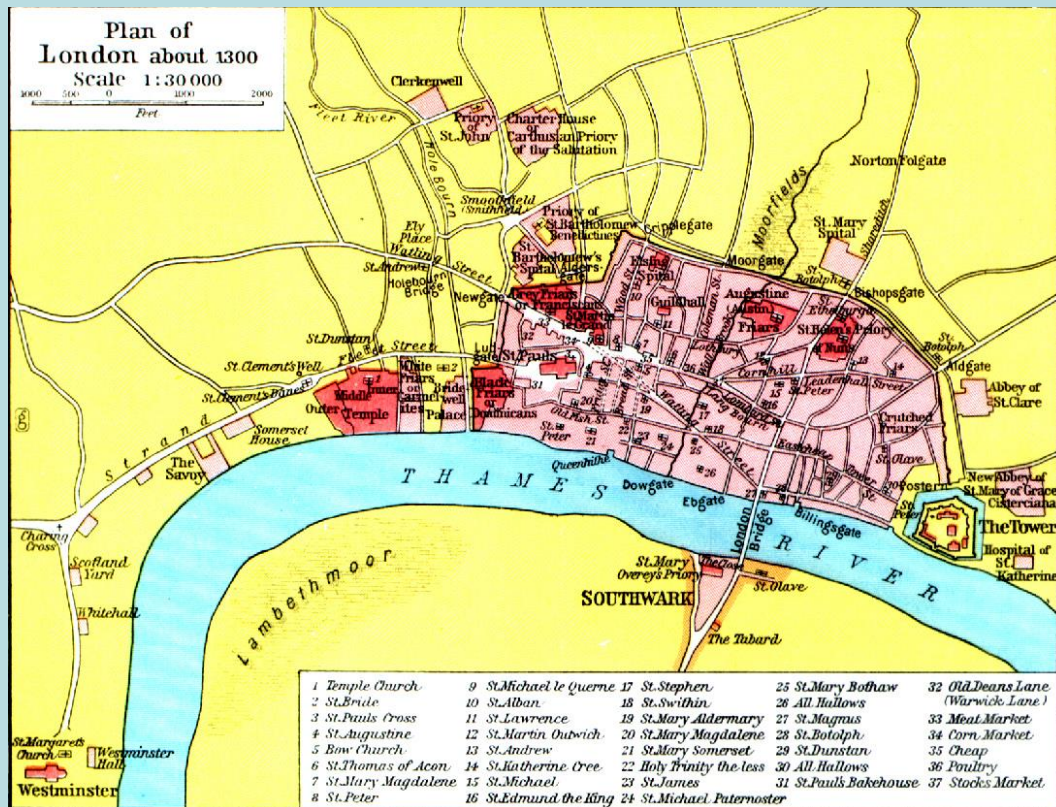


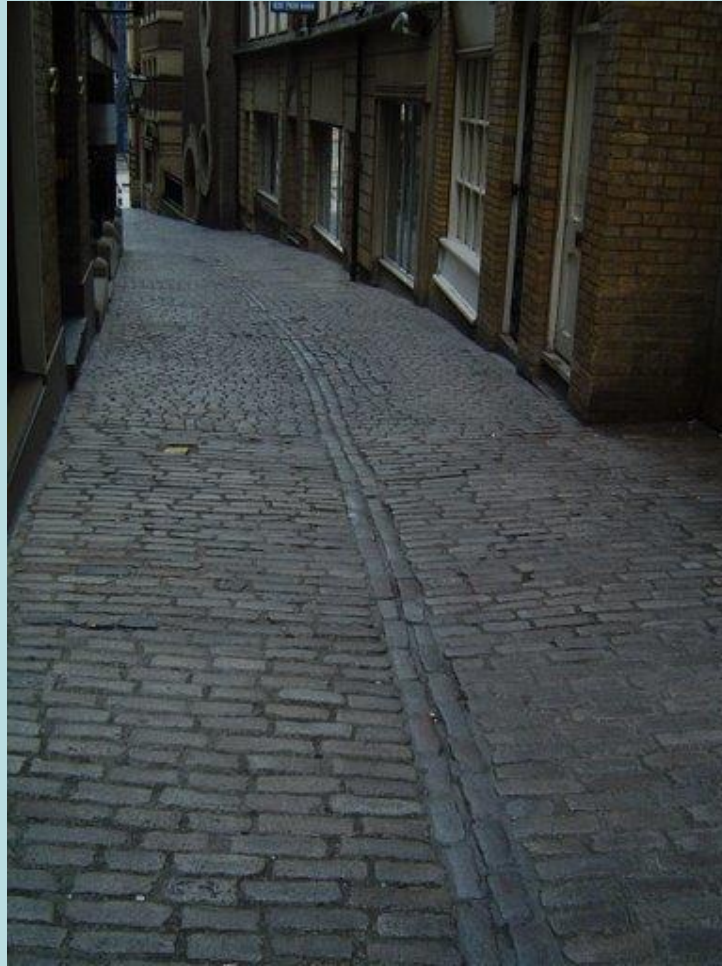
Perth, Scotland, population c.45-50,000

Scale 1:30 000

3000 500 0 1000 2000

Feet







What was Chaucer's occupation?



What is an author?

What was Chaucer's occupation?

- 1356: page for the earl and countess of Ulster
 - 1366: marries Philippa de Roet
 - Two sons, Thomas and Lewis



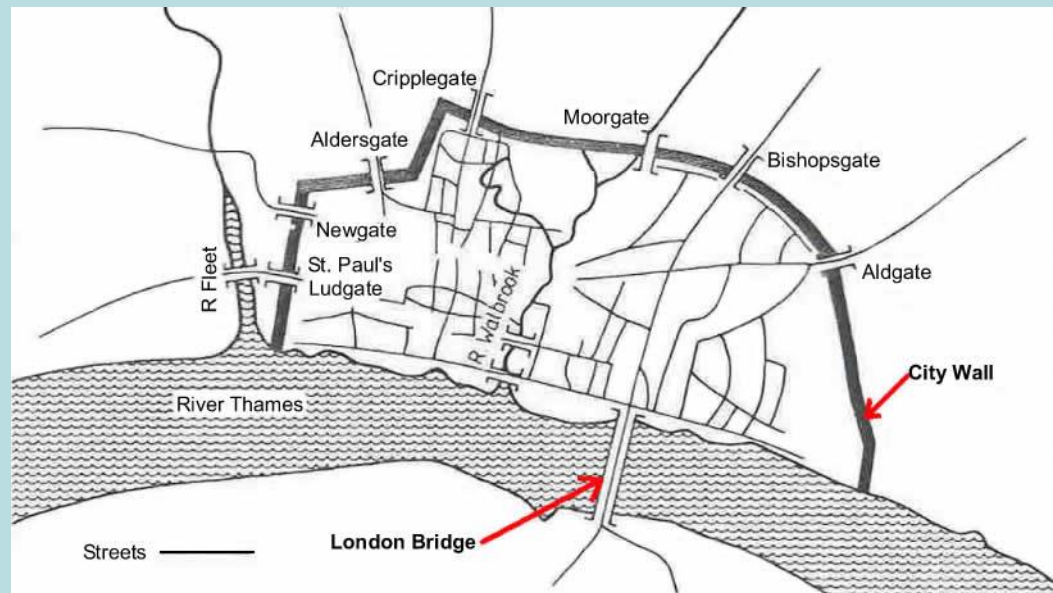
Chaucer visits Florence, Italy, 1373

How much was he paid?





John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster
(1340-99) – Chaucer's main
patron?





Was Chaucer always on the right side of the law?

- The 'raptus' of Cecily Chaumpaigne
- Beating a friar in Fleet Street

What about the last 10 years of Chaucer's life?

- 1389: Clerk of the King's Works
- 1399: retires from royal service
 - 1400: Chaucer dies

TERRY JONES

ROBERT YEAGER · TERRY DOLAN · ALAN FLETCHER · JULIETTE DOR



WHO MURDERED CHAUCER?

A MEDIEVAL MYSTERY





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So what kind of man was Chaucer....and what kind of writer...?

...a man of the world

...educated but not bookish

...the son of urban traders

...who came into contact with a wide spectrum of medieval society

...who life and times are reflected in his language and literary creations

...who uses the living language of English

Lecture 1 – Revision

- What are the dates of Chaucer's birth and death?
- What social station was Chaucer born into and what was his family's business?
- The Peasants' Revolt, Black Death, Hundred Years' War and the rise of 'Lollardy' all occurred during Chaucer's lifetime. Can you give dates for each and comment on their social and cultural implications?
- Make a list some of Chaucer's main duties and responsibilities in his paid employment (i.e. during his career).
- Who was John of Gaunt?
- Which languages did Chaucer know? When did he use these languages – i.e. in what circumstances and for what purposes?
- What do you think are the likely reasons and influences upon Chaucer when it came to his decision to write *The Canterbury Tales* in English?

Further reading: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* profile of Chaucer

www.oxforddnb.com

Paul Strohm, *The Poet's Tale: Chaucer and the year that made the Canterbury Tales* (Profile Books, 2015)



THANK YOU! THANK YOU, I'LL BE HERE ALL WEEK.