

The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales key Info

Writer: Geoffrey Chaucer | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Poet:** Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340 - 1400)
- **Titles of the Poet:** Father of English Literature, Father of English Poetry, Father of English Language, Grandfather of the English Novel, "The first great realist in English literature" & "The morning star of the Renaissance."
- **Written Time:** Around 1387-1400 (late 14th century, during the Middle Ages)
- **First Published:** Posthumously (after Chaucer's death) around 1400
- **Full Title:** The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales
- **Original Title (Middle English):** The Prologe of the Canterbury Tales
- **Part:** "The Canterbury Tales" ("The General Prologue" is the beginning part of it.)
- **Language:** Middle English (East Midland dialect — the base of Modern English)
- **Genre:** Frame story, satire, estates satire (A medieval genre common among French poets.)
- **Form:** Narrative verse written in rhyming couplets (iambic pentameter — heroic couplets)
- **Source:** Inspired by real medieval pilgrimage traditions to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury. Chaucer may have been influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio's Decameron, which also uses the frame-story technique of storytelling among travelers.
- **Tone:** Lively, humorous, ironic, realistic, and humanistic. Chaucer mixes gentle satire with sympathy, exposing both virtues and vices of medieval English society.
- **Point of View:** First-person narrative (Chaucer as one of the pilgrims). The narrator observes and describes each character with a mix of admiration and irony.
- **Style:** Narrative
- **Narrator:** Geoffrey Chaucer
- **Total Lines:** 858
- **Rhyme Scheme:** Rhymed couplets (AA, BB, CC, etc.)
- **Famous Lines:**

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,

(When April with his sweet showers has pierced the drought of March to the root.)

- **Settings:**

- **Time Setting:** Late 14th century. Springtime - the month of April (symbol of rebirth and renewal).

- **Place Setting:** Begins at The Tabard Inn in Southwark, London, and continues on the road to Canterbury Cathedral, the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket.

LxNotes