

The Three Stages of Chaucer's Poetic Development.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400) is called the "Father of English Literature". He is the most influential poet of the Middle English Period (1066-1500). He is known for his remarkable contribution to the development of English poetry. Chaucer's poetic career is often divided into three stages: the French, Italian, and English periods. Here are three stages of Chaucer's poetic development.

This note will cover all the following questions:

1. **Discuss the three stages of Chaucer's poetic development.**
2. **Or, Chaucer's contribution to English Literature in three phrases. Discuss.**
3. **Or, Discuss the career of Chaucer as a poet.**

French Period

(1360-1370)

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Chaucer's early work was heavily influenced by French poetry. They were very popular in England during his time. One of the most important pieces from this period is

"The Book of the Duchess"

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published in 1368. This poem reflects the French style of courtly love and allegory. They were key elements in French literature.

In "The Book of the Duchess", Chaucer follows the tradition of French poets like Guillaume de Machaut. Machaut also wrote about themes of love and loss. Chaucer's use of dream visions and detailed descriptions reflects the French poetic style. For instance, he describes the Duchess as,

"The fairest and the beste."

This highlights his use of the idealized language of French courtly love poetry. However, while Chaucer imitated French styles, he also began to develop his own style. His later works were depart from purely imitative techniques.

Italian Period (1370-1385): In his middle period, Chaucer's poetry began to show the influence of Italian literature. During his travels to Italy, Chaucer was influenced by the works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Their works significantly influenced his writing. This period marked a shift from the French allegorical style to more complex narratives and character development.

Chaucer's "**Troilus and Criseyde**" is a masterpiece from this Period. This epic poem was written in 1380. This poem is inspired by Boccaccio's "**Il Filostrato**". This highlights Chaucer's ability to blend Italian influence with his growing narrative skills. The character of Troilus, for instance, is portrayed with great psychological depth. This reflects the influence of Italian humanism. Chaucer writes,

"The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen.

That was the king Priamus sone of Troye."

This shows the extreme emotional experiences that represent Italian literature. In this period, Chaucer moved away from purely courtly themes. He began to explore more human and relatable emotions. This forms the stage for his mature works.

English Period (1385-1400): The final stage of Chaucer's poetic development is marked by his mature style. At this stage, he fully embraces English realism. This stage is best represented by "**The Canterbury Tales**". "The Canterbury Tales" is a collection of 24. The stories are told by various groups of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. This work is considered Chaucer's masterpiece of English literature.

In The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer portrays different characters from different social classes. He uses realistic and often humorous descriptions. For example, the description of the Wife of Bath is vivid and full of life:

"Gat-tothed was she."

This highlights Chaucer's skill in creating relatable characters. This period reflects Chaucer's full development as a poet. He could combine social commentary with storytelling. Chaucer's

writing also focused on the ideals of knightly honour. This is seen in the description of the Knight:

“A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man.”

Chaucer was able to capture the spirit of different people. His use of English vocabulary made his work accessible to a broader audience. That is why, “The Canterbury Tales” becomes the groundwork for future English literature.

Geoffrey Chaucer's each stage of his career brought new influences and techniques. Through his poetic journey, Chaucer not only entertained but also offered a profound understanding of the human condition. He opened the door for writing poetry for all the great English poets that came after him. This makes his work timeless and universally applicable.