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Writer: Geoffrey Chaucer | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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A monk is a man who has dedicated his life to religion, partly by giving up some aspects of regular, worldly life. But in the prologue To The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer (1340-1400) exposes the clergy class's hypocrisy through the Monk's character.

Worldly and Materialistic Outlook: The Monk is one of the thirty pilgrims travelling to Canterbury in “The Canterbury Tales.” He is nothing like the usual monk many people imagine. He is rebellious, ignores rules, and lives and controls his own life. Unlike the typical image of a monk devoted to prayer, this Monk is described as someone who enjoys hunting and fine living. Chaucer writes,

*Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.*

This portrayal suggests a monk more interested in earthly pleasures than spiritual pursuits. The Monk's preference for hunting and riding, associated with the aristocracy, indicates his worldly inclinations.

Authority and Independence: The Monk in "The Canterbury Tales" rebels expectations of the poor and dutiful Church officer. By depicting his monk as enjoying a lavish lifestyle, Chaucer criticizes the clergy in this period.

Physical Appearance: The Monk is bald and dresses in fur and gold, which tells us that he cares more about what he looks like on the outside than what he should be on the inside. His face is smooth and shiny, and his eyes roll in his head. and Chaucer describes them as hot and fiery. Chaucer says,

*His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.*

With the Monk's portrait, we see another satire of religious figures who are supposed to live a monastic life of deprivation and hard work but instead live a life of luxury and ease. Like the Prioress, the Monk is doing all kinds of things, primarily representing him as pious, but he is not.

In termination, the Monk represents the themes of erotic obsession and the corrupting influence of power. The Monk deals with important issues and contains moments of impressive psychological insight. However, his character remains a morality tale about one man's fall from grace through greed, pride and lust.