

The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales Quotes

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Quotes

*"A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie."*

Modern English:

(A Knyght there was, and that (one was) a worthy man, / Who from the time that he first began / To ride out, he loved chivalry.)

Explanation: The Knight is a man of courage, honor, and devotion. He is a soldier of the Crusades who has lived up to the ideals of chivalry.

"He was as fressh as is the month of May"

Modern English:

He was as fresh as the month of May.

Explanation: The Young Squire is the son of the Knight. He is 20 years old. He can sing, dance, draw, write, and compose songs.

*"A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere."*

Modern English: (

A virile man, qualified to be an abbot. / He had very many fine horses in his stable, / And when he rode, one could hear his bridle)

Explanation: The monk enjoys a life of luxury. He enjoys hunting and owns many excellent horses. Chaucer satirizes him for his untraditional activities.

"Amor Vincit Omnia."

Modern English:

(Love conquers all/everything.)

Explanation: The Prioress wears a fashionable dress with a golden brooch engraved with the words

*"She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
That no drope ne fille upon hire brist."*

Modern English:

(She let no morsel fall from her lips, / Nor wet her fingers deep in her sauce; / She well knew how to carry a morsel (to her mouth) and take good care / That no drop fell upon her breast.)

Explanation: The Prioress displays flawless table manners. She always ensures no food or sauce falls from her lips.

"His studie was but litel on the Bible."

Modern English:

(
His study was but little on the Bible.)

Explanation: The Doctor of Physic practices herbal remedies. Here, his knowledge of astronomy and astrology is also traceable. He was so busy in his profession that he had no time to read the Bible.

*"Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe."*

Modern English:

(She had (married) five husbands at the church door, / Not counting other company in youth-)

Explanation: The Wife of Bath married five times.

***"Of remedies of love she knew per chauncé,
For she koude of that art."***

Modern English:

(She knew, as it happened, about remedies for love / For she knew the old dance (tricks of the trade) of that art.)

Explanation: The Wife of Bath is well-known for her experience in love and marriage.

***"Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:"***

Modern English:

(He well knew how to deal in foreign currencies. / This worthy man employed his wit very well:)

Explanation: The Marchant is very familiar with his management power and the business in his area.

***"Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede."***

Modern English:

(He took most care and paid most heed to study. / He spoke not one word more than was needed,)

Explanation: The Clerk is very busy with studying and does not talk more than necessary. Though he is a clerk, he is described as a religious figure. We can address him as a student of religion.

***"A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre Person of a Toun."***

Modern English:

(A good man was there of religion, / And (he) was a poor Parson of a Town.)

Explanation: The Parson leads a very simple and virtuous life. He is devoted to his service. He preaches sincerely and tries to practice what he preaches.

*"Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun."*

Modern English: (Very well beloved and familiar was he / With landowners every where in his country, / And also with worthy women of the town; / For he had power of confession,)

Explanation:

The Friar is a corrupted person. He misuses his religious power and becomes familiar to wealthy sinners.

"He knew the tavernes wel in every toun."

Modern English:

(
He knew the taverns well in every town)

Explanation: He is a clergyman but knows all the inns in the cities. He is nothing but a hypocritical man.

*"A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle
For to been a marchal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen stepe --
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe --
Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught."*

Eek therto he was right a myrie man."

Modern English:

(Our Host was an impressive man indeed

(Qualified) to be a master of ceremonies in a hall.

He was a large man with prominent eyes --

There was no better business man in Cheapside --

Bold of his speech, and wise, and well mannered,

And he lacked nothing at all of the qualities proper to a man.

Also moreover he was a right merry man;)

Explanation: The Host is an impressive man, a good speaker, and a large figure with influential eyes. He has everything as a businessman.

"Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;

He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne."

Modern English:

(Now draw straws, before we depart further (from London); / He who has the shortest shall begin.)

Explanation: The Host mentions the process of selecting the first storyteller.