from Le Morte d'Arthur

Video link at thinkcentral.com

Romance by Sir Thomas Malory Retold by Keith Baines

COMMON CORE

RL 2 Provide an objective summary of the text. **RL 3** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. **RL 4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including connotative meanings. **RL 5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning.

Meet the Author

Sir Thomas Malory early 1400s–1471

The legend of King Arthur is one of the most popular and enduring legends in Western culture. Most English-speaking readers have been introduced to the Arthurian legend through *Le Morte d'Arthur,* a work consisting of a number of interwoven tales that chronicle the rise and fall of King Arthur and his court.

Adventurous Life Although his identity is not certain, most scholars believe that the author of *Le Morte d'Arthur* was born into a fairly prosperous family in Warwickshire, England. As a young man, Thomas Malory fought in the Hundred Years' War. He was knighted in about 1442 and was later elected to Parliament. Malory then became embroiled in the violent political conflicts that preceded the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses.

A staunch supporter of the house of Lancaster and its claim to the throne, Malory was imprisoned repeatedly by the Yorkist government on a variety of charges, including rape, robbery, cattle rustling, bribery, and attempted murder. He pleaded innocent to all the charges, and his guilt was never proven. It is possible that his outspoken opposition to the ruling family provoked enemies to accuse him falsely in some instances.

Writing from Behind Bars Malory wrote *Le Morte d'Arthur* while serving a series of prison terms that began in 1451. He finished the work in prison in 1469. At the end of the book, he asks that readers "pray . . . that God send me good deliverance. And when I am dead, I pray you all pray for my soul."

The Arthurian Legends The first edition of *Le Morte d'Arthur* was published in 1485, fourteen years after Malory's death. *Le Morte d'Arthur* remains the most complete English version of the Arthurian legends, which are believed to have existed since the sixth century as part of the oral tradition in France and England. Some historians believe that the fictional Arthur was modeled on a real fifth- or sixth-century Celtic military leader, although the historical Arthur was undoubtedly very different from Malory's Arthur, who ruled an idealized world of romance, chivalry, and magic.

As the first prose epic written in English, *Le Morte d'Arthur* is an important milestone in English literature. It has proved to be an astonishingly popular work, having not once gone out of print since it was first published in 1485—a testament to Malory's singular talent as a writer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sir Thomas Malory . . .

- completed *Le Morte d'Arthur* while in Newgate Prison in London.
- spent more than ten years in prison, accused of violent acts.

Author Online

THINK central

Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML12-246

TEXT ANALYSIS: CONFLICT

The plot of a medieval romance is typically driven by **conflict,** a struggle between opposing forces. The conflict can be **external,** between a character and an outside force, or it can be **internal,** taking place within the mind of a character. Sometimes a single event contains both types of conflict; for example, in a battle, a knight may externally struggle against an enemy warrior and internally struggle to be courageous and live up to the ideals of chivalry. In addition, conflicts often reveal a character's **motivations,** or reasons for acting in a certain way. As you read *Le Morte d'Arthur,* look for examples of both types of conflict faced by King Arthur, Sir Launcelot, and the other knights, and for how these conflicts shed light on each character's motivations.

Review: Medieval Romance

READING SKILL: SUMMARIZE

Summarizing can help you keep track of events in an action-filled narrative, such as a romance. When you **summarize** a narrative, you briefly describe its plot developments. An effective summary should describe events in the same order in which they appear in the narrative and leave out details that are not essential to the plot. As you read, use a chart like the one shown to help you summarize the main plot developments.

Passage	Summary
lines 1–6	Arthur sails to France, where Launcelot has settled, and attacks Launcelot's lands.

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Knowing the following boldfaced words will help you read *Le Morte d'Arthur.* To show that you understand the terms, try to replace each one with a word or phrase that has the same meaning.

1. The king established **dominion** over the nation.
2. It is **incumbent** upon the captain to try to save his ship.
3. Having been robbed and injured, we seek **redress.**
4. The leader of the rebellion was able to **usurp** the throne.
5. Some people are open and frank, while others use **guile.**

Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What is your ultimate LOYALTY?

One of the most important components of the medieval code of chivalry was the requirement that a knight be loyal to his king and country. In *Le Morte d'Arthur,* Sir Launcelot, King Arthur's most exemplary knight, falls in love with the king's wife and faces a crisis of loyalty of epic proportions.

QUICKWRITE Loyalty is still a highly valued human quality, one that sometimes requires personal sacrifice. Make a list of individuals or groups to whom you owe some loyalty. Review your list, then write a paragraph to explain which person or group is the one you would not abandon under any circumstances.

Le Morte d'Arthur

Sir Thomas Malory

BACKGROUND King Arthur's favorite knight, Sir Launcelot, has fallen in love with the king's wife, Gwynevere. The secret love affair is exposed by Sir Modred, Arthur's son by another woman, and Gwynevere is sentenced to burn at the stake. While rescuing the imprisoned Gwynevere, Launcelot slays two knights who, unknown to him at the time, are the brothers of Sir Gawain, a favorite nephew of Arthur's. After a reconciliation, Launcelot returns Gwynevere to Arthur to be reinstated as queen. At the urging of Sir Gawain, who still wants revenge on Launcelot, the king banishes Launcelot to France, where the following excerpt begins.

Analyze Visuals ▶
What details in this image suggest the size and power of the opposing armies?

The Siege of Benwick

When Sir Launcelot had established **dominion** over France, he garrisoned the towns and settled with his army in the fortified city of Benwick, where his father King Ban had held court.

King Arthur, after appointing Sir Modred ruler in his absence, and instructing Queen Gwynevere to obey him, sailed to France with an army of sixty thousand men, and, on the advice of Sir Gawain, started laying waste[1] all before him. A

News of the invasion reached Sir Launcelot, and his counselors advised him. Sir Bors[2] spoke first:

"My lord Sir Launcelot, is it wise to allow King Arthur to lay your lands waste when sooner or later he will oblige you to offer him battle?"

dominion (də-mĭn'yən) *n.* rule or power to rule; mastery

A **CONFLICT**
Reread lines 1–6 and the background note. How have Launcelot's past actions set the stage for his current conflict with King Arthur?

1. **laying waste:** destroying.
2. **Sir Bors:** Sir Bors de Ganis, Launcelot's cousin and the son of King Bors.

Arthur Uses Excalibur, Arthur Rackham. Illustration from *The Romance of King Arthur.*

Sir Lyonel[3] spoke next: "My lord, I would recommend that we remain within the walls of our city until the invaders are weakened by cold and hunger, and then let us sally forth[4] and destroy them."

Next, King Bagdemagus: "Sir Launcelot, I understand that it is out of courtesy that you permit the king to ravage your lands, but where will this courtesy end? If you remain within the city, soon everything will be destroyed."

Then Sir Galyhud: "Sir, you command knights of royal blood; you cannot expect them to remain meekly within the city walls. I pray you, let us encounter the enemy on the open field, and they will soon repent of their expedition." B

And to this the seven knights of West Britain all muttered their assent. Then Sir Launcelot spoke:

"My lords, I am reluctant to shed Christian blood in a war against my own liege;[5] and yet I do know that these lands have already suffered depredation [6] in the wars between King Claudas and my father and uncle, King Ban and King Bors. Therefore I will next send a messenger to King Arthur and sue[7] for peace, for peace is always preferable to war."

Accordingly a young noblewoman accompanied by a dwarf was sent to King Arthur. They were received by the gentle knight Sir Lucas the Butler.

"My lady, you bring a message from Sir Launcelot?" he asked.

"My lord, I do. It is for the king."

"Alas! King Arthur would readily be reconciled to Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawain forbids it; and it is a shame, because Sir Launcelot is certainly the greatest knight living."

The young noblewoman was brought before the king, and when he had heard Sir Launcelot's entreaties for peace he wept, and would readily have accepted them had not Sir Gawain spoken up:

"My liege, if we retreat now we will become a laughingstock, in this land and in our own. Surely our honor demands that we pursue this war to its proper conclusion."

"Sir Gawain, I will do as you advise, although reluctantly, for Sir Launcelot's terms are generous and he is still dear to me. I beg you make a reply to him on my behalf." C

Sir Gawain addressed the young noblewoman:

"Tell Sir Launcelot that we will not bandy words with him, and it is too late now to sue for peace. Further that I, Sir Gawain, shall not cease to strive against him until one of us is killed."

The young noblewoman was escorted back to Sir Launcelot, and when she had delivered Sir Gawain's message they both wept. Then Sir Bors spoke:

B SUMMARIZE
Summarize in one sentence the advice Launcelot receives from his counselors in lines 9–19.

C CONFLICT
What **internal conflict** does Arthur reveal in lines 34–42? How does it motivate his decision?

3. **Sir Lyonel** (lī'ən-əl): another of Launcelot's cousins.
4. **sally forth:** rush out suddenly in an attack.
5. **liege** (lēj): a lord or ruler to whom one owes loyalty and service.
6. **depredation** (dĕp'rĭ-dā'shən) n. destruction caused by robbery or looting
7. **sue:** appeal; beg.

"My lord, we beseech you, do not look so dismayed! You have many trustworthy knights behind you; lead us onto the field and we will put an end to this quarrel."

"My lords, I do not doubt you, but I pray you, be ruled by me: I will not lead you against our liege until we ourselves are endangered; only then can we honorably sally forth and defeat him."

Sir Launcelot's nobles submitted; but the next day it was seen that King Arthur had laid siege to the city of Benwick. Then Sir Gawain rode before the city walls and shouted a challenge:

"My lord Sir Launcelot: have you no knight who will dare to ride forth and break spears with me? It is I, Sir Gawain."

Sir Bors accepted the challenge. He rode out of the castle gate, they encountered, and he was wounded and flung from his horse. His comrades helped him back to the castle, and then Sir Lyonel offered to joust. He too was overthrown and helped back to the castle.

Thereafter, every day for six months Sir Gawain rode before the city and overthrew whoever accepted his challenge. Meanwhile, as a result of skirmishes, numbers on both sides were beginning to dwindle. Then one day Sir Gawain challenged Sir Launcelot:

"My lord Sir Launcelot: traitor to the king and to me, come forth if you dare and meet your mortal foe, instead of lurking like a coward in your castle!"

Sir Launcelot heard the challenge, and one of his kinsmen spoke to him:

"My lord, you must accept the challenge, or be shamed forever."

"Alas, that I should have to fight Sir Gawain!" said Sir Launcelot. "But now I am obliged to."

Sir Launcelot gave orders for his most powerful courser[8] to be harnessed, and when he had armed, rode to the tower and addressed King Arthur:

"My lord King Arthur, it is with a heavy heart that I set forth to do battle with one of your own blood; but now it is **incumbent** upon my honor to do so. For six months I have suffered your majesty to lay my lands waste and to besiege me in my own city. My courtesy is repaid with insults, so deadly and shameful that now I must by force of arms seek **redress.**"

"Have done, Sir Launcelot, and let us to battle!" shouted Sir Gawain.

Sir Launcelot rode from the city at the head of his entire army. King Arthur was astonished at his strength and realized that Sir Launcelot had not been boasting when he claimed to have acted with forbearance[9]**.** "Alas, that I should ever have come to war with him!" he said to himself.

It was agreed that the two combatants should fight to the death, with interference from none. Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawain then drew apart and

COMMON CORE RL 4

Language Coach

Etymology A word's **etymology,** or origin, can help you understand its **connotations.** In line 61, *encountered* means "met in battle." It comes from the Old French *encontre* ("against"). How does the etymology help you understand the more current meaning of *encountered*?

incumbent (ĭn-kŭm'bənt) *adj.* required as a duty or an obligation

redress (rĭ-drĕs') *n.* repayment for a wrong or an injury

8. **courser:** a horse trained for battle.

9. **forbearance** (fôr-bâr'əns) n. self-control; patient restraint

galloped furiously together, and so great was their strength that their horses crashed to the ground and both riders were overthrown.

A terrible sword fight commenced, and each felt the might of the other as fresh wounds were inflicted with every blow. For three hours they fought with scarcely a pause, and the blood seeped out from their armor and trickled to the ground. Sir Launcelot found to his dismay that Sir Gawain, instead of weakening, seemed to increase in strength as they proceeded, and he began to fear that he was battling not with a knight but with a fiend incarnate.[10] He decided to fight defensively and to conserve his strength.

It was a secret known only to King Arthur and to Sir Gawain himself that his strength increased for three hours in the morning, reaching its zenith[11] at noon, and waning again. This was due to an enchantment that had been cast over him by a hermit[12] when he was still a youth. Often in the past, as now, he had taken advantage of this.

Thus when the hour of noon had passed, Sir Launcelot felt Sir Gawain's strength return to normal, and knew that he could defeat him.

"Sir Gawain, I have endured many hard blows from you these last three hours, but now beware, for I see that you have weakened, and it is I who am the stronger."

Thereupon Sir Launcelot redoubled his blows, and with one, catching Sir Gawain sidelong on the helmet, sent him reeling to the ground. Then he courteously stood back. D

"Sir Launcelot, I still defy you!" said Sir Gawain from the ground. "Why do you not kill me now? for I warn you that if ever I recover I shall challenge you again."

"Sir Gawain, by the grace of God I shall endure you again," Sir Launcelot replied, and then turned to the king:

"My liege, your expedition can find no honorable conclusion at these walls, so I pray you withdraw and spare your noble knights. Remember me with kindness and be guided, as ever, by the love of God."

"Alas!" said the king, "Sir Launcelot scruples[13] to fight against me or those of my blood, and once more I am beholden to him."

Sir Launcelot withdrew to the city and Sir Gawain was taken to his pavilion, where his wounds were dressed. King Arthur was doubly grieved, by his quarrel with Sir Launcelot and by the seriousness of Sir Gawain's wounds.

For three weeks, while Sir Gawain was recovering, the siege was relaxed and both sides skirmished only halfheartedly. But once recovered, Sir Gawain rode up to the castle walls and challenged Sir Launcelot again:

"Sir Launcelot, traitor! Come forth, it is Sir Gawain who challenges you."

D SUMMARIZE
Describe the battle between Launcelot and Gawain. What tactic does Launcelot use to overcome Gawain's secret advantage?

10. **fiend incarnate:** devil in human form.
11. **zenith:** highest point; peak.
12. **hermit:** a person living in solitude for religious reasons.
13. **scruples:** hesitates for reasons of principle.

"Sir Gawain, why these insults? I have the measure of your strength and you can do me but little harm."

"Come forth, traitor, and this time I shall make good my revenge!" Sir Gawain shouted.

"Sir Gawain, I have once spared your life; should you not beware of meddling with me again?"

Sir Launcelot armed and rode out to meet him. They jousted and Sir Gawain broke his spear and was flung from his horse. He leaped up immediately, and putting his shield before him, called on Sir Launcelot to fight on foot.

"The issue[14] of a mare has failed me; but I am the issue of a king and a queen and I shall not fail!" he exclaimed.

As before, Sir Launcelot felt Sir Gawain's strength increase until noon, during which period he defended himself, and then weaken again.

"Sir Gawain, you are a proved knight, and with the increase of your strength until noon you must have overcome many of your opponents, but now your strength has gone, and once more you are at my mercy."

Sir Launcelot struck out lustily and by chance reopened the wound he had made before. Sir Gawain fell to the ground in a faint, but when he came to he said weakly:

"Sir Launcelot, I still defy you. Make an end of me, or I shall fight you again!"

"Sir Gawain, while you stand on your two feet I will not gainsay[15] you; but I will never strike a knight who has fallen. God defend me from such dishonor!" E

Sir Launcelot walked away and Sir Gawain continued to call after him: "Traitor! Until one of us is dead I shall never give in!"

For a month Sir Gawain lay recovering from his wounds, and the siege remained; but then, as Sir Gawain was preparing to fight Sir Launcelot once more, King Arthur received news which caused him to strike camp and lead his army on a forced march to the coast, and thence to embark for Britain.

E **MEDIEVAL ROMANCE**
In what ways does Launcelot exemplify the ideals of chivalry in lines 138–148?

The Day of Destiny

During the absence of King Arthur from Britain, Sir Modred, already vested with sovereign powers,[16] had decided to **usurp** the throne. Accordingly, he had false letters written—announcing the death of King Arthur in battle—and delivered to himself. Then, calling a parliament, he ordered the letters to be read and persuaded the nobility to elect him king. The coronation took place at Canterbury and was celebrated with a fifteen-day feast.

usurp (yo͞o-sûrp′) *v.* to seize unlawfully by force

Sir Modred then settled in Camelot and made overtures to Queen Gwynevere to marry him. The queen seemingly acquiesced, but as soon as she had won his confidence, begged leave to make a journey to London in order to prepare her

14. **issue:** offspring.
15. **gainsay:** deny.
16. **vested with sovereign powers:** given the authority of a king.

trousseau.[17] Sir Modred consented, and the queen rode straight to the Tower which, with the aid of her loyal nobles, she manned and provisioned for her defense. F

Sir Modred, outraged, at once marched against her, and laid siege to the Tower, but despite his large army, siege engines, and guns, was unable to effect a breach. He then tried to entice the queen from the Tower, first by **guile** and then by threats, but she would listen to neither. Finally the Archbishop of Canterbury came forward to protest:

"Sir Modred, do you not fear God's displeasure? First you have falsely made yourself king; now you, who were begotten by King Arthur on his aunt,[18] try to marry your father's wife! If you do not revoke your evil deeds I shall curse you with bell, book, and candle."[19]

"Fie on you! Do your worst!" Sir Modred replied.

"Sir Modred, I warn you take heed! or the wrath of the Lord will descend upon you."

"Away, false priest, or I shall behead you!" G

The Archbishop withdrew, and after excommunicating Sir Modred, abandoned his office and fled to Glastonbury. There he took up his abode as a simple hermit, and by fasting and prayer sought divine intercession[20] in the troubled affairs of his country.

Sir Modred tried to assassinate the Archbishop, but was too late. He continued to assail the queen with entreaties and threats, both of which failed, and then the news reached him that King Arthur was returning with his army from France in order to seek revenge.

Sir Modred now appealed to the barony to support him, and it has to be told that they came forward in large numbers to do so. Why? it will be asked. Was not King Arthur, the noblest sovereign Christendom had seen, now leading his armies in a righteous cause? The answer lies in the people of Britain, who, then as now, were fickle. Those who so readily transferred their allegiance to Sir Modred did so with the excuse that whereas King Arthur's reign had led them into war and strife, Sir Modred promised them peace and festivity. H

Hence it was with an army of a hundred thousand that Sir Modred marched to Dover to battle against his own father, and to withhold from him his rightful crown.

As King Arthur with his fleet drew into the harbor, Sir Modred and his army launched forth in every available craft, and a bloody battle ensued in the ships and on the beach. If King Arthur's army were the smaller, their courage was the higher, confident as they were of the righteousness of their cause. Without stint[21] they battled through the burning ships, the screaming wounded, and the corpses

F SUMMARIZE
Reread lines 155–165 and summarize the events that open this section of the selection.

guile (gīl) *n.* clever trickery; deceit

G CONFLICT
Describe the **external conflict** in lines 166–178. What motivates Mordred's behavior?

Analyze Visuals ▶
William Morris was a designer and artist who was heavily influenced by medieval arts and crafts. What details in this image suggest Gwynevere's emotional state?

H SUMMARIZE
Summarize lines 187–193. Why do many people in Britain support Modred?

17. **trousseau** (trōō'sō): clothes and linens that a bride brings to her marriage.
18. **begotten . . . aunt:** Modred is the son of Arthur and Queen Margawse, the sister of Arthur's mother, Queen Igraine.
19. **I shall curse you with bell, book, and candle:** The archbishop is threatening to excommunicate Modred—that is, to deny him participation in the rites of the church. In the medieval ritual of excommunication, a bell was rung, a book was shut, and a candle was extinguished.
20. **divine intercession:** assistance from God.
21. **stint:** holding back.

Guinevere (1858), William Morris. Watercolor and drawing on paper, 1,264 mm × 552 mm. Tate Gallery, London.

floating on the bloodstained waters. Once ashore they put Sir Modred's entire army to flight.

The battle over, King Arthur began a search for his casualties, and on peering into one of the ships found Sir Gawain, mortally wounded. Sir Gawain fainted when King Arthur lifted him in his arms; and when he came to, the king spoke:

"Alas! dear nephew, that you lie here thus, mortally wounded! What joy is now left to me on this earth? You must know it was you and Sir Launcelot I loved above all others, and it seems that I have lost you both."

"My good uncle, it was my pride and my stubbornness that brought all this about, for had I not urged you to war with Sir Launcelot your subjects would not now be in revolt. Alas, that Sir Launcelot is not here, for he would soon drive them out! And it is at Sir Launcelot's hands that I suffer my own death: the wound which he dealt me has reopened. I would not wish it otherwise, because is he not the greatest and gentlest of knights?

"I know that by noon I shall be dead, and I repent bitterly that I may not be reconciled to Sir Launcelot; therefore I pray you, good uncle, give me pen, paper, and ink so that I may write to him."

A priest was summoned and Sir Gawain confessed; then a clerk brought ink, pen, and paper, and Sir Gawain wrote to Sir Launcelot as follows:

"Sir Launcelot, flower of the knighthood: I, Sir Gawain, son of King Lot of Orkney and of King Arthur's sister, send you my greetings!

"I am about to die; the cause of my death is the wound I received from you outside the city of Benwick; and I would make it known that my death was of my own seeking, that I was moved by the spirit of revenge and spite to provoke you to battle.

"Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I beseech you to visit my tomb and offer what prayers you will on my behalf; and for myself, I am content to die at the hands of the noblest knight living.

"One more request: that you hasten with your armies across the sea and give succor[22] to our noble king. Sir Modred, his bastard son, has usurped the throne and now holds against him with an army of a hundred thousand. He would have won the queen, too, but she fled to the Tower of London and there charged her loyal supporters with her defense.

"Today is the tenth of May, and at noon I shall give up the ghost; this letter is written partly with my blood. This morning we fought our way ashore, against the armies of Sir Modred, and that is how my wound came to be reopened. We won the day, but my lord King Arthur needs you, and I too, that on my tomb you may bestow your blessing." I

Sir Gawain fainted when he had finished, and the king wept. When he came to he was given extreme unction,[23] and died, as he had anticipated, at the hour of noon. The king buried him in the chapel at Dover Castle, and there many came to see him, and all noticed the wound on his head which he had received from Sir Launcelot.

I SUMMARIZE
Reread lines 221–239. Briefly summarize Gawain's letter to Sir Launcelot.

22. **succor** (sŭk′ər) n. aid in a time of need; relief

23. **extreme unction:** a ritual in which a priest anoints and prays for a dying person.

Then the news reached Arthur that Sir Modred offered him battle on the field at Baron Down. Arthur hastened there with his army, they fought, and Sir Modred fled once more, this time to Canterbury.

When King Arthur had begun the search for his wounded and dead, many volunteers from all parts of the country came to fight under his flag, convinced now of the rightness of his cause. Arthur marched westward, and Sir Modred once more offered him battle. It was assigned for the Monday following Trinity Sunday, on Salisbury Down.

Sir Modred levied fresh troops from East Anglia and the places about London, and fresh volunteers came forward to help Arthur. Then, on the night of Trinity Sunday, Arthur was vouchsafed[24] a strange dream:

He was appareled in gold cloth and seated in a chair which stood on a pivoted scaffold. Below him, many fathoms deep, was a dark well, and in the water swam serpents, dragons, and wild beasts. Suddenly the scaffold tilted and Arthur was flung into the water, where all the creatures struggled toward him and began tearing him limb from limb.

Arthur cried out in his sleep and his squires hastened to waken him. Later, as he lay between waking and sleeping, he thought he saw Sir Gawain, and with him a host of beautiful noblewomen. Arthur spoke:

"My sister's son! I thought you had died; but now I see you live, and I thank the lord Jesu! I pray you, tell me, who are these ladies?"

"My lord, these are the ladies I championed[25] in righteous quarrels when I was on earth. Our lord God has vouchsafed that we visit you and plead with you not to give battle to Sir Modred tomorrow, for if you do, not only will you yourself be killed, but all your noble followers too. We beg you to be warned, and to make a treaty with Sir Modred, calling a truce for a month, and granting him whatever terms he may demand. In a month Sir Launcelot will be here, and he will defeat Sir Modred."

Thereupon Sir Gawain and the ladies vanished, and King Arthur once more summoned his squires and his counselors and told them his vision. Sir Lucas and Sir Bedivere were commissioned to make a treaty with Sir Modred. They were to be accompanied by two bishops and to grant, within reason, whatever terms he demanded.

The ambassadors found Sir Modred in command of an army of a hundred thousand and unwilling to listen to overtures of peace. However, the ambassadors eventually prevailed on him, and in return for the truce granted him suzerainty[26] of Cornwall and Kent, and succession to the British throne when King Arthur died. The treaty was to be signed by King Arthur and Sir Modred the next day. They were to meet between the two armies, and each was to be accompanied by no more than fourteen knights.

Both King Arthur and Sir Modred suspected the other of treachery, and gave orders for their armies to attack at the sight of a naked sword. When they met at the appointed place the treaty was signed and both drank a glass of wine.

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes Two examples of **suffixes** (affixes at the end of a word) are *–ness* ("state of") and *–eous* ("full of"). Each suffix appears on this page, in lines 250 and 266. What is the base word in both cases? What does each word mean?

24. **vouchsafed:** granted.
25. **championed:** defended or fought for.
26. **suzerainty** (sōō'zər-ən-tē): the position of feudal lord.

Then, by chance, one of the soldiers was bitten in the foot by an adder[27] which had lain concealed in the brush. The soldier unthinkingly drew his sword to kill it, and at once, as the sword flashed in the light, the alarums[28] were given, trumpets sounded, and both armies galloped into the attack. J

"Alas for this fateful day!" exclaimed King Arthur, as both he and Sir Modred hastily mounted and galloped back to their armies. There followed one of those rare and heartless battles in which both armies fought until they were destroyed. King Arthur, with his customary valor, led squadron after squadron of cavalry into the attack, and Sir Modred encountered him unflinchingly. As the number of dead and wounded mounted on both sides, the active combatants continued dauntless until nightfall, when four men alone survived.

King Arthur wept with dismay to see his beloved followers fallen; then, struggling toward him, unhorsed and badly wounded, he saw Sir Lucas the Butler and his brother, Sir Bedivere.[29]

"Alas!" said the king, "that the day should come when I see all my noble knights destroyed! I would prefer that I myself had fallen. But what has become of the traitor Sir Modred, whose evil ambition was responsible for this carnage?"

Looking about him King Arthur then noticed Sir Modred leaning with his sword on a heap of the dead.

"Sir Lucas, I pray you give me my spear, for I have seen Sir Modred."

"Sire, I entreat you, remember your vision—how Sir Gawain appeared with a heaven-sent message to dissuade you from fighting Sir Modred. Allow this fateful day to pass; it is ours, for we three hold the field, while the enemy is broken."

"My lords, I care nothing for my life now! And while Sir Modred is at large I must kill him: there may not be another chance." K

"God speed you, then!" said Sir Bedivere.

When Sir Modred saw King Arthur advance with his spear, he rushed to meet him with drawn sword. Arthur caught Sir Modred below the shield and drove his spear through his body; Sir Modred, knowing that the wound was mortal, thrust himself up to the handle of the spear, and then, brandishing his sword in both hands, struck Arthur on the side of the helmet, cutting through it and into the skull beneath; then he crashed to the ground, gruesome and dead.

King Arthur fainted many times as Sir Lucas and Sir Bedivere struggled with him to a small chapel nearby, where they managed to ease his wounds a little. When Arthur came to, he thought he heard cries coming from the battlefield.

"Sir Lucas, I pray you, find out who cries on the battlefield," he said.

Wounded as he was, Sir Lucas hobbled painfully to the field, and there in the moonlight saw the camp followers stealing gold and jewels from the dead, and murdering the wounded. He returned to the king and reported to him what he had seen, and then added:

J SUMMARIZE
Summarize lines 277–290. What leads to the breaking of the treaty between King Arthur and Modred?

K CONFLICT
What **motivates** Arthur's decision to fight Modred despite Sir Bedivere's advice?

27. **adder:** a poisonous snake.
28. **alarums:** calls to arms.
29. **Sir Lucas . . . Bedivere:** brothers who are members of King Arthur's court.

Arthur Versus Modred, Arthur Rackham. Illustration from *The Romance of King Arthur.*

"My lord, it surely would be better to move you to the nearest town?"

"My wounds forbid it. But alas for the good Sir Launcelot! How sadly I have missed him today! And now I must die—as Sir Gawain warned me I would—
330 repenting our quarrel with my last breath."

Sir Lucas and Sir Bedivere made one further attempt to lift the king. He fainted as they did so. Then Sir Lucas fainted as part of his intestines broke through a wound in the stomach. When the king came to, he saw Sir Lucas lying dead with foam at his mouth.

"Sweet Jesu, give him succor!" he said. "This noble knight has died trying to save my life—alas that this was so!"

▲ Analyze Visuals

What elements of this image help convey the ferocity of the battle between Arthur and Modred?

Sir Bedivere wept for his brother.

"Sir Bedivere, weep no more," said King Arthur, "for you can save neither your brother nor me; and I would ask you to take my sword Excalibur[30] to the shore of the lake and throw it in the water. Then return to me and tell me what you have seen."

"My lord, as you command, it shall be done."

Sir Bedivere took the sword, but when he came to the water's edge, it appeared so beautiful that he could not bring himself to throw it in, so instead he hid it by a tree, and then returned to the king.

"Sir Bedivere, what did you see?"

"My lord, I saw nothing but the wind upon the waves."

"Then you did not obey me; I pray you, go swiftly again, and this time fulfill my command."

Sir Bedivere went and returned again, but this time too he had failed to fulfill the king's command.

"Sir Bedivere, what did you see?"

"My lord, nothing but the lapping of the waves."

"Sir Bedivere, twice you have betrayed me! And for the sake only of my sword: it is unworthy of you! Now I pray you, do as I command, for I have not long to live."

This time Sir Bedivere wrapped the girdle around the sheath and hurled it as far as he could into the water. A hand appeared from below the surface, took the sword, waved it thrice, and disappeared again. Sir Bedivere returned to the king and told him what he had seen. L

"Sir Bedivere, I pray you now help me hence, or I fear it will be too late."

Sir Bedivere carried the king to the water's edge, and there found a barge in which sat many beautiful ladies with their queen. All were wearing black hoods, and when they saw the king, they raised their voices in a piteous lament.

"I pray you, set me in the barge," said the king.

Sir Bedivere did so, and one of the ladies laid the king's head in her lap; then the queen spoke to him:

"My dear brother, you have stayed too long: I fear that the wound on your head is already cold."

Thereupon they rowed away from the land and Sir Bedivere wept to see them go.

"My lord King Arthur, you have deserted me! I am alone now, and among enemies."

"Sir Bedivere, take what comfort you may, for my time is passed, and now I must be taken to Avalon[31] for my wound to be healed. If you hear of me no more, I beg you pray for my soul."

The barge slowly crossed the water and out of sight while the ladies wept. Sir Bedivere walked alone into the forest and there remained for the night.

In the morning he saw beyond the trees of a copse[32] a small hermitage. He entered and found a hermit kneeling down by a fresh tomb. The hermit was

L CONFLICT
What **internal conflict** does Sir Bedivere experience in lines 343–360? How does he ultimately resolve it?

30. **Excalibur** (ĕk-skăl'ə-bər): Arthur's remarkable sword, which originally came from the Lady of the Lake.
31. **Avalon:** an island paradise of Celtic legend, where heroes are taken after death.
32. **copse** (kŏps): a grove of small trees.

weeping as he prayed, and then Sir Bedivere recognized him as the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been banished by Sir Modred.

"Father, I pray you, tell me, whose tomb is this?"

"My son, I do not know. At midnight the body was brought here by a company of ladies. We buried it, they lit a hundred candles for the service, and rewarded me with a thousand bezants."[33]

"Father, King Arthur lies buried in this tomb."

Sir Bedivere fainted when he had spoken, and when he came to he begged the Archbishop to allow him to remain at the hermitage and end his days in fasting and prayer.

"Father, I wish only to be near to my true liege."

"My son, you are welcome; and do I not recognize you as Sir Bedivere the Bold, brother to Sir Lucas the Butler?"

Thus the Archbishop and Sir Bedivere remained at the hermitage, wearing the habits of hermits and devoting themselves to the tomb with fasting and prayers of contrition.[34]

Such was the death of King Arthur as written down by Sir Bedivere. By some it is told that there were three queens on the barge: Queen Morgan le Fay, the Queen of North Galys, and the Queen of the Waste Lands; and others include the name of Nyneve, the Lady of the Lake who had served King Arthur well in the past, and had married the good knight Sir Pelleas.

In many parts of Britain it is believed that King Arthur did not die and that he will return to us and win fresh glory and the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesu Christ; but for myself I do not believe this, and would leave him buried peacefully in his tomb at Glastonbury, where the Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Bedivere humbled themselves, and with prayers and fasting honored his memory. And inscribed on his tomb, men say, is this legend:

HIC IACET ARTHURUS,
REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS.[35]

33. **bezants** (bĕz′ənts): gold coins.

34. **contrition** (kən-trĭsh′ən): sincere regret for wrongdoing.

35. ***Hic iacet Arthurus, rex quondam rexque futurus*** (hĭk yä′kĕt är-to͞o′ro͝os rāks kwôn′däm rāk′skwĕ fo͝o-to͞o′ro͝os) *Latin:* Here lies Arthur, the once and future king.

Reading for Information

William Caxton, the first English printer, had a significant impact on the literature of his day. In his preface to the first edition of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), Caxton describes his anticipated audience and reveals his purpose in publishing the work.

PREFACE
TO THE
FIRST EDITION
OF
LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

WILLAM CAXTON

I have, after the simple cunning that God hath sent to me, under the favor and correction of all noble lords and gentlemen, enprised to enprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur and of certain of his knights, after a copy unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malory did take out of certain books of French and reduced it into English.

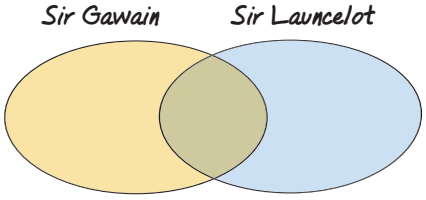
And I, according to my copy, have done set it in enprint to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in tho[se] days, by which they came to honor, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies with all other estates, of what estate or degree they been of, that shall see and read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and to follow the same; wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalries. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What prevents Arthur from accepting Launcelot's peace offers?
2. **Recall** Why does Arthur call off the siege of Benwick and return to Britain?
3. **Clarify** What happens when Arthur fights Modred?

Text Analysis

4. **Summarize** Review the chart you created as you read. Then summarize the ways in which Gawain's hostility toward Launcelot contributes to Arthur's downfall.
5. **Analyze Conflict** To what extent are Arthur's **internal** and **external conflicts** with Launcelot similar to his conflicts with Modred? In what ways are they different?
6. **Examine Medieval Romance** Review the Text Analysis instruction on page 229. *Le Morte d'Arthur* is one of the most influential medieval romances. What characteristics of medieval romance appear in this work?
7. **Compare and Contrast Characters** Make a Venn diagram like the one shown to help you compare and contrast Gawain's and Launcelot's character traits. Which knight's failure to exemplify the ideals of chivalry is greater? Support your answer with evidence from the text.



8. **Evaluate Texts** In his preface on page 262, William Caxton explains that he has published *Le Morte d'Arthur* to provide a model for good behavior. How well does this selection from Malory's romance fulfill Caxton's purpose?

Text Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** One critic has suggested that when "confronted by a need to make a decision in a moment of crisis," Arthur "invariably chooses the wrong course of action" because he is unable or unwilling to see the situation as it really is. Think about the various conflicts, both internal and external, that Arthur struggles with in the selection, and consider the important decisions he makes. Do you agree or disagree that he "invariably chooses the wrong course of action"? Cite evidence from the text to support your opinion.

What is your ultimate LOYALTY?

Should Arthur have forgiven Launcelot for his disloyalty? Why or why not? Can loyalty, once lost, ever be restored? Explain your response.

COMMON CORE

RL 2 Provide an objective summary of the text. **RL 3** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. **RL 5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning.

Vocabulary in Context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Choose the vocabulary word that best completes each sentence. Use the context clues in the sentence to help you decide.

1. It is _____ on you to work hard if you want to succeed.
2. The queen had _____ over six new colonies.
3. The king's nephew tried to _____ power for himself.
4. He demanded that someone offer _____ for his grievances.
5. Clever but dishonest, she often used _____ to trick others.

WORD LIST

dominion
guile
incumbent
redress
usurp

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• concept • culture • parallel • section • structure

How do the internal conflicts of Gawain and Arthur **parallel** each other? Which of them changes most dramatically in response to his internal conflict and why? Discuss these questions with a partner, using at least two additional Academic Vocabulary words in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: MULTIPLE-MEANING WORDS

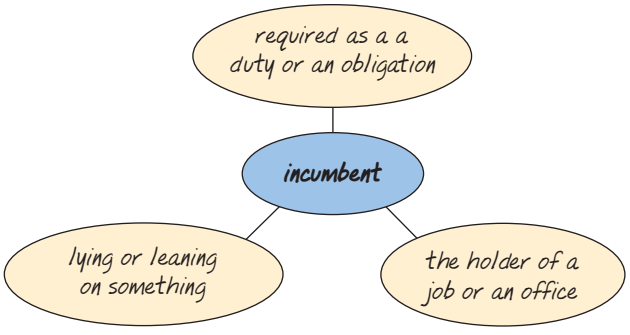
Incumbent has more than one possible meaning. To determine which meaning applies in a particular instance, consider the context, or surroundings. For instance, in the sentence "It is incumbent on my honor to do so," the context suggests that *incumbent* means "required as a duty or obligation."

COMMON CORE

L 4 Determine or clarify the meaning of multiple-meaning words. **L 4d** Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word by checking the inferred meaning in context.

PRACTICE In the passage below, use context to determine the likely meaning of each boldfaced word. Then explain which context clues in the paragraph helped you determine the correct meaning of the word.

The legend of Arthur has captured the imagination of writers since at least 1136, with the appearance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. From this text, later writers would **adopt** some of the essential **elements** of Arthurian lore: Merlin, Excalibur, and Arthur's final **repose** at Avalon. A few decades later, the French poet Chrétien de Troyes introduced the character of Launcelot to the growing **body** of Arthurian literature. *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1469), one of the earliest books printed in English, would eventually become the **ultimate** source for writers of Arthurian literature.



Interactive Vocabulary THINK central
Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML12-264

The Legacy of Medieval Romance

Firmly embedded in the tradition of Arthurian romance is the code of chivalry prescribed for all knights. Along with the traits of bravery, courtesy, and personal honor, this code of conduct required that men behave gallantly toward women. It is this treatment of women that, even today, is most often associated with mention of the chivalric code.

Writing to Persuade

Re-examine the selections on pages 230–261 for examples of chivalric behavior, but look for more than just gallantry toward women. Find examples of knights displaying the other ideals of chivalry you've learned about: loyalty, modesty, faith, honor, bravery, and courtesy. Use these examples to write an essay persuading a contemporary audience—your peers, parents, and teachers—that chivalry is or is not an outmoded virtue in the 21st century.

Consider

- which details from the selections will provide you with the best support for your argument
- what language will best persuade your audience
- how to organize your writing to prove your argument clearly and logically

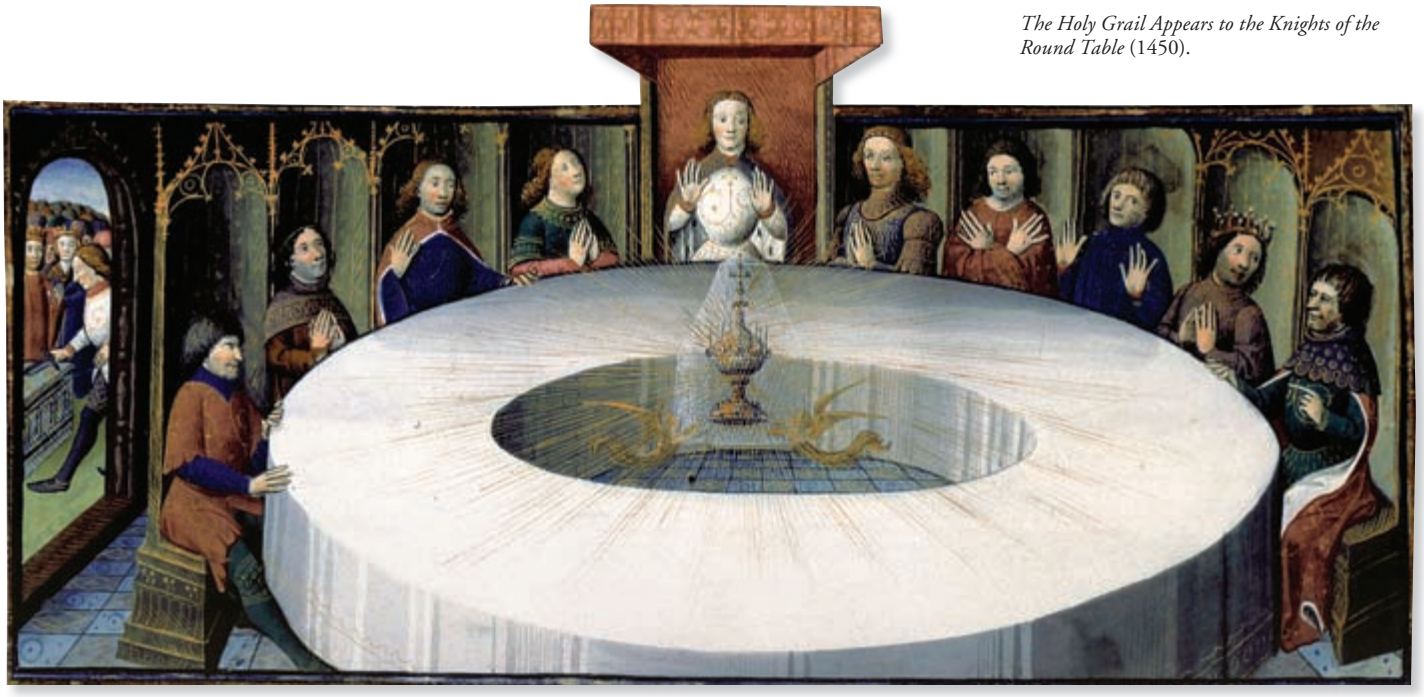
Extension

SPEAKING & LISTENING

Divide into teams to debate this statement: *Chivalry is dead.* You may use your persuasive essays as a jumping-off point, but with your team members find additional examples from today's world to prove that chivalry is alive and well or has withered and died in the face of our modern sensibilities and values.

COMMON CORE

W 1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts. **W 1a** Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), reasons, and evidence. **W 9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis. **SL 1a** Come to discussions having read and researched material under study.



The Holy Grail Appears to the Knights of the Round Table (1450).

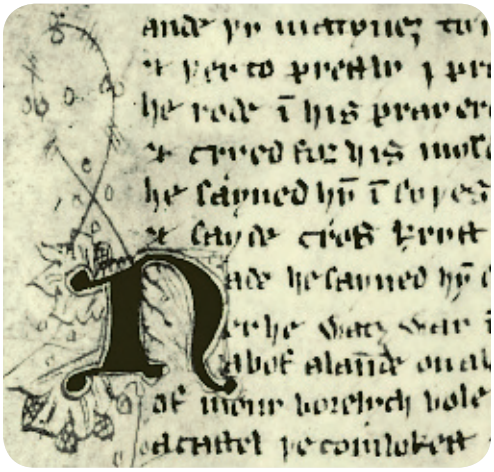
from Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Romance by the Gawain Poet Translated by John Gardner

VIDEO TRAILER THINK central KEYWORD: HML12-228

READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods. **RC-12(B)** Make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding.

Meet the Author



The Gawain Poet's rich imagination and skill with language have earned him recognition as one of the greatest medieval English poets. Yet his identity remains unknown. Scholars can only speculate on what the background of the Gawain Poet (as he is known) may have been.

Provincial Genius The Gawain Poet's descriptions and language suggest that he wrote the poem during the second half of the 14th century, which would have made him a contemporary of Chaucer's. His dialect, however, indicates that, unlike Chaucer, he was not a Londoner but probably lived somewhere in the northwestern part of England.

The only surviving early manuscript of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* produced by an anonymous copyist around 1400, also contains three religious poems—*Pearl, Purity,* and *Patience*—that are believed to be the work of the Gawain Poet. The manuscript also includes a dozen rough illustrations of the four poems, though it is impossible to verify who created the images for this manuscript. Because *Pearl* is the most technically brilliant of the four poems, the Gawain Poet is sometimes also called the Pearl Poet.

A Man for All Seasons The Gawain Poet's works reveal that he was widely read in French and Latin and had some knowledge of law and theology. Although he was familiar with many details of medieval aristocratic life, his descriptions and metaphors also show a love of the countryside and rural life.

The Ideal Knight In the person of Sir Gawain—a nephew of the legendary King Arthur—the Gawain Poet portrays the ideals medieval knights would have striven to meet. Although real knights were far from perfect, legendary knights such as Sir Gawain dutifully obeyed a code of chivalry that represented a combination of Christian and military ideals, including faith, modesty, loyalty, courtesy, bravery, and honor.

Perhaps the most important virtue for a knight in the age of chivalry was what the Gawain Poet calls *trawthe*, a Middle English word translated variously as "truth," "devotion," and "fidelity." *Trawthe* meant not only keeping one's word but also remaining faithful to the vows taken at the ceremony of knighthood, which included both secular and religious chivalric responsibilities.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The first modern edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was translated by J. R. R. Tolkien, a respected scholar of Old and Middle English as well as the author of *The Lord of the Rings*.

LITERARY ANALYSIS: MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

A **medieval romance** is a dramatic verse or prose narrative that usually involves adventurous heroes, idealized love, exotic places, and supernatural events. This genre first appeared in France during the 12th century and soon spread to England. Many of the best-known romances celebrate the legendary King Arthur and his knights, who often risk their lives for the love of a noble lady or to uphold the code of behavior known as chivalry. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is considered one of the finest Arthurian romances. As you read, look for these characteristics of romance:

- idealized or larger-than-life characters
- a hero who faces a challenge or test
- exotic settings and supernatural or magical elements
- hidden or mistaken identity

Review: **Character Traits**

READING SKILL: MAKE INFERENCES

When you **make inferences,** you are making logical guesses about a text or character based on your own experience and the evidence or clues you find in the text. Making inferences is sometimes called "reading between the lines" because you come to understand something in the text that the author has not explicitly stated. For example, we can infer from the following lines that Arthur and his knights may be frightened by the Green Knight's challenge:

If they were like stone before, they were stiller now,
Every last lord in the hall, both the high and the low;

As you read the excerpt from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* pay close attention to the Gawain Poet's descriptions of the characters and settings. Record your inferences about the story in a chart like the one shown.

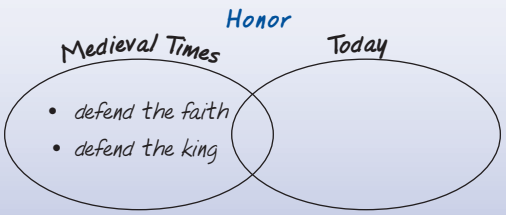
Details from the Text	Inferences
"And over his breast hung a beard as big as a bush" (line 4)	There's something wild and uncivilized about the Green Knight.

Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Is HONOR *worth dying for?*

Whether honor is worth dying for is a question a good medieval knight would have no trouble answering. The code of chivalry made it plain that it was his duty to defend—if necessary, with his life—his church, king, and country. Today, blind obedience is often looked upon with suspicion. Many people cannot accept the belief that an abstract concept is worth dying for.

DISCUSS Get together with several classmates to make a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts what it means to be honorable today with what it meant to a medieval knight. Are there similarities in the way we define *honor* today to a medieval knight's definition of it? Discuss how the idea of honor has changed and whether there are leaders today who might be thought of as modern-day knights.



Sir Gawain AND THE *Green Knight*

As the poem begins, Arthur and his knights are gathered to celebrate Christmas and the new year with feasting and revelry. In the midst of their festivities, an enormous man—who is entirely green—bounds through the door.

Splendid that knight errant stood in a splay of green,
And green, too, was the mane of his mighty destrier;
Fair fanning tresses enveloped the fighting man's shoulders,
And over his breast hung a beard as big as a bush;
The beard and the huge mane burgeoning forth from his head
Were clipped off clean in a straight line over his elbows,
And the upper half of each arm was hidden underneath
As if covered by a king's chaperon, closed round the neck.
The mane of the marvelous horse was much the same,
Well crisped and combed and carefully pranked with knots,
Threads of gold interwoven with the glorious green,
Now a thread of hair, now another thread of gold;
The tail of the horse and the forelock were tricked the same way,
And both were bound up with a band of brilliant green
Adorned with glittering jewels the length of the dock,
Then caught up tight with a thong in a criss-cross knot
Where many a bell tinkled brightly, all burnished gold.
So monstrous a mount, so mighty a man in the saddle
Was never once encountered on all this earth
till then;

1 knight errant (ĕr′ənt): a knight who wanders about, searching for adventure in order to prove his chivalry; **splay:** display

2 destrier (dĕs′trē-ər): war horse.

5 burgeoning (bûr′jə-nĭng): growing.

8 chaperon (shăp′ə-rōn′): hood.

10 pranked with knots: decorated with bows.

13 forelock: the part of a horse's mane that falls between the ears.

15 dock: the fleshy part of an animal's tail.

Analyze Visuals ▶
Which details in this image correspond with the Gawain Poet's description of the Green Knight?

Illustration by Herbert Cole in *English Fairy Tales* by Ernest and Grace Rhys.

His eyes, like lightning, flashed,
And it seemed to many a man,
That any man who clashed
With him would not long stand. A

But the huge man came unarmed, without helmet or hauberk,
No breastplate or gorget or iron cleats on his arms;
He brought neither shield nor spearshaft to shove or to smite,
But instead he held in one hand a bough of the holly
That grows most green when all the groves are bare
And held in the other an ax, immense and unwieldy,
A pitiless battleblade terrible to tell of. . . .

A ROMANCE
What details in lines 1–23 make the Green Knight a larger-than-life figure?

24 hauberk (hô′bərk): a coat of chain mail (a type of armor).

25 breastplate or gorget (gôr′jĭt) **or iron cleats:** armor for the chest, the throat, or the shoulders and elbows.

Detail of *The Holy Grail Appears to the Knights of the Round Table* (1927–1932), by Morris & Company, Merton Abbey Tapestry Works, after design about 1891 by Edward Burne-Jones. 250 cm × 530 cm. Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich.

King Arthur stared down at the stranger before the high dais
And greeted him nobly, for nothing on earth frightened him.
And he said to him, "Sir, you are welcome in this place;
I am the head of this court. They call me Arthur.
Get down from your horse, I beg you, and join us for dinner,
And then whatever you seek we will gladly see to."
But the stranger said, "No, so help me God on high,
My errand is hardly to sit at my ease in your castle!
But friend, since your praises are sung so far and wide,
Your castle the best ever built, people say, and your barons
The stoutest men in steel armor that ever rode steeds,
Most mighty and most worthy of all mortal men
And tough devils to toy with in tournament games,
And since courtesy is in flower in this court, they say,
All these tales, in truth, have drawn me to you at this time.
You may be assured by this holly branch I bear
That I come to you in peace, not spoiling for battle.
If I'd wanted to come in finery, fixed up for fighting,
I have back at home both a helmet and a hauberk,
A shield and a sharp spear that shines like fire,
And other weapons that I know pretty well how to use.
But since I don't come here for battle, my clothes are mere cloth.
Now if you are truly as bold as the people all say,
You will grant me gladly the little game that I ask
as my right."
Arthur gave him answer
And said, "Sir noble knight,
If it's a duel you're after,
We'll furnish you your fight."

"Good heavens, I want no such thing! I assure you, Sire,
You've nothing but beardless babes about this bench!
If I were hasped in my armor and high on my horse,
You haven't a man that could match me, your might is so feeble.

And so all I ask of this court is a Christmas game,
For the Yule is here, and New Year's, and here sit young men;
If any man holds himself, here in this house, so hardy,
So bold in his blood—and so brainless in his head—
That he dares to stoutly exchange one stroke for another,
I shall let him have as my present this lovely gisarme,
This ax, as heavy as he'll need, to handle as he likes,
And I will abide the first blow, bare-necked as I sit.

31 dais (dā'ĭs): a raised platform where honored guests are seated.

33 this place: Camelot, Arthur's favorite castle and the site of his court of the Round Table.

43 In medieval tournaments, knights on horseback fought one another for sport.

44 courtesy is in flower: the high standards of behavior expected in a king's court are currently flourishing.

47 spoiling for: eager for.

61 hasped: fastened.

68 gisarme (gĭ-zärm'): a battle-ax with a long shaft and a two-edged blade.

If anyone here has the daring to try what I've offered,
Leap to me lightly, lad; lift up this weapon;
I give you the thing forever—you may think it your own;
And I will stand still for your stroke, steady on the floor,
Provided you honor my right, when my inning comes,
to repay.
But let the respite be
A twelvemonth and a day;
Come now, my boys, let's see
What any here can say."

76–77 let the respite . . . day: let the period of delay be a year and a day.

If they were like stone before, they were stiller now,
Every last lord in the hall, both the high and the low;
The stranger on his destrier stirred in the saddle
And ferociously his red eyes rolled around;
He lowered his grisly eyebrows, glistening green,
And waved his beard and waited for someone to rise;
When no one answered, he coughed, as if embarrassed,
And drew himself up straight and spoke again:
"What! Can this be King Arthur's court?" said the stranger,
"Whose renown runs through many a realm, flung far and wide?
What has become of your chivalry and your conquest,
Your greatness-of-heart and your grimness and grand words?
Behold the radiance and renown of the mighty Round Table
Overwhelmed by a word out of one man's mouth!
You shiver and blanch before a blow's been shown!" B
And with that he laughed so loud that the lord was distressed;
In chagrin, his blood shot up in his face and limbs
so fair;
More angry he was than the wind,
And likewise each man there;
And Arthur, bravest of men,
Decided now to draw near.

B MAKE INFERENCES
Why does the Green Knight taunt Arthur and his knights in lines 88–94?

And he said, "By heaven, sir, your request is strange;
But since you have come here for folly, you may as well find it.
I know no one here who's aghast of your great words.
Give me your gisarme, then, for the love of God,
And gladly I'll grant you the gift you have asked to be given."
Lightly the King leaped down and clutched it in his hand;
Then quickly that other lord alighted on his feet.
Arthur lay hold of the ax, he gripped it by the handle,
And he swung it up over him sternly, as if to strike.
The stranger stood before him, in stature higher

102 folly: dangerous and foolish activity.

By a head or more than any man here in the house;
Sober and thoughtful he stood there and stroked his beard,
And with patience like a priest's he pulled down his collar,
No more unmanned or dismayed by Arthur's might
Than he'd be if some baron on the bench had brought him a glass of wine.
Then Gawain, at Guinevere's side,
Made to the King a sign:
"I beseech you, Sire," he said,
"Let this game be mine.

"Now if you, my worthy lord," said Gawain to the King,
"Would command me to step from the dais and stand with you there,
That I might without bad manners move down from my place
(Though I couldn't, of course, if my liege lady disliked it)
I'd be deeply honored to advise you before all the court;
For I think it unseemly, if I understand the matter,
That challenges such as this churl has chosen to offer
Be met by Your Majesty—much as it may amuse you—
When so many bold-hearted barons sit about the bench:
No men under Heaven, I am sure, are more hardy in will
Or better in body on the fields where battles are fought;
I myself am the weakest, of course, and in wit the most feeble;
My life would be least missed, if we let out the truth.
Only as you are my uncle have I any honor,
For excepting your blood, I bear in my body slight virtue. C
And since this affair that's befallen us here is so foolish,
And since I have asked for it first, let it fall to me.
If I've reasoned incorrectly, let all the court say, without blame."
The nobles gather round
And all advise the same:
"Let the King step down
And give Sir Gawain the game!" . . .

Arthur grants Gawain's request to take on the Green Knight's challenge. The Green Knight asks Gawain to identify himself, and the two agree on their pact. Gawain then prepares to strike his blow against the Green Knight.

On the ground, the Green Knight got himself into position,
His head bent forward a little, the bare flesh showing,
His long and lovely locks laid over his crown

114 unmanned: deprived of manly courage.

116 Guinevere: King Arthur's wife.

123 liege (lēj) **lady:** a lady to whom one owes loyalty and service; here used by Gawain to refer to Queen Guinevere.

126 churl: rude, uncouth person.

C CHARACTER TRAITS
What traits does Gawain reveal about himself in lines 120–134?

So that any man there might note the naked neck.
Sir Gawain laid hold of the ax and he hefted it high,
His pivot foot thrown forward before him on the floor,
And then, swiftly, he slashed at the naked neck;
The sharp of the battleblade shattered asunder the bones
And sank through the shining fat and slit it in two,
And the bit of the bright steel buried itself in the ground.
The fair head fell from the neck to the floor of the hall
And the people all kicked it away as it came near their feet.
The blood splashed up from the body and glistened on the green,
But he never faltered or fell for all of that,
But swiftly he started forth upon stout shanks
And rushed to reach out, where the King's retainers stood,
Caught hold of the lovely head, and lifted it up,
And leaped to his steed and snatched up the reins of the bridle,
Stepped into stirrups of steel and, striding aloft,
He held his head by the hair, high, in his hand;
And the stranger sat there as steadily in his saddle
As a man entirely unharmed, although he was headless
on his steed.
He turned his trunk about,
That baleful body that bled,
And many were faint with fright
When all his say was said.

He held his head in his hand up high before him,
Addressing the face to the dearest of all on the dais;
And the eyelids lifted wide, and the eyes looked out,
And the mouth said just this much, as you may now hear:
"Look that you go, Sir Gawain, as good as your word,
And seek till you find me, as loyally, my friend,
As you've sworn in this hall to do, in the hearing of the knights.
Come to the Green Chapel, I charge you, and take
A stroke the same as you've given, for well you deserve
To be readily requited on New Year's morn.
Many men know me, the Knight of the Green Chapel;
Therefore if you seek to find me, you shall not fail.
Come or be counted a coward, as is fitting."
Then with a rough jerk he turned the reins
And haled away through the hall-door, his head in his hand,
And fire of the flint flew out from the hooves of the foal.
To what kingdom he was carried no man there knew,

149 asunder: into pieces.

156 shanks: legs.

157 retainers: servants or attendants.

165 baleful: threatening evil; sinister.

D ROMANCE
Which characteristics of medieval romance are reflected in lines 161–174?

No more than they knew what country it was he came from.
What then?
The King and Gawain there
Laugh at the thing and grin;
And yet, it was an affair
Most marvelous to men. E

E MAKE INFERENCES
Reread lines 185–189. What can you infer about Arthur and Gawain's feelings about their encounter with the Green Knight?

As the end of the year approaches, Gawain leaves on his quest to find the Green Chapel and fulfill his pledge. After riding through wild country and encountering many dangers, he comes upon a splendid castle. The lord of the castle welcomes Gawain and invites him to stay with him and his lady for a few days.

The lord proposes that he will go out to hunt each day while Gawain stays at the castle. At the end of the day, they will exchange what they have won. While the lord is out hunting, the lady attempts to seduce Gawain. Gawain resists her, however, and on the first two days accepts only kisses, which he gives to the lord at the end of each day in exchange for what the lord has gained in the hunt. On the third day Gawain continues to resist the lady, but she presses him to accept another gift.

She held toward him a ring of the yellowest gold
And, standing aloft on the band, a stone like a star
From which flew splendid beams like the light of the sun;
And mark you well, it was worth a rich king's ransom.
But right away he refused it, replying in haste,
"My lady gay, I can hardly take gifts at the moment;
Having nothing to give, I'd be wrong to take gifts in turn."
She implored him again, still more earnestly, but again
He refused it and swore on his knighthood that he could take nothing.
Grieved that he still would not take it, she told him then:
"If taking my ring would be wrong on account of its worth,
And being so much in my debt would be bothersome to you,
I'll give you merely this sash that's of slighter value."
She swiftly unfastened the sash that encircled her waist,
Tied around her fair tunic, inside her bright mantle;
It was made of green silk and was marked of gleaming gold F
Embroidered along the edges, ingeniously stitched.
This too she held out to the knight, and she earnestly begged him
To take it, trifling as it was, to remember her by.

197 implored: begged.

204 tunic . . . mantle: shirtlike garment worn under a sleeveless cloak.

F GRAMMAR AND STYLE
The Gawain Poet uses alliterative **participial phrases** throughout the poem, which creates a rhythmic or "musical" effect in the selection. "Gleaming gold" in line 205 is a good example.

Queen Guinevere (1858), William Morris. Oil on canvas.

But again he said no, there was nothing at all he could take,
Neither treasure nor token, until such time as the Lord
Had granted him some end to his adventure.
"And therefore, I pray you, do not be displeased,
But give up, for I cannot grant it, however fair
or right.
I know your worth and price,
And my debt's by no means slight;
I swear through fire and ice
To be your humble knight." G

"Do you lay aside this silk," said the lady then,
"Because it seems unworthy—as well it may?
Listen. Little as it is, it seems less in value,
But he who knew what charms are woven within it
Might place a better price on it, perchance.
For the man who goes to battle in this green lace,
As long as he keeps it looped around him,
No man under Heaven can hurt him, whoever may try,
For nothing on earth, however uncanny, can kill him."
The knight cast about in distress, and it came to his heart
This might be a treasure indeed when the time came to take
The blow he had bargained to suffer beside the Green Chapel.
If the gift meant remaining alive, it might well be worth it;
So he listened in silence and suffered the lady to speak,
And she pressed the sash upon him and begged him to take it,
And Gawain did, and she gave him the gift with great pleasure
And begged him, for her sake, to say not a word,
And to keep it hidden from her lord. And he said he would,
That except for themselves, this business would never be known
to a man. H
He thanked her earnestly,
And boldly his heart now ran;
And now a third time she
Leaned down and kissed her man.

When the lord returns at the end of the third day, Gawain gives him a kiss but does not reveal the gift of the sash.

G CHARACTER TRAITS
In lines 209–217, what does Gawain's refusal of gifts suggest about his character?

H MAKE INFERENCES
Reread lines 227–236. Why is Gawain distressed when he learns about the sash's magical powers?

On New Year's Day Gawain must go to meet the Green Knight. Wearing the green sash, he sets out before dawn. Gawain arrives at a wild, rugged place, where he sees no chapel but hears the sound of a blade being sharpened. Gawain calls out, and the Green Knight appears with a huge ax. The Green Knight greets Gawain, who, with pounding heart, bows his head to take his blow.

Quickly then the man in the green made ready,
Grabbed up his keen-ground ax to strike Sir Gawain;
With all the might in his body he bore it aloft
And sharply brought it down as if to slay him;
Had he made it fall with the force he first intended
He would have stretched out the strongest man on earth.
But Sir Gawain cast a side glance at the ax
As it glided down to give him his Kingdom Come,
And his shoulders jerked away from the iron a little,
And the Green Knight caught the handle, holding it back,
And mocked the prince with many a proud reproof:
"*You* can't be Gawain," he said, "who's thought so good,
A man who's never been daunted on hill or dale!
For look how you flinch for fear before anything's felt!
I never heard tell that Sir Gawain was ever a coward!
I never moved a muscle when *you* came down;
In Arthur's hall I never so much as winced.
My head fell off at my feet, yet I never flickered;
But you! You tremble at heart before you're touched!
I'm bound to be called a better man than you, then,
my lord."
Said Gawain, "I shied once:
No more. You have my word.
But if my head falls to the stones
It cannot be restored.

"But be brisk, man, by your faith, and come to the point!
Deal out my doom if you can, and do it at once,
For I'll stand for one good stroke, and I'll start no more
Until your ax has hit—and that I swear."
"Here goes, then," said the other, and heaves it aloft
And stands there waiting, scowling like a madman;
He swings down sharp, then suddenly stops again,
Holds back the ax with his hand before it can hurt,
And Gawain stands there stirring not even a nerve;
He stood there still as a stone or the stock of a tree
That's wedged in rocky ground by a hundred roots. I
O, merrily then he spoke, the man in green:

248 his Kingdom Come: his death and entry into the afterlife; a reference to the sentence "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer.

259–260 The Green Knight has proclaimed himself a better man than Gawain.

I MAKE INFERENCES
Reread lines 271–275. Why does the Green Knight stop his axe from falling a second time?

"Good! You've got your heart back! Now I can hit you.
May all that glory the good King Arthur gave you
Prove efficacious now—if it ever can—
And save your neck." In rage Sir Gawain shouted,
"*Hit* me, hero! I'm right up to here with your threats!
Is it *you* that's the cringing coward after all?"
"Whoo!" said the man in green, "he's wrathful, too!
No pauses, then; I'll pay up my pledge at once,
I vow!"
He takes his stride to strike
And lifts his lip and brow;
It's not a thing Gawain can like,
For nothing can save him now!

He raises that ax up lightly and flashes it down,
And that blinding bit bites in at the knight's bare neck—
But hard as he hammered it down, it hurt him no more
Than to nick the nape of his neck, so it split the skin;
The sharp blade slit to the flesh through the shiny hide,
And red blood shot to his shoulders and spattered the ground.
And when Gawain saw his blood where it blinked in the snow
He sprang from the man with a leap to the length of a spear;
He snatched up his helmet swiftly and slapped it on,
Shifted his shield into place with a jerk of his shoulders,
And snapped his sword out faster than sight; said boldly—
And, mortal born of his mother that he was,
There was never on earth a man so happy by half—
"No more strokes, my friend; you've had your swing!
I've stood one swipe of your ax without resistance;
If you offer me any more, I'll repay you at once
With all the force and fire I've got—as you
will see.
I take one stroke, that's all,
For that was the compact we
Arranged in Arthur's hall;
But now, no more for me!"

The Green Knight remained where he stood, relaxing on his ax—
Settled the shaft on the rocks and leaned on the sharp end—
And studied the young man standing there, shoulders hunched,
And considered that staunch and doughty stance he took,
Undaunted yet, and in his heart he liked it;
And then he said merrily, with a mighty voice—
With a roar like rushing wind he reproved the knight—
"Here, don't be such an ogre on your ground!
Nobody here has behaved with bad manners toward you

Language Coach

Frequently Misused Words
Reread lines 278-280. *Efficacious* can be a synonym for *effective,* but only when applied to things. Both words mean "producing the desired effect." Is *efficacious* used correctly in this sentence? *King Arthur was an efficacious leader.* Why or why not?

307 compact: binding agreement.

313 staunch: firm; **doughty** (dou'tē): brave.

Or done a thing except as the contract said.
I owed you a stroke, and I've struck; consider yourself
Well paid. And now I release you from all further duties.
If I'd cared to hustle, it may be, perchance, that I might
Have hit somewhat harder, and then you might well be cross!
The first time I lifted my ax it was lighthearted sport,
I merely feinted and made no mark, as was right,
For you kept our pact of the first night with honor
And abided by your word and held yourself true to me,
Giving me all you owed as a good man should.
I feinted a second time, friend, for the morning
You kissed my pretty wife twice and returned me the kisses;
And so for the first two days, mere feints, nothing more severe.

A man who's true to his word,
There's nothing he needs to fear;
You failed me, though, on the third
Exchange, so I've tapped you here.

325 feinted (fān′tĭd): pretended to attack.

"That sash you wear by your scabbard belongs to me;
My own wife gave it to you, as I ought to know.
I know, too, of your kisses and all your words
And my wife's advances, for I myself arranged them.
It was I who sent her to test you. I'm convinced
You're the finest man that ever walked this earth.
As a pearl is of greater price than dry white peas,
So Gawain indeed stands out above all other knights.
But you lacked a little, sir; you were less than loyal;
But since it was not for the sash itself or for lust
But because you loved your life, I blame you less."
Sir Gawain stood in a study a long, long while,
So miserable with disgrace that he wept within,
And all the blood of his chest went up to his face
And he shrank away in shame from the man's gentle words.
The first words Gawain could find to say were these:
"Cursed be cowardice and covetousness both,
Villainy and vice that destroy all virtue!"
He caught at the knots of the girdle and loosened them
And fiercely flung the sash at the Green Knight.
"There, there's my fault! The foul fiend vex it!
Foolish cowardice taught me, from fear of your stroke,
To bargain, covetous, and abandon my kind,

336 scabbard (skăb′ərd): a sheath for a dagger or sword.

354 girdle: sash.

356 vex: harass; torment.

The selflessness and loyalty suitable in knights;
Here I stand, faulty and false, much as I've feared them,
Both of them, untruth and treachery; may they see sorrow
and care!
I can't deny my guilt;
My works shine none too fair!
Give me your good will
And henceforth I'll beware." J

At that, the Green Knight laughed, saying graciously,
"Whatever harm I've had, I hold it amended
Since now you're confessed so clean, acknowledging sins
And bearing the plain penance of my point;
I consider you polished as white and as perfectly clean
As if you had never fallen since first you were born.
And I give you, sir, this gold-embroidered girdle,
For the cloth is as green as my gown. Sir Gawain, think
On this when you go forth among great princes;
Remember our struggle here; recall to your mind
This rich token. Remember the Green Chapel.
And now, come on, let's both go back to my castle
And finish the New Year's revels with feasting and joy,
not strife,
I beg you," said the lord,
And said, "As for my wife,
She'll be your friend, no more
A threat against your life."

"No, sir," said the knight, and seized his helmet
And quickly removed it, thanking the Green Knight,
"I've reveled too well already; but fortune be with you;
May He who gives all honors honor you well." . . .

And so they embraced and kissed and commended each other
To the Prince of Paradise, and parted then
in the cold;
Sir Gawain turned again
To Camelot and his lord;
And as for the man of green,
He went wherever he would. K

J ROMANCE

Paraphrase lines 357–365. What ideals of chivalry does Gawain believe he has betrayed?

367–371 The Green Knight is saying that Gawain has paid for his fault by admitting it and offering his head to the ax.

369 penance: punishment accepted by a person to show sorrow for wrongdoing; **point:** blade.

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes For words that end in a vowel and consonant, normal spelling rules require doubling the final consonant when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel. Reread line 385. Does *revel* follow this rule? What other words are like *revel*?

TEKS 3

K DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a narrative: it has a clear beginning, middle and end, and focuses on a conflict and its eventual resolution. These elements of story-telling contribute to its dramatic **structure**, the sequence of actions and events that unfold in a narrative. Like most stories, this one builds to a **climax** as Gawain realizes he has betrayed his chivalric ideals, and the Green Knight passes judgment on him. Reread lines 366–392. What judgment does the Green Knight pass on Gawain? How does Gawain react? What is the resolution that results from this final scene?

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What challenge does the Green Knight make to King Arthur and his knights?
2. **Summarize** What happens when Sir Gawain meets the Green Knight on New Year's Day?
3. **Clarify** At the end of the poem, what is the Green Knight's opinion of Gawain?

READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods. **RC-12(B)** Make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding.

Literary Analysis

4. **Examine Medieval Romance** In medieval romances, there is often a character whose identity is hidden or mistaken. Explain how this characteristic affects the outcome of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.
5. **Identify Situational Irony** Situational irony is a contrast between what is expected and what actually occurs. What is ironic about Sir Gawain's acceptance of the sash from the lady of the castle?
6. **Analyze Character's Motives** Why does Gawain decline the Green Knight's invitation to celebrate the new year together at the end of the poem?
7. **Make Inferences** Review the inference chart you created as you read. Which character shows greater courage, Sir Gawain or the Green Knight? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
8. **Compare Texts** Both *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale" portray knights who undergo a test. Compare the **tone,** or writer's attitude toward a subject, in these two selections. Identify words and details that help convey the tone in each poem.

Literary Criticism

9. **Social Context** It is believed that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was written in the late 1300s, as the age of chivalry began to wane. Though legend has it that Gawain was one of Arthur's finest and most loyal knights, the Gawain Poet depicts him as flawed. Why might the Gawain poet have portrayed Gawain this way?

Is HONOR *worth dying for?*

King Arthur's knights devote themselves to following the code of chivalry. Trying to live up to such high ideals can be a double-edged sword. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having such high ideals?

Conventions in Writing

WRITING 14A Write an engaging story. **ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 17A** Use and understand the function of different types of clauses and phrases.

GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Use Alliteration

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 237. The lilting quality of the Gawain Poet's verse owes much to his use of **alliteration,** the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words—a technique that can add emphasis, heighten mood, or create a musical effect in a line or passage. Many of the alliterative elements in the poem consist of **participles,** verb forms that function as adjectives, and **participial phrases,** participles plus their modifiers and complements.

Fair fanning tresses enveloped the fighting man's shoulders,
And over his breast hung a beard as big as a bush; (lines 3–4)

Notice how the writer uses the alliterative participles *fanning* and *fighting*, repeating the consonant *f* to emphasize the Green Knight's appearance.

PRACTICE Identify the participles in the following lines from the poem, then write your own passages by similarly using participles to create alliteration.

EXAMPLE

He lowered his grisly eyebrows, glistening green,
And waved his beard and waited for someone to rise;

He held a large ax, blinding bright,
But seemed friendly enough as he sized up the knights.

1. The sharp of the battleblade shattered asunder the bones
   And sank through the shining fat and slit it in two,
2. And then he said merrily, with a mighty voice—
   With a roar like rushing wind he reproved the knight—

READING-WRITING CONNECTION

Expand your understanding of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by responding to this prompt. Then, use the **revising tips** to improve your eyewitness account.

WRITING PROMPT	REVISING TIPS
CREATE AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT Imagine that you are a guest at King Arthur's court. Write a **three-to-five-paragraph eyewitness account** about the Green Knight's first appearance. Include a description of the event and excerpts from "interviews" with Knights of the Round Table who watched the event unfold.	• Organize your eyewitness account in chronological order and include quotations from various knights . • Add participial phrases and alliteration to at least one sentence to enliven your description.

Interactive Revision THINK central
Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML12-245

The Prologue
from The Canterbury Tales
Poem by Geoffrey Chaucer Translated by Nevill Coghill

READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.

VIDEO TRAILER THINK central KEYWORD: HML12-142A

Meet the Author

Geoffrey Chaucer 1340?–1400

Geoffrey Chaucer made an enormous mark on the language and literature of England. Writing in an age when French was widely spoken in educated circles, Chaucer was among the first writers to show that English could be a respectable literary language. Today, his work is considered a cornerstone of English literature.

Befriended by Royalty Chaucer was born sometime between 1340 and 1343, probably in London, in an era when expanding commerce was helping to bring about growth in villages and cities. His family, though not noble, was well off, and his parents were able to place him in the household of the wife of Prince Lionel, a son of King Edward III, where he served as an attendant. Such a position was a vital means of advancement; the young Chaucer learned the customs of upper-class life and came into contact with influential people. It may have been during this period that Chaucer met Lionel's younger brother, John of Gaunt, who would become Chaucer's lifelong patron and a leading political figure of the day.

A Knight and a Writer Although Chaucer wrote his first important work around 1370, writing was always a sideline; his primary career was in diplomacy. During Richard II's troubled reign (1377 to 1399), Chaucer was appointed a member of Parliament and knight of the shire. When Richard II was overthrown in 1399 by Henry Bolingbroke (who became King Henry IV), Chaucer managed to retain his political position, as Henry was the son of John of Gaunt.

Despite the turmoil of the 1380s and 1390s, the last two decades of Chaucer's life saw his finest literary achievements—the brilliant verse romance *Troilus and Criseyde* and his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales,* a collection of verse and prose tales of many different kinds. At the time of his death, Chaucer had penned nearly 20,000 lines of *The Canterbury Tales,* but many more tales were planned.

Uncommon Honor When he died in 1400, Chaucer was accorded a rare honor for a commoner—burial in London's Westminster Abbey. In 1556, an admirer erected an elaborate marble monument to his memory. This was the beginning of the Abbey's famous Poets' Corner, where many of England's most distinguished writers have since been buried.

DID YOU KNOW?
Geoffrey Chaucer . . .
- was captured and held for ransom while fighting for England in the Hundred Years' War.
- held various jobs, including royal messenger, justice of the peace, and forester.
- portrayed himself as a foolish character in a number of works.

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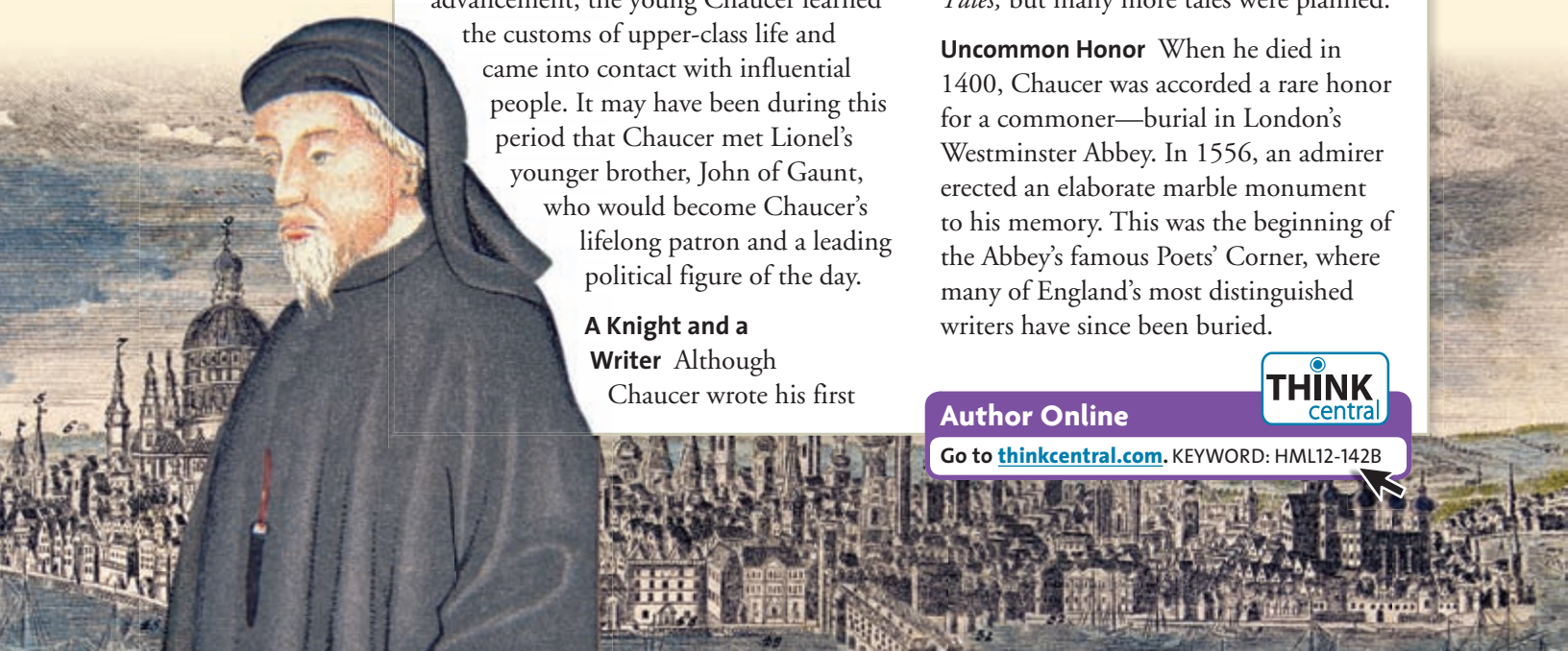


LITERARY ANALYSIS: CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization refers to the techniques a writer uses to develop characters. In "The Prologue," the introduction to *The Canterbury Tales,* Chaucer offers a vivid portrait of English society during the Middle Ages. Among his 30 characters are clergy, aristocrats, and commoners. Chaucer employs a dramatic structure similar to Boccaccio's *The Decameron*—each pilgrim tells a tale. Some of the ways Chaucer characterizes the pilgrims include

- description of a character's appearance
- examples of a character's speech, thoughts, and actions
- the responses of others to a character
- the narrator's direct comments about a character

As you read, look for details that reveal the **character traits,** or consistent qualities, of each pilgrim.

READING STRATEGY: PARAPHRASE

Reading medieval texts, such as *The Canterbury Tales,* can be challenging because they often contain unfamiliar words and complex sentences. One way that you can make sense of Chaucer's work is to **paraphrase,** or restate information in your own words. A paraphrase is usually the same length as the original text but contains simpler language. As you read, paraphrase difficult passages. Here is an example.

Chaucer's Words	Paraphrase
"When in April the sweet showers fall/And pierce the drought of March to the root, . . ." (lines 1–2)	When the April rains come and end the dryness of March, . . .

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The following boldfaced words are critical to understanding Chaucer's literary masterpiece. Try to figure out the meaning of each word from its context.

1. The refined gentleman always behaved with **courtliness.**
2. She remained calm and **sedately** finished her meal.
3. The popular politician was charming and **personable.**
4. When you save money in a bank, interest will **accrue.**
5. Does she suffer from heart disease or another **malady?**
6. She made an **entreaty** to the king, asking for a pardon.

Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What makes a great CHARACTER?

Creating a great character requires a sharp eye for detail, a keen understanding of people, and a brilliant imagination—all of which Chaucer possessed. Chaucer populated *The Canterbury Tales* with a colorful cast of characters whose virtues and flaws ring true even today, hundreds of years later.

QUICKWRITE Work with a partner to invent a character. Start with an intriguing name. Then come up with questions that will reveal basic information about the character, such as his or her age, physical appearance, family and friends, job, home, and personal tastes. Brainstorm possible answers for the questions. Then circle the responses that have the best potential for making a lively character.

Name: Bartholomew Throckmorton

1. What is his occupation?
   duke
   squire to a knight
   sea captain
   (town doctor)
   grave digger
2. Where does he live?
3.
4.
5.

The CANTERBURY TALES

Geoffrey Chaucer

The PROLOGUE

BACKGROUND In "The Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales,* a group gathers at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, a town just south of London, to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. At the suggestion of the innkeeper, the group decides to hold a storytelling competition to pass the time as they travel. "The Prologue" introduces the "sundry folk" who will tell the stories and is followed by the tales themselves—24 in all.

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power
As brings about the engendering of the flower,
When also Zephyrus with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath
Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the *Ram* has run,
And the small fowl are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye
(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)
Then people long to go on pilgrimages
And palmers long to seek the stranger strands
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands,
And specially, from every shire's end
Of England, down to Canterbury they wend
To seek the holy blissful martyr, quick
To give his help to them when they were sick. A

It happened in that season that one day
In Southwark, at *The Tabard*, as I lay

5 Zephyrus (zĕf′ər-əs): the Greek god of the west wind.

8 the Ram: Aries—the first sign of the zodiac. The time is mid-April.

13 palmers: people journeying to religious shrines; pilgrims; **strands:** shores.

14 sundry (sŭn′drē): various.

15 shire's: county's.

17 martyr: St. Thomas à Becket.

A PARAPHRASE
Restate lines 1–18. Why does the group make its pilgrimage in April?

Illustrations by Teresa Fasolino.

Ready to go on pilgrimage and start
For Canterbury, most devout at heart,
At night there came into that hostelry
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk happening then to fall
In fellowship, and they were pilgrims all
That towards Canterbury meant to ride.
The rooms and stables of the inn were wide;
They made us easy, all was of the best.
And, briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,
I'd spoken to them all upon the trip
And was soon one with them in fellowship,
Pledged to rise early and to take the way
To Canterbury, as you heard me say.

But none the less, while I have time and space,
Before my story takes a further pace,
It seems a reasonable thing to say
What their condition was, the full array
Of each of them, as it appeared to me,
According to profession and degree,
And what apparel they were riding in;
And at a Knight I therefore will begin. B
There was a *Knight,* a most distinguished man,
Who from the day on which he first began
To ride abroad had followed chivalry,
Truth, honor, generousness and courtesy.
He had done nobly in his sovereign's war
And ridden into battle, no man more,
As well in Christian as in heathen places,
And ever honored for his noble graces.

When we took Alexandria, he was there.
He often sat at table in the chair
Of honor, above all nations, when in Prussia.
In Lithuania he had ridden, and Russia,
No Christian man so often, of his rank.
When, in Granada, Algeciras sank
Under assault, he had been there, and in
North Africa, raiding Benamarin;
In Anatolia he had been as well
And fought when Ayas and Attalia fell,
For all along the Mediterranean coast
He had embarked with many a noble host.
In fifteen mortal battles he had been
And jousted for our faith at Tramissene

23 hostelry (hŏs'təl-rē): inn.

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes The suffix *-ship* can mean "someone entitled to a specific rank of" (*lordship*), "art or skill of" (*craftsmanship*), or "state of" (*friendship*). Which meaning applies to *fellowship?* Give another example of each use of *-ship.*

B PARAPHRASE
Paraphrase lines 35–42. What does the narrator set out to accomplish in "The Prologue"?

45 chivalry (shĭv'əl-rē): the code of behavior of medieval knights, which stressed the values listed in line 46.

51 Alexandria: a city in Egypt, captured by European Christians in 1365. All the places named in lines 51–64 were scenes of conflicts in which medieval Christians battled Muslims and other non-Christian peoples.

64 jousted: fought with a lance in an arranged battle against another knight.

Thrice in the lists, and always killed his man.
This same distinguished knight had led the van
Once with the Bey of Balat, doing work
For him against another heathen Turk;
He was of sovereign value in all eyes.
And though so much distinguished, he was wise
And in his bearing modest as a maid.
He never yet a boorish thing had said
In all his life to any, come what might;
He was a true, a perfect gentle-knight. C

Speaking of his equipment, he possessed
Fine horses, but he was not gaily dressed.
He wore a fustian tunic stained and dark
With smudges where his armor had left mark;
Just home from service, he had joined our ranks
To do his pilgrimage and render thanks.

He had his son with him, a fine young *Squire,*
A lover and cadet, a lad of fire
With locks as curly as if they had been pressed.
He was some twenty years of age, I guessed.
In stature he was of a moderate length,
With wonderful agility and strength.
He'd seen some service with the cavalry
In Flanders and Artois and Picardy
And had done valiantly in little space
Of time, in hope to win his lady's grace.
He was embroidered like a meadow bright
And full of freshest flowers, red and white.
Singing he was, or fluting all the day;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, the sleeves were long and wide;
He knew the way to sit a horse and ride.
He could make songs and poems and recite,
Knew how to joust and dance, to draw and write.
He loved so hotly that till dawn grew pale
He slept as little as a nightingale.
Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
And carved to serve his father at the table.

There was a *Yeoman* with him at his side,
No other servant; so he chose to ride.
This Yeoman wore a coat and hood of green,
And peacock-feathered arrows, bright and keen
And neatly sheathed, hung at his belt the while

65 thrice: three times; **lists:** fenced areas for jousting.

66 van: vanguard—the troops foremost in an attack.

67 Bey of Balat: a Turkish ruler.

C CHARACTERIZATION
Reread lines 43–74. What do the Knight's actions on and off the battlefield reveal about his character? Cite details to support your answer.

77 fustian (fŭs′chən): a strong cloth made of linen and cotton.

81 Squire: a young man attending on and receiving training from a knight.

82 cadet: soldier in training.

88 Flanders and Artois (är-twä′) **and Picardy** (pĭk′ər-dē): areas in what is now Belgium and northern France.

93 fluting: whistling.

103 Yeoman (yō′mən): an attendant in a noble household; **him:** the Knight.

—For he could dress his gear in yeoman style,
His arrows never drooped their feathers low—
And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
His head was like a nut, his face was brown.
He knew the whole of woodcraft up and down.
A saucy brace was on his arm to ward
It from the bow-string, and a shield and sword
Hung at one side, and at the other slipped
A jaunty dirk, spear-sharp and well-equipped.
A medal of St. Christopher he wore
Of shining silver on his breast, and bore
A hunting-horn, well slung and burnished clean,
That dangled from a baldrick of bright green.
He was a proper forester, I guess.

There also was a *Nun,* a Prioress,
Her way of smiling very simple and coy.
Her greatest oath was only "By St. Loy!"
And she was known as Madam Eglantyne.
And well she sang a service, with a fine
Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,
And she spoke daintily in French, extremely,
After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe;
French in the Paris style she did not know.
At meat her manners were well taught withal;
No morsel from her lips did she let fall,
Nor dipped her fingers in the sauce too deep;
But she could carry a morsel up and keep
The smallest drop from falling on her breast.
For **courtliness** she had a special zest,
And she would wipe her upper lip so clean
That not a trace of grease was to be seen
Upon the cup when she had drunk; to eat,
She reached a hand **sedately** for the meat.
She certainly was very entertaining,
Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining
To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace,
A stately bearing fitting to her place,
And to seem dignified in all her dealings. D
As for her sympathies and tender feelings,
She was so charitably solicitous
She used to weep if she but saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bleeding.
And she had little dogs she would be feeding
With roasted flesh, or milk, or fine white bread.
And bitterly she wept if one were dead

113 saucy: jaunty; stylish; **brace:** a leather arm-guard worn by archers.

116 dirk: small dagger.

117 St. Christopher: patron saint of travelers.

120 baldrick: shoulder strap.

122 Prioress: a nun ranking just below the abbess (head) of a convent.

124 St. Loy: St. Eligius (known as St. Éloi in France).

129 Stratford-atte-Bowe: a town (now part of London) near the Prioress's convent.

131 at meat: when dining; **withal:** moreover.

courtliness (kôrt'lē-nĭs) *n.* polite, elegant manners; refined behavior

sedately (sĭ-dāt'lē) *adv.* in a composed, dignified manner; calmly

143 counterfeit: imitate.

D **CHARACTERIZATION**
Reread lines 122–145. Which details suggest that the Prioress may be trying to appear more sophisticated than she really is?

Or someone took a stick and made it smart;
She was all sentiment and tender heart.
Her veil was gathered in a seemly way,
Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-grey;
Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,
Her forehead, certainly, was fair of spread,
Almost a span across the brows, I own;
She was indeed by no means undergrown.
Her cloak, I noticed, had a graceful charm.
She wore a coral trinket on her arm,
A set of beads, the gaudies tricked in green,
Whence hung a golden brooch of brightest sheen
On which there first was graven a crowned A,
And lower, *Amor vincit omnia.*

Another *Nun,* the secretary at her cell,
Was riding with her, and *three Priests* as well.

A *Monk* there was, one of the finest sort
Who rode the country; hunting was his sport.
A manly man, to be an Abbot able;
Many a dainty horse he had in stable.
His bridle, when he rode, a man might hear
Jingling in a whistling wind as clear,
Aye, and as loud as does the chapel bell
Where my lord Monk was Prior of the cell.
The Rule of good St. Benet or St. Maur
As old and strict he tended to ignore;
He let go by the things of yesterday
And took the modern world's more spacious way.
He did not rate that text at a plucked hen
Which says that hunters are not holy men
And that a monk uncloistered is a mere
Fish out of water, flapping on the pier,
That is to say a monk out of his cloister.
That was a text he held not worth an oyster;
And I agreed and said his views were sound;
Was he to study till his head went round
Poring over books in cloisters? Must he toil
As Austin bade and till the very soil?
Was he to leave the world upon the shelf?
Let Austin have his labor to himself.

This Monk was therefore a good man to horse;
Greyhounds he had, as swift as birds, to course.
Hunting a hare or riding at a fence

159 span: a unit of length equal to nine inches. A broad forehead was considered a sign of beauty in Chaucer's day.

163 gaudies: the larger beads in a set of prayer beads.

166 *Amor vincit omnia* (ä′môr wĭn′kĭt ôm′nē-ə)**:** Latin for "Love conquers all things."

171 Abbot: the head of a monastery.

172 dainty: excellent.

176 Prior of the cell: head of a subsidiary group of monks.

177 St. Benet . . . St. Maur: St. Benedict, who established a strict set of rules for monks' behavior, and his follower, St. Maurus, who introduced those rules into France.

190 Austin: St. Augustine of Hippo, who recommended that monks engage in hard agricultural labor.

194 to course: for hunting.

Was all his fun, he spared for no expense.
I saw his sleeves were garnished at the hand
With fine grey fur, the finest in the land,
And on his hood, to fasten it at his chin
He had a wrought-gold cunningly fashioned pin;
Into a lover's knot it seemed to pass.
His head was bald and shone like looking-glass;
So did his face, as if it had been greased.
He was a fat and **personable** priest;
His prominent eyeballs never seemed to settle. E
They glittered like the flames beneath a kettle;
Supple his boots, his horse in fine condition.
He was a prelate fit for exhibition,
He was not pale like a tormented soul.
He liked a fat swan best, and roasted whole.
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.

There was a *Friar,* a wanton one and merry,
A Limiter, a very festive fellow.
In all Four Orders there was none so mellow,
So glib with gallant phrase and well-turned speech.
He'd fixed up many a marriage, giving each
Of his young women what he could afford her.
He was a noble pillar to his Order.
Highly beloved and intimate was he
With County folk within his boundary,
And city dames of honor and possessions;
For he was qualified to hear confessions,

personable (pûr′sə-nə-bəl) *adj.* pleasing in behavior and appearance

E **CHARACTERIZATION**
List three **character traits** of the Monk. In what ways does the narrator appear to poke fun at him?

211 palfrey (pôl′frē): saddle horse.

212 Friar: a member of a religious group sworn to poverty and living on charitable donations; **wanton** (wŏn′tən): playful; jolly.

213 Limiter: a friar licensed to beg for donations in a limited area.

214 Four Orders: the four groups of friars—Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, and Augustinian.

222 confessions: church rites in which people confess their sins to clergy members. Only certain friars were licensed to hear confessions.

Or so he said, with more than priestly scope;
He had a special license from the Pope.
Sweetly he heard his penitents at shrift
With pleasant absolution, for a gift.
He was an easy man in penance-giving
Where he could hope to make a decent living;
It's a sure sign whenever gifts are given
To a poor Order that a man's well shriven,
And should he give enough he knew in verity
The penitent repented in sincerity.
For many a fellow is so hard of heart
He cannot weep, for all his inward smart.
Therefore instead of weeping and of prayer
One should give silver for a poor Friar's care.
He kept his tippet stuffed with pins for curls,
And pocket-knives, to give to pretty girls.
And certainly his voice was gay and sturdy,
For he sang well and played the hurdy-gurdy.
At sing-songs he was champion of the hour.
His neck was whiter than a lily-flower
But strong enough to butt a bruiser down.
He knew the taverns well in every town
And every innkeeper and barmaid too
Better than lepers, beggars and that crew,
For in so *eminent* a man as he
It was not fitting with the dignity
Of his position, dealing with a scum
Of wretched lepers; nothing good can come
Of commerce with such slum-and-gutter dwellers,
But only with the rich and victual-sellers.
But anywhere a profit might **accrue**
Courteous he was and lowly of service too.
Natural gifts like his were hard to match.
He was the finest beggar of his batch,
And, for his begging-district, paid a rent;
His brethren did no poaching where he went.
For though a widow mightn't have a shoe,
So pleasant was his holy how-d'ye-do
He got his farthing from her just the same
Before he left, and so his income came
To more than he laid out. And how he romped,
Just like a puppy! He was ever prompt
To arbitrate disputes on settling days
(For a small fee) in many helpful ways,
Not then appearing as your cloistered scholar
With threadbare habit hardly worth a dollar,

225 shrift: confession.

230 well shriven: completely forgiven through the rite of confession.

231 verity: truth.

237 tippet: an extension of a hood or sleeve, used as a pocket.

240 hurdy-gurdy: a stringed musical instrument, similar to a lute, played by turning a crank while pressing down keys.

F PARAPHRASE
Restate lines 237–246. How does the Friar spend the money he earns through hearing confessions?

252 victual (vĭt'l): food.

accrue (ə-kro͞o') *v.* to be added or gained; to accumulate

261 farthing: a coin of small value used in England until recent times.

265 settling days: days on which disputes were settled out of court. Friars often acted as arbiters in the disputes and charged for their services, though forbidden by the church to do so.

But much more like a Doctor or a Pope.
Of double-worsted was the semi-cope
Upon his shoulders, and the swelling fold
About him, like a bell about its mold
When it is casting, rounded out his dress.
He lisped a little out of wantonness
To make his English sweet upon his tongue.
When he had played his harp, or having sung,
His eyes would twinkle in his head as bright
As any star upon a frosty night.
This worthy's name was Hubert, it appeared.

There was a *Merchant* with a forking beard
And motley dress; high on his horse he sat,
Upon his head a Flemish beaver hat
And on his feet daintily buckled boots.
He told of his opinions and pursuits
In solemn tones, he harped on his increase
Of capital; there should be sea-police
(He thought) upon the Harwich-Holland ranges;
He was expert at dabbling in exchanges.
This estimable Merchant so had set
His wits to work, none knew he was in debt,
He was so stately in administration,
In loans and bargains and negotiation.
He was an excellent fellow all the same;
To tell the truth I do not know his name. G

An *Oxford Cleric,* still a student though,
One who had taken logic long ago,
Was there; his horse was thinner than a rake,
And he was not too fat, I undertake,
But had a hollow look, a sober stare;
The thread upon his overcoat was bare.
He had found no preferment in the church
And he was too unworldly to make search
For secular employment. By his bed
He preferred having twenty books in red
And black, of Aristotle's philosophy,
Than costly clothes, fiddle or psaltery.
Though a philosopher, as I have told,
He had not found the stone for making gold.
Whatever money from his friends he took
He spent on learning or another book
And prayed for them most earnestly, returning
Thanks to them thus for paying for his learning.

270 double-worsted (wo͝os'tĭd): a strong, fairly costly fabric made from tightly twisted woolen yarn; **semi-cope:** a short cloak.

281 motley: multicolored.

282 Flemish: from Flanders, an area in what is now Belgium and northern France.

287 Harwich-Holland ranges: shipping routes between Harwich (hăr'ĭj), a port on England's east coast, and the country of Holland.

288 exchanges: selling foreign currency at a profit.

G PARAPHRASE
Paraphrase lines 284–294. Is the Merchant a successful businessman? Why or why not?

295 Cleric: a student preparing for the priesthood.

301 preferment: advancement.

305 Aristotle's philosophy: the writings of Aristotle, a famous Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C.

306 psaltery (sôl'tə-rē): a stringed instrument.

307–308 Though a philosopher . . . gold: The "philosopher's stone" supposedly turned metals into gold.

His only care was study, and indeed
He never spoke a word more than was need,
Formal at that, respectful in the extreme,
Short, to the point, and lofty in his theme.
A tone of moral virtue filled his speech
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach. H

A *Sergeant at the Law* who paid his calls,
Wary and wise, for clients at St. Paul's
There also was, of noted excellence.
Discreet he was, a man to reverence,
Or so he seemed, his sayings were so wise.
He often had been Justice of Assize
By letters patent, and in full commission.
His fame and learning and his high position
Had won him many a robe and many a fee.
There was no such conveyancer as he;
All was fee-simple to his strong digestion,
Not one conveyance could be called in question.
Though there was nowhere one so busy as he,
He was less busy than he seemed to be.
He knew of every judgment, case and crime
Ever recorded since King William's time.
He could dictate defenses or draft deeds;
No one could pinch a comma from his screeds
And he knew every statute off by rote.
He wore a homely parti-colored coat,
Girt with a silken belt of pin-stripe stuff;
Of his appearance I have said enough.

There was a *Franklin* with him, it appeared;
White as a daisy-petal was his beard.
A sanguine man, high-colored and benign,
He loved a morning sop of cake in wine.
He lived for pleasure and had always done,
For he was Epicurus' very son,
In whose opinion sensual delight
Was the one true felicity in sight.
As noted as St. Julian was for bounty
He made his household free to all the County.
His bread, his ale were finest of the fine
And no one had a better stock of wine.
His house was never short of bake-meat pies,
Of fish and flesh, and these in such supplies
It positively snowed with meat and drink
And all the dainties that a man could think. I

H CHARACTERIZATION
Reread lines 295–318. In what ways does the Oxford Cleric differ from the Monk and the Friar? Cite details.

319 Sergeant at the Law: a lawyer appointed by the monarch to serve as a judge.

320 St. Paul's: the cathedral of London, outside which lawyers met clients when the courts were closed.

324 Justice of Assize: a judge who traveled about the country to hear cases.

325 letters patent: royal documents commissioning a judge.

328 conveyancer: a lawyer specializing in conveyances (deeds) and property disputes.

329 fee-simple: property owned without restrictions.

334 King William's time: the reign of William the Conqueror.

336 screeds: documents.

341 Franklin: a wealthy landowner.

343 sanguine (săng′gwĭn): cheerful and good-natured.

346 Epicurus' very son: someone who pursues pleasure as the chief goal in life, as the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus was supposed to have recommended.

349 St. Julian: the patron saint of hospitality; **bounty:** generosity.

I CHARACTERIZATION
What does the narrator state directly about the Franklin in lines 341–356?

According to the seasons of the year
Changes of dish were ordered to appear.
He kept fat partridges in coops, beyond,
Many a bream and pike were in his pond.
Woe to the cook unless the sauce was hot
And sharp, or if he wasn't on the spot!
And in his hall a table stood arrayed
And ready all day long, with places laid.
As Justice at the Sessions none stood higher;
He often had been Member for the Shire.
A dagger and a little purse of silk
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
As Sheriff he checked audit, every entry.
He was a model among landed gentry.

A *Haberdasher,* a *Dyer,* a *Carpenter,*
A *Weaver* and a *Carpet-maker* were
Among our ranks, all in the livery
Of one impressive guild-fraternity.
They were so trim and fresh their gear would pass
For new. Their knives were not tricked out with brass
But wrought with purest silver, which avouches
A like display on girdles and on pouches.
Each seemed a worthy burgess, fit to grace
A guild-hall with a seat upon the dais.
Their wisdom would have justified a plan
To make each one of them an alderman;
They had the capital and revenue,
Besides their wives declared it was their due.
And if they did not think so, then they ought;
To be called *"Madam"* is a glorious thought,
And so is going to church and being seen
Having your mantle carried, like a queen.

They had a *Cook* with them who stood alone
For boiling chicken with a marrow-bone,
Sharp flavoring-powder and a spice for savor.
He could distinguish London ale by flavor,
And he could roast and seethe and broil and fry,
Make good thick soup and bake a tasty pie.
But what a pity—so it seemed to me,
That he should have an ulcer on his knee.
As for blancmange, he made it with the best.

There was a *Skipper* hailing from far west;
He came from Dartmouth, so I understood.

365 Sessions: local court proceedings.

366 Member for the Shire: his county's representative in Parliament.

368 girdle: belt.

369 Sheriff: a royal tax collector.

370 landed gentry (jĕn'trē): well-born, wealthy landowners.

371 Haberdasher: a seller of hats and other clothing accessories.

373–374 livery . . . guild-fraternity: uniform of a social or religious organization.

379 burgess (bûr'jĭs): citizen of a town.

382 alderman: town councilor.

388 mantle: cloak.

397 blancmange (blə-mänj'): a thick chicken stew with almonds.

399 Dartmouth (därt'məth): a port in southwestern England.

He rode a farmer's horse as best he could,
In a woolen gown that reached his knee.
A dagger on a lanyard falling free
Hung from his neck under his arm and down.
The summer heat had tanned his color brown,
And certainly he was an excellent fellow.
Many a draft of vintage, red and yellow,
He'd drawn at Bordeaux, while the trader snored.
The nicer rules of conscience he ignored.
If, when he fought, the enemy vessel sank,
He sent his prisoners home; they walked the plank.
As for his skill in reckoning his tides,
Currents and many another risk besides,
Moons, harbors, pilots, he had such dispatch
That none from Hull to Carthage was his match.
Hardy he was, prudent in undertaking;
His beard in many a tempest had its shaking,
And he knew all the havens as they were
From Gottland to the Cape of Finisterre,
And every creek in Brittany and Spain;
The barge he owned was called *The Maudelayne.*

A *Doctor* too emerged as we proceeded;
No one alive could talk as well as he did
On points of medicine and of surgery,
For, being grounded in astronomy,
He watched his patient closely for the hours
When, by his horoscope, he knew the powers
Of favorable planets, then ascendant,
Worked on the images for his dependent.
The cause of every **malady** you'd got
He knew, and whether dry, cold, moist or hot;
He knew their seat, their humor and condition.
He was a perfect practicing physician.
These causes being known for what they were,
He gave the man his medicine then and there.
All his apothecaries in a tribe
Were ready with the drugs he would prescribe
And each made money from the other's guile;
They had been friendly for a goodish while.
He was well-versed in Aesculapius too
And what Hippocrates and Rufus knew
And Dioscorides, now dead and gone,
Galen and Rhazes, Hali, Serapion,
Averroes, Avicenna, Constantine,
Scotch Bernard, John of Gaddesden, Gilbertine.

402 lanyard (lăn′yərd): a cord worn as a necklace.

406 vintage: wine.

407 Bordeaux (bôr-dō′): a region of France famous for its wine.

414 Hull . . . Carthage: ports in England and in Spain. The places named in lines 414–419 show that the Skipper is familiar with all the western coast of Europe.

416 tempest: violent storm.

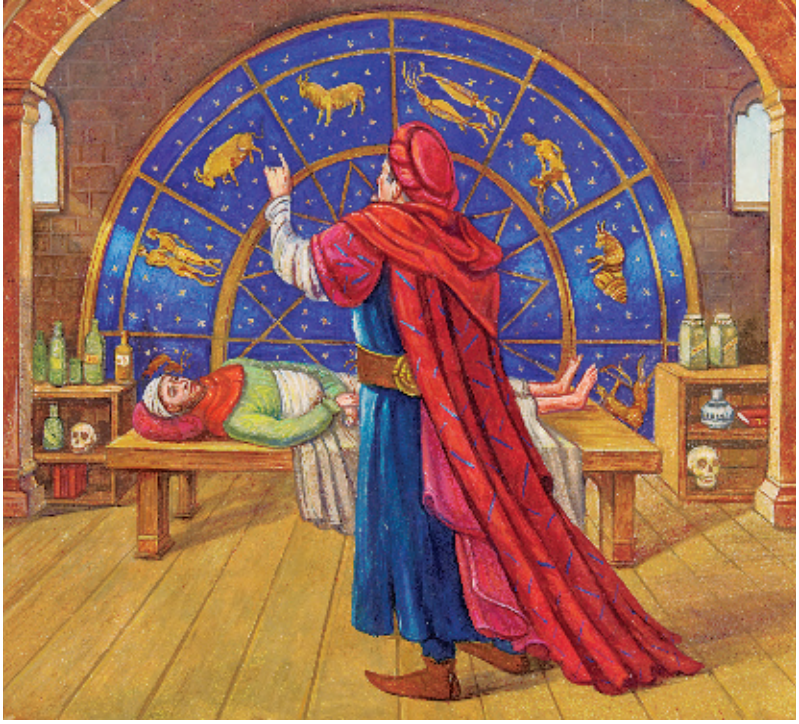
424 astronomy: astrology.

malady (măl′ə-dē) *n.* a disease or disorder; an ailment

430 dry, cold, moist . . . hot: in medieval science, the four basic qualities that were thought to combine to form both the four elements of the world (fire, air, water, and earth) and the four humors of the human body.

435 apothecaries (ə-pŏth′ĭ-kĕr′ēz): druggists.

439–444 Aesculapius (ĕs′kyə-lā′pē-əs) **. . . Gilbertine:** famous ancient and medieval medical experts.



Analyze Visuals
What does this image reveal about the ways in which a medieval doctor's practice differed from that of a modern doctor?

In his own diet he observed some measure;
There were no superfluities for pleasure,
Only digestives, nutritives and such.
He did not read the Bible very much.
In blood-red garments, slashed with bluish grey
And lined with taffeta, he rode his way;
Yet he was rather close as to expenses
And kept the gold he won in pestilences.
Gold stimulates the heart, or so we're told.
He therefore had a special love of gold.

A worthy *woman* from beside *Bath* city
Was with us, somewhat deaf, which was a pity.
In making cloth she showed so great a bent
She bettered those of Ypres and of Ghent.
In all the parish not a dame dared stir
Towards the altar steps in front of her,
And if indeed they did, so wrath was she
As to be quite put out of charity.
Her kerchiefs were of finely woven ground;
I dared have sworn they weighed a good ten pound,
The ones she wore on Sunday, on her head.
Her hose were of the finest scarlet red
And gartered tight; her shoes were soft and new.
Bold was her face, handsome, and red in hue.
A worthy woman all her life, what's more
She'd had five husbands, all at the church door,
Apart from other company in youth;
No need just now to speak of that, forsooth.

446 superfluities (sōō′pər-flōō′ĭ-tēz): excesses.

450 taffeta (tăf′ĭ-tə): a stiff, smooth fabric.

452 pestilences: plagues.

455 Bath: a city in southwestern England.

458 Ypres (ē′prə) **. . . Ghent** (gĕnt): Flemish cities famous in the Middle Ages for manufacturing fine wool fabrics.

461 wrath (răth): angry.

463 ground: a textured fabric.

466 hose: stockings.

470 all at the church door: In medieval times, a marriage was performed outside or just within the doors of a church; afterwards, the marriage party went inside for mass.

472 forsooth: in truth; indeed.

And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,
Seen many strange rivers and passed over them;
She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne,
St. James of Compostella and Cologne,
And she was skilled in wandering by the way.
She had gap-teeth, set widely, truth to say.
Easily on an ambling horse she sat
Well wimpled up, and on her head a hat
As broad as is a buckler or a shield;
She had a flowing mantle that concealed
Large hips, her heels spurred sharply under that.
In company she liked to laugh and chat
And knew the remedies for love's mischances,
An art in which she knew the oldest dances. J

A holy-minded man of good renown
There was, and poor, the *Parson* to a town,
Yet he was rich in holy thought and work.
He also was a learned man, a clerk,
Who truly knew Christ's gospel and would preach it
Devoutly to parishioners, and teach it.
Benign and wonderfully diligent,
And patient when adversity was sent
(For so he proved in much adversity)
He hated cursing to extort a fee,
Nay rather he preferred beyond a doubt
Giving to poor parishioners round about
Both from church offerings and his property;
He could in little find sufficiency.
Wide was his parish, with houses far asunder,
Yet he neglected not in rain or thunder,
In sickness or in grief, to pay a call
On the remotest, whether great or small,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a stave.
This noble example to his sheep he gave
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught;
And it was from the Gospel he had caught
Those words, and he would add this figure too,
That if gold rust, what then will iron do?
For if a priest be foul in whom we trust
No wonder that a common man should rust;
And shame it is to see—let priests take stock—
A shitten shepherd and a snowy flock.
The true example that a priest should give
Is one of cleanness, how the sheep should live.

473–476 Jerusalem . . . Rome . . . Boulogne (bo͞o-lo͞n′)**, St. James of Compostella and Cologne** (kə-lōn′): popular destinations of religious pilgrimages in the Middle Ages.

480 wimpled: with her hair and neck covered by a cloth headdress.

481 buckler: small round shield.

J CHARACTERIZATION
Reread lines 455–486. Which details help define the Wife of Bath as a worldly woman?

490 clerk: scholar.

500 sufficiency: enough to get by on.

501 asunder: apart.

505 stave: staff.

507 wrought (rôt): worked.

509 figure: figure of speech.

He did not set his benefice to hire
And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire
Or run to London to earn easy bread
By singing masses for the wealthy dead,
Or find some Brotherhood and get enrolled.
He stayed at home and watched over his fold
So that no wolf should make the sheep miscarry.
He was a shepherd and no mercenary. K
Holy and virtuous he was, but then
Never contemptuous of sinful men,
Never disdainful, never too proud or fine,
But was discreet in teaching and benign.
His business was to show a fair behavior
And draw men thus to Heaven and their Savior,
Unless indeed a man were obstinate;
And such, whether of high or low estate,
He put to sharp rebuke, to say the least.
I think there never was a better priest.
He sought no pomp or glory in his dealings,
No scrupulosity had spiced his feelings.
Christ and His Twelve Apostles and their lore
He taught, but followed it himself before.

There was a *Plowman* with him there, his brother;
Many a load of dung one time or other
He must have carted through the morning dew.
He was an honest worker, good and true,
Living in peace and perfect charity,
And, as the gospel bade him, so did he,
Loving God best with all his heart and mind
And then his neighbor as himself, repined
At no misfortune, slacked for no content,
For steadily about his work he went
To thrash his corn, to dig or to manure
Or make a ditch; and he would help the poor L
For love of Christ and never take a penny
If he could help it, and, as prompt as any,
He paid his tithes in full when they were due
On what he owned, and on his earnings too.
He wore a tabard smock and rode a mare.

There was a *Reeve,* also a *Miller,* there,
A College *Manciple* from the Inns of Court,
A papal *Pardoner* and, in close consort,

517 set his benefice (bĕn′ə-fĭs) **to hire:** pay someone to perform his parish duties for him.

K PARAPHRASE
Restate lines 515–524. In what ways does the Parson serve the members of his parish?

536 scrupulosity (skro͞o′pyə-lŏs′ĭ-tē): excessive concern with fine points of behavior.

L CHARACTERIZATION
Compare the Plowman with his brother, the Parson. What character traits do they seem to share?

555 tabard smock: a short loose jacket made of a heavy material.
556 Reeve: an estate manager; **557 Manciple:** a servant in charge of purchasing food; **Inns of Court:** London institutions for training law students; **558 Pardoner:** a church official authorized to sell people pardons for their sins.

A Church-Court *Summoner,* riding at a trot,
And finally myself—that was the lot.

The *Miller* was a chap of sixteen stone,
A great stout fellow big in brawn and bone.
He did well out of them, for he could go
And win the ram at any wrestling show.
Broad, knotty and short-shouldered, he would boast
He could heave any door off hinge and post,
Or take a run and break it with his head.
His beard, like any sow or fox, was red
And broad as well, as though it were a spade;
And, at its very tip, his nose displayed
A wart on which there stood a tuft of hair
Red as the bristles in an old sow's ear.
His nostrils were as black as they were wide.
He had a sword and buckler at his side,
His mighty mouth was like a furnace door.
A wrangler and buffoon, he had a store
Of tavern stories, filthy in the main.
His was a master-hand at stealing grain.
He felt it with his thumb and thus he knew
Its quality and took three times his due—
A thumb of gold, by God, to gauge an oat!
He wore a hood of blue and a white coat.
He liked to play his bagpipes up and down
And that was how he brought us out of town.

The *Manciple* came from the Inner Temple;
All caterers might follow his example
In buying victuals; he was never rash
Whether he bought on credit or paid cash.
He used to watch the market most precisely
And got in first, and so he did quite nicely.
Now isn't it a marvel of God's grace
That an illiterate fellow can outpace
The wisdom of a heap of learned men?
His masters—he had more than thirty then—
All versed in the abstrusest legal knowledge,
Could have produced a dozen from their College
Fit to be stewards in land and rents and game
To any Peer in England you could name,
And show him how to live on what he had
Debt-free (unless of course the Peer were mad)
Or be as frugal as he might desire,
And make them fit to help about the Shire

559 Summoner: a layman with the job of summoning sinners to church courts.

561 stone: a unit of weight equal to 14 pounds.

GRAMMAR AND STYLE
Review lines 570–575. Notice how Chaucer uses **similes,** or comparisons, to create a remarkably vivid—and unflattering—portrait of the Miller.

576 wrangler (răng′glər): a loud, argumentative person; **buffoon** (bə-fo͞on′): a fool.

577 in the main: for the most part.

581 thumb of gold: a reference to a proverb, "An honest miller has a golden thumb"—perhaps meaning that there is no such thing as an honest miller.

585 Inner Temple: one of the Inns of Court.

594 his masters: the lawyers that the Manciple feeds.

595 abstrusest: most scholarly and difficult to understand.

597–598 stewards . . . Peer: estate managers for any nobleman.

In any legal case there was to try;
And yet this Manciple could wipe their eye.

604 wipe their eye: outdo them.

The *Reeve* was old and choleric and thin;
His beard was shaven closely to the skin,
His shorn hair came abruptly to a stop
Above his ears, and he was docked on top
Just like a priest in front; his legs were lean,
Like sticks they were, no calf was to be seen.
He kept his bins and garners very trim;
No auditor could gain a point on him.
And he could judge by watching drought and rain
The yield he might expect from seed and grain.
His master's sheep, his animals and hens,
Pigs, horses, dairies, stores and cattle-pens
Were wholly trusted to his government.
He had been under contract to present
The accounts, right from his master's earliest years.
No one had ever caught him in arrears.
No bailiff, serf or herdsman dared to kick,
He knew their dodges, knew their every trick;
Feared like the plague he was, by those beneath.
He had a lovely dwelling on a heath,
Shadowed in green by trees above the sward.
A better hand at bargains than his lord,

605 choleric (kŏl′ə-rĭk): having a temperament in which yellow bile predominates, and therefore prone to outbursts of anger.

608 docked: clipped short.

611 garners: buildings for storing grain.

617 government: authority.

620 in arrears: with unpaid debts.

621 bailiff: farm manager; **serf:** farm laborer.

625 sward: grassy plot.

He had grown rich and had a store of treasure
Well tucked away, yet out it came to pleasure
His lord with subtle loans or gifts of goods,
To earn his thanks and even coats and hoods.
When young he'd learnt a useful trade and still
He was a carpenter of first-rate skill.
The stallion-cob he rode at a slow trot
Was dapple-grey and bore the name of Scot.
He wore an overcoat of bluish shade
And rather long; he had a rusty blade
Slung at his side. He came, as I heard tell,
From Norfolk, near a place called Baldeswell.
His coat was tucked under his belt and splayed.
He rode the hindmost of our cavalcade.

There was a *Summoner* with us at that Inn,
His face on fire, like a cherubin,
For he had carbuncles. His eyes were narrow,
He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow.
Black scabby brows he had, and a thin beard.
Children were afraid when he appeared.
No quicksilver, lead ointment, tartar creams,
No brimstone, no boracic, so it seems,
Could make a salve that had the power to bite,
Clean up or cure his whelks of knobby white
Or purge the pimples sitting on his cheeks.
Garlic he loved, and onions too, and leeks,
And drinking strong red wine till all was hazy.
Then he would shout and jabber as if crazy,
And wouldn't speak a word except in Latin
When he was drunk, such tags as he was pat in;
He only had a few, say two or three,
That he had mugged up out of some decree;
No wonder, for he heard them every day.
And, as you know, a man can teach a jay
To call out "Walter" better than the Pope.
But had you tried to test his wits and grope
For more, you'd have found nothing in the bag.
Then *"Questio quid juris"* was his tag.
He was a noble varlet and a kind one,
You'd meet none better if you went to find one.
Why, he'd allow—just for a quart of wine—
Any good lad to keep a concubine
A twelvemonth and dispense him altogether!
And he had finches of his own to feather:
And if he found some rascal with a maid

633 stallion-cob: a thickset, short-legged male horse.

638 Norfolk (nôr′fək): a county in eastern England.

642 cherubin (chĕr′ə-bĭn′): a type of angel—in the Middle Ages often depicted with a fiery red face.

643 carbuncles (kär′bŭng′kəlz): big pimples, considered a sign of lechery and drunkenness in the Middle Ages.

647–648 quicksilver . . . boracic (bə-răs′ĭk)**:** substances used as skin medicines in medieval times.

650 whelks (hwĕlks): swellings.

656 tags: brief quotations.

658 mugged up: memorized.

660 jay: a bird that can be taught to mimic human speech without understanding it.

664 *Questio quid juris* (kwĕs′tē-ō kwĭd yo͝or′ĭs): Latin for "The question is, What part of the law (is applicable)?"—a statement often heard in medieval courts.

He would instruct him not to be afraid
In such a case of the Archdeacon's curse
(Unless the rascal's soul were in his purse)
For in his purse the punishment should be.
"Purse is the good Archdeacon's Hell," said he.
But well I know he lied in what he said;
A curse should put a guilty man in dread,
For curses kill, as shriving brings, salvation.
We should beware of excommunication.
Thus, as he pleased, the man could bring duress
On any young fellow in the diocese.
He knew their secrets, they did what he said.
He wore a garland set upon his head
Large as the holly-bush upon a stake
Outside an ale-house, and he had a cake,
A round one, which it was his joke to wield
As if it were intended for a shield.

He and a gentle *Pardoner* rode together,
A bird from Charing Cross of the same feather,
Just back from visiting the Court of Rome.
He loudly sang, *"Come hither, love, come home!"*
The Summoner sang deep seconds to this song,
No trumpet ever sounded half so strong.
This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,
Hanging down smoothly like a hank of flax.
In driblets fell his locks behind his head
Down to his shoulders which they overspread;
Thinly they fell, like rat-tails, one by one.
He wore no hood upon his head, for fun;
The hood inside his wallet had been stowed,
He aimed at riding in the latest mode;
But for a little cap his head was bare
And he had bulging eye-balls, like a hare.
He'd sewed a holy relic on his cap;
His wallet lay before him on his lap,
Brimful of pardons come from Rome, all hot.
He had the same small voice a goat has got.
His chin no beard had harbored, nor would harbor,
Smoother than ever chin was left by barber.
I judge he was a gelding, or a mare.
As to his trade, from Berwick down to Ware
There was no pardoner of equal grace,
For in his trunk he had a pillow-case
Which he asserted was Our Lady's veil.

673 Archdeacon's curse: excommunication—an official exclusion of a person from participating in the rites of the church. (An archdeacon is a high church official.)

681 duress (dŏŏ-rĕs′): compulsion by means of threats.

682 diocese (dī′ə-sĭs): the district under a bishop's supervision.

685–686 the holly-bush . . . ale-house: Since few people could read in the Middle Ages, many businesses identified themselves with symbols. Outside many taverns could be found wreaths of holly on stakes.

690 Charing Cross: a section of London.

696 flax: a pale grayish yellow fiber used for making linen cloth.

701 wallet: knapsack.

705 holy relic: an object revered because of its association with a holy person.

711 gelding (gĕl′dĭng): a castrated horse—here, a eunuch.

712 Berwick (bĕr′ĭk) **. . . Ware:** towns in the north and the south of England.

715 Our Lady's veil: the kerchief of the Virgin Mary.

He said he had a gobbet of the sail
Saint Peter had the time when he made bold
To walk the waves, till Jesu Christ took hold.
He had a cross of metal set with stones
And, in a glass, a rubble of pigs' bones.
And with these relics, any time he found
Some poor up-country parson to astound,
In one short day, in money down, he drew
More than the parson in a month or two,
And by his flatteries and prevarication
Made monkeys of the priest and congregation.
But still to do him justice first and last
In church he was a noble ecclesiast.
How well he read a lesson or told a story!
But best of all he sang an Offertory,
For well he knew that when that song was sung
He'd have to preach and tune his honey-tongue
And (well he could) win silver from the crowd.
That's why he sang so merrily and loud.

Now I have told you shortly, in a clause,
The rank, the array, the number and the cause
Of our assembly in this company
In Southwark, at that high-class hostelry
Known as *The Tabard,* close beside *The Bell.*
And now the time has come for me to tell
How we behaved that evening; I'll begin
After we had alighted at the Inn,
Then I'll report our journey, stage by stage,
All the remainder of our pilgrimage.
But first I beg of you, in courtesy,
Not to condemn me as unmannerly
If I speak plainly and with no concealings
And give account of all their words and dealings,
Using their very phrases as they fell.
For certainly, as you all know so well,
He who repeats a tale after a man
Is bound to say, as nearly as he can,
Each single word, if he remembers it,
However rudely spoken or unfit,
Or else the tale he tells will be untrue,
The things pretended and the phrases new.
He may not flinch although it were his brother,
He may as well say one word as another.
And Christ Himself spoke broad in Holy Writ,
Yet there is no scurrility in it,

716 gobbet: piece.

717–718 when he . . . took hold: a reference to an incident in which Jesus extended a helping hand to Peter as he tried to walk on water (Matthew 14:29–31).

N PARAPHRASE
Paraphrase the description of the Pardoner in lines 712–726. How exactly does he earn a living?

739 The Bell: another inn.

745–756 The narrator apologizes in advance for using the exact words of his companions.

759 broad: bluntly; plainly.

760 scurrility (skə-rĭl′ĭ-tē): vulgarity; coarseness.

And Plato says, for those with power to read,
"The word should be as cousin to the deed."
Further I beg you to forgive it me
If I neglect the order and degree
And what is due to rank in what I've planned.
I'm short of wit as you will understand.

761 Plato (plā′tō): a famous philosopher of ancient Greece.

Our *Host* gave us great welcome; everyone
Was given a place and supper was begun.
He served the finest victuals you could think,
The wine was strong and we were glad to drink.
A very striking man our Host withal,
And fit to be a marshal in a hall.
His eyes were bright, his girth a little wide;
There is no finer burgess in Cheapside.
Bold in his speech, yet wise and full of tact,
There was no manly attribute he lacked,
What's more he was a merry-hearted man.
After our meal he jokingly began
To talk of sport, and, among other things
After we'd settled up our reckonings,
He said as follows: "Truly, gentlemen,
You're very welcome and I can't think when
—Upon my word I'm telling you no lie—
I've seen a gathering here that looked so spry,
No, not this year, as in this tavern now.
I'd think you up some fun if I knew how.
And, as it happens, a thought has just occurred

767 Host: the innkeeper of the Tabard.

772 marshal in a hall: an official in charge of arranging a nobleman's banquet.

774 Cheapside: the main business district of London in Chaucer's day.

780 settled up our reckonings: paid our bills.

To please you, costing nothing, on my word.
You're off to Canterbury—well, God speed!
Blessed St. Thomas answer to your need!
And I don't doubt, before the journey's done
You mean to while the time in tales and fun.
Indeed, there's little pleasure for your bones
Riding along and all as dumb as stones.
So let me then propose for your enjoyment,
Just as I said, a suitable employment.
And if my notion suits and you agree
And promise to submit yourselves to me
Playing your parts exactly as I say
Tomorrow as you ride along the way,
Then by my father's soul (and he is dead)
If you don't like it you can have my head!
Hold up your hands, and not another word."

Well, our opinion was not long deferred,
It seemed not worth a serious debate;
We all agreed to it at any rate
And bade him issue what commands he would.
"My lords," he said, "now listen for your good,
And please don't treat my notion with disdain.
This is the point. I'll make it short and plain.
Each one of you shall help to make things slip
By telling two stories on the outward trip
To Canterbury, that's what I intend,
And, on the homeward way to journey's end
Another two, tales from the days of old;
And then the man whose story is best told,
That is to say who gives the fullest measure
Of good morality and general pleasure,
He shall be given a supper, paid by all,
Here in this tavern, in this very hall,
When we come back again from Canterbury.
And in the hope to keep you bright and merry
I'll go along with you myself and ride
All at my own expense and serve as guide.
I'll be the judge, and those who won't obey
Shall pay for what we spend upon the way.
Now if you all agree to what you've heard
Tell me at once without another word,
And I will make arrangements early for it."

790 St. Thomas: St. Thomas à Becket, to whose shrine the pilgrims are traveling.

794 dumb: silent.

Language Coach

Multiple Meanings *Submit* has several meanings: (1) to yield to someone else's power, (2) to present for review, (3) to present as an opinion. Which meaning applies in line 798? Which meaning applies in this sentence? *I will submit my article to the school newspaper.*

807 bade him: asked him to.

TEKS 3

TONE

In literature, **tone** refers to the attitude a writer takes toward a subject or character. A writer can communicate tone through diction, choice of details, and direct statements of his or her opinion. Tone can be serious, playful, admiring, mocking, or objective. How would you describe Chaucer's tone toward his characters throughout "The Prologue"? Why do you think he portrays his characters this way?

Of course we all agreed, in fact we swore it
Delightedly, and made **entreaty** too
That he should act as he proposed to do,
Become our Governor in short, and be
Judge of our tales and general referee,
And set the supper at a certain price.
We promised to be ruled by his advice
Come high, come low; unanimously thus
We set him up in judgment over us.
More wine was fetched, the business being done;
We drank it off and up went everyone
To bed without a moment of delay. P

Early next morning at the spring of day
Up rose our Host and roused us like a cock,
Gathering us together in a flock,
And off we rode at slightly faster pace
Than walking to St. Thomas' watering-place;
And there our Host drew up, began to ease
His horse, and said, "Now, listen if you please,
My lords! Remember what you promised me.
If evensong and matins will agree
Let's see who shall be first to tell a tale.
And as I hope to drink good wine and ale
I'll be your judge. The rebel who disobeys,
However much the journey costs, he pays.
Now draw for cut and then we can depart;
The man who draws the shortest cut shall start."

entreaty (ĕn-trē′tē) *n.* a serious request or plea

P CHARACTERIZATION
Examine the way the pilgrims respond to the Host in lines 830–841. What type of person do you think would appeal to so many?

843 cock: rooster (whose cry rouses people from sleep).

846 St. Thomas' watering-place: a brook about two miles from London.

850 If evensong and matins (măt′nz) **will agree:** if what you said last night is what you will do this morning. (Evensong and matins are evening and morning prayer services.)

855 draw for cut: draw lots.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** When and where does "The Prologue" take place?
2. **Recall** What event or circumstance causes the characters to gather?
3. **Summarize** What plan does the Host propose to the characters?

WRITING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.

Literary Analysis

4. **Analyze Characterization** Throughout the selection, Chaucer uses physical details—eyes, hair, clothing—to help develop his **characters.** Choose three pilgrims and describe how their outward appearances reflect their personalities.
5. **Identify Irony** Much of the humor of "The Prologue" is based on irony, the discrepancy between what appears to be true and what actually is true. Explain the irony in each of the following character portraits:
   - the Nun Prioress
   - the Merchant
   - the Skipper
   - the Doctor
6. **Draw Conclusions** Review what you **paraphrased** as you read the selection. Describe the narrator's personality and values.
7. **Examine Satire** A writer who pokes fun at behaviors and customs with the intent of improving society is creating **satire**. Review the descriptions of the Monk and the Friar in lines 169–279. What aspects of the medieval church does Chaucer satirize through these characters?
8. **Interpret Tone** In literature, **tone** refers to the attitude a writer takes toward a subject or character. Tone can be serious, playful, admiring, mocking, or objective. Review lines 455–486. What is Chaucer's tone toward the Wife of Bath? Cite specific words and phrases to support your answer.

Literary Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** In 1809, the English poet and artist William Blake made the following observation: "Chaucer's pilgrims are the characters which compose all ages and nations. . . . Some of the names or titles are altered by time, but the characters themselves forever remain unaltered." Do you agree or disagree that Chaucer's characters seem timeless and universal? Support your opinion with details from the text and your own experiences.

What makes a great CHARACTER?

Which of Chaucer's characters do you like best? Which character traits make this character appealing to you?

Vocabulary in Context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Use the details from "The Prologue" and your understanding of the boldfaced words to help you choose the answer to each question.

1. Which of these characters shows the most **courtliness?**
2. Which of these characters seems the most **personable?**
3. What does the Doctor believe can cause a **malady?**
4. Which of these characters tries the most to behave **sedately?**
5. Which character has seen money **accrue** in his savings?
6. To whom do the pilgrims make an **entreaty** about judging the story contest?

WORD LIST

accrue
courtliness
entreaty
malady
personable
sedately

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• concept • culture • parallel • section • structure

Chaucer characters embody abstract **concepts** like greed and vanity, yet remain fully-realized, three-dimesional characters. Using at least two additional Academic Vocabulary words, write about how the **structure** of "The Prologue" allows Chaucer to give such a complete picture of the pilgrims.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: WORDS FROM FRENCH

French has contributed words to English since the French-speaking Normans invaded England in 1066. A huge number of our "Latin" words actually come from Latin by way of Old French. Knowing the French origins of a word can help you understand its meanings. For example, knowing that *parley* comes from the French *parler,* which means "to speak," will tell you that a *parley* is a conference.

PRACTICE Based on the word list to the right and the following word bank, respond each item below:

• malady • personable • entreaty • court • accrue

1. The words *accretion* and _____ both contain the core meaning of the Old French word *acreu*. What is that core meaning? _____
2. The core meaning of the English word _____ can be found in the Old French word for "sick." What is that word? _____
3. If the Normans had not invaded England in 1066, we might not say a friendly individual is _____.
4. Although it did not survive into Modern French, the Old French word *entraiter* survives in English in the form of _____.

READING 1A Determine the meaning of technical academic English words in multiple content areas derived from Latin or other linguistic roots. **1D** Analyze and explain how the English language has developed and been influenced by other languages.

Old French Root	Original Meaning
acreu	increased
entraiter	to deal with, beseech
malade	sick
persone	person

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BEFORE YOU READ

from *Don Quixote*

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MEET MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

Little is known about Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's early years and education except that he was the son of a doctor. When he was twenty-one, Cervantes went to Italy to work for a cardinal. By 1570 he enlisted in the Spanish army regiment stationed in Rome, and the following year, he fought against the Turks in the Lepanto naval battle. Though ill with a fever, Cervantes fought bravely and his personal courage was noted. He sustained several wounds, one of which rendered his left hand permanently useless. Nonetheless, he remained with the army and fought in several other battles. While returning to Spain in 1576, Barbary pirates captured his ship, and Cervantes and his brother were sold into slavery in Algiers. Even as a slave, Cervantes gained a reputation for courage and leadership, and mounted several attempts to escape. In 1580 Cervantes's family finally managed to buy his freedom, but the price ruined his family's finances.

Struggles to Find Work Once back in Spain, Cervantes struggled with his desire to write and the necessity of making a living; he finally obtained a short-lived position as royal messenger to Algeria in 1581. During this time, Cervantes's only child, Isabel de Saavedra, was born and raised in his household.

In 1585 Cervantes published his first work, *La Galatea*, a pastoral romance written in both prose and verse. In later years, Cervantes claimed to have written more than twenty plays during this time (1582–1587), although only two survive: *La Numancia* (a historical tragedy), and *El trato de Argel (The Traffic of Algiers).* He once noted that these plays were received by audiences without "booing" or pelting the actors with vegetables. Cervantes's literary career languished, and he finally decided to find other, more consistent work.

Cervantes was hired as a purchasing agent for the Spanish Armada. However, accounting errors landed him in trouble with his superiors, municipal authorities, and the church, which excommunicated him several times. Cervantes started writing short stories, but his earlier accounting troubles caught up with him, and he was jailed until April 1598.

> *"It can be said that all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of* Don Quixote."
>
> —Lionel Trilling

Publishing Success In 1605 Cervantes published Part I of *Don Quixote.* The titular character is an idealistic gentleman devoted to reading chivalric romances. He decides to become a knight-errant, and sets off in search of adventure with his squire Sancho Panza. Readers responded enthusiastically, and Cervantes finally achieved literary success.

Over the next decade or so, Cervantes wrote several other works of fiction. But none surpassed the creation of Don Quixote, one of the world's most beloved and enduring literary figures.

Miguel de Cervantes was born in 1547 and died in 1616.

LiteratureOnline **Author Search** For more about Miguel de Cervantes, go to www.glencoe.com.

LITERATURE PREVIEW

Connecting to the Story

The following excerpt from *Don Quixote* depicts an underdog, or someone who is not expected to succeed. Before you read the story, think about the following questions:

- Can you remember a time when you defied the odds? Explain.
- How do you generally feel about an underdog in a given situation?

Building Background

Cervantes published the novel *Don Quixote* in two parts, the first in 1605 and the final in 1615. The excerpt included here is just a fraction of the entire work, which, in some English translations, spans over one thousand pages.

Don Quixote discusses two sharply different perspectives of the world: idealism (envisioning things in an ideal form) and realism (envisioning things as they actually are). The work can be appreciated as a satire of idealism in an imperfect and often corrupt world. *Don Quixote* also highlights the way illusion can transform. Its influence on the development of the modern novel is significant and global.

Setting Purposes for Reading

Big Idea Acts of Courage

As you read this excerpt, reflect on how Don Quixote is a hero in his own mind, and how this information is enough to render his acts courageous.

Literary Element Parody

A **parody** is a humorous imitation of a literary work that aims to illustrate the work's shortcomings. A parody may imitate the plot, characters, or style of another work, but usually exaggerates those characteristics. As you read, think about why this work is a parody of chivalry and stories about knights.

- See Literary Terms Handbook, p. R1

READING PREVIEW

Reading Strategy Evaluating Characters

When you **evaluate characters**, you make judgments or form opinions about them by paying close attention to their actions, statements, thoughts, and feelings. As you read this excerpt, notice how Cervantes provides details about the characters' personalities, physical attributes, and ways of thinking about life, particularly knightly life.

Reading Tip: Looking for Clues As you read, think about the clues the author gives about each character's personality. Some clues will be subtle, while others will be directly stated.

Vocabulary

interminable (in tur′ mi nə bəl) *adj.* having or seeming to have no end; p. 1012 *The students found the exam to be interminable.*

renown (ri noun′) *n.* a state of being widely acclaimed; p. 1012 *In the 1920s my aunt was a singer of worldwide renown.*

redress (ri dres′) *v.* to correct or compensate for wrong or loss; p. 1013 *The man felt there was no way to redress the tragic loss of his dog.*

discourteous (dis kur′ tē əs) *adj.* impolite; p. 1015 *The angry pedestrian was discourteous to the driver of the car that hit him.*

enmity (en′ mə tē) *n.* hatred or ill will; p. 1017 *The organization has enmity toward anyone who abuses animals.*

Vocabulary Tip: Synonyms Words that have the same or nearly the same meaning are called synonyms.

Interactive Literary Elements Handbook To review or learn more about the literary elements, go to www.glencoe.com.

OBJECTIVES
In studying this selection, you will focus on the following:
- understanding parody
- evaluating characters
- recognizing and analyzing foils
- writing to apply theme

Giraudon/Art Resource, NY

Don Quixote armed as a knight. Cristobal Valero. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

from DON QUIXOTE

Miguel de Cervantes
Translated by J. M. Cohen

Which treats of the quality and way of life of the famous knight Don Quixote de la Mancha.[1]

In a certain village in La Mancha,[1] which I do not wish to name, there lived not long ago a gentleman—one of those who have always a lance in the rack, an ancient shield, a lean hack[2] and a greyhound for coursing. His habitual diet consisted of a stew, more beef than mutton, of hash most nights, boiled bones on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, and a young pigeon as a Sunday treat; and on this he spent three-quarters of his income. The rest of it went on a fine cloth doublet,[3] velvet breeches and slippers for

1. *La Mancha* is a region in south-central Spain.

2. Unlike a warhorse or show horse, a *hack* is a horse used for transportation.

3. A *doublet* is a close-fitting jacket worn by men of this time.

holidays, and a homespun suit of the best in which he decked himself on weekdays. His household consisted of a housekeeper of rather more than forty, a niece not yet twenty, and a lad for the field and market, who saddled his horse and wielded the pruning hook.

Our gentleman was verging on fifty, of tough constitution, lean-bodied, thin-faced, a great early riser and a lover of hunting. They say that his surname was Quixada or Quesada—for there is some difference of opinion amongst authors on this point. However, by very reasonable conjecture we may take it that he was called Quexana. But this does not much concern our story; enough that we do not depart by so much as an inch from the truth in the telling of it.

The reader must know, then, that this gentleman, in the times when he had nothing to do—as was the case for most of the year—gave himself up to the reading of books of knight-errantry;[4] which he loved and enjoyed so much that he almost entirely forgot his hunting, and even the care of his estate. So odd and foolish, indeed, did he grow on this subject that he sold many acres of cornland to buy these books of chivalry[5] to read, and in this way brought home every one he could get. And of them all he considered none so good as the works of the famous Feliciano de Silva. For his brilliant style and those complicated sentences seemed to him very pearls, especially when he came upon those love passages and challenges frequently written in the manner of: "The reason for the unreason with which you treat my reason, so weakens my reason that with reason I complain of your beauty"; and also when he read: "The high heavens that with their stars divinely fortify you in your divinity and make you deserving of the desert that your greatness deserves."

These writings drove the poor knight out of his wits; and he passed sleepless nights trying to understand them and disentangle their meaning, though Aristotle[6] himself would never have unraveled or understood them, even if he had been resurrected for that sole purpose. He did not much like the wounds that Sir Belianis gave and received, for he imagined that his face and his whole body must have been covered with scars and marks, however skillful the surgeons who tended him. But, for all that, he admired the author for ending his book with the promise to continue with that **interminable** adventure, and often the desire seized him to take up the pen himself, and write the promised sequel for him. No doubt he would have done so, and perhaps successfully, if other greater and more persistent preoccupations had not prevented him.

In short, he so buried himself in his books that he spent the nights reading from twilight till daybreak and the days from dawn till dark; and so from little sleep and much reading, his brain dried up and he lost his wits. He filled his mind with all that he read in them, with enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, torments and other impossible nonsense; and so deeply did he steep his imagination in the belief that all the fanciful stuff he read was true, that to his mind no history in the world was more authentic. . . .

In fact, now that he had utterly wrecked his reason he fell into the strangest fancy that ever a madman had in the whole world. He thought it fit and proper, both in order to increase his **renown** and to serve the state, to turn knight-errant and travel through the

4. *Knights-errant* traveled about in search of adventure.
5. Medieval knights lived by a code of honorable behavior known as *chivalry*.

Reading Strategy Evaluating Characters *Do you think Don Quixote is behaving like a typical knight? Explain.*

6. The Greek philosopher *Aristotle* (384-322 BC) was considered to possess one of the greatest minds of the ancient world.

Literary Element Parody *What is Cervantes conveying about Don Quixote here?*

Vocabulary

interminable (in tur′ mi nə bəl) *adj.* having or seeming to have no end

renown (ri noun′) *n.* a state of being widely acclaimed

Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK/Bridgeman Art Library

Don Quixote in his Study, 1800–1868. George Cattermole, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

world with horse and armor in search of adventures, following in every way the practice of the knights-errant he had read of, **redressing** all manner of wrongs, and exposing himself to chances and dangers, by the overcoming of which he might win eternal honor and renown. Already the poor man fancied himself crowned by the valor of his arm, at least with the empire of Trebizond; and so, carried away by the strange pleasure he derived from these agreeable thoughts, he hastened to translate his desires into action.

The first thing that he did was to clean some armor which had belonged to his ancestors, and had lain for ages forgotten in a corner, eaten with rust and covered with mold. But when he had cleaned and repaired it as best he could, he found that there was one great defect: the helmet was a simple headpiece without a visor. So he ingeniously made good this deficiency by fashioning out of pieces of pasteboard a kind of half-visor which, fitted to the helmet, gave the appearance of a complete headpiece. However, to see if it was strong enough to stand up to the risk of a sword cut, he took out his sword and gave it two strokes, the first of which demolished in a moment what had taken him a week to make. He was not too pleased at the ease with which he had destroyed it, and to safeguard himself against this danger, reconstructed the visor, putting some strips of iron inside, in such a way as to satisfy himself of his protection; and, not caring to make another trial of it, he accepted it as a fine jointed headpiece and put it into commission.

Next he went to inspect his hack, but though, through leanness, he had more quarters than there are pence in a groat,[7] and more blemishes than Gonella's[8] horse, which was nothing but skin and bone, he appeared to our knight more than the equal of Alexander's Bucephalus and the Cid's Babieca.[9] He spent four days pondering what name to give him; for, he reflected, it would be wrong for the horse of so famous a knight, a horse so good in himself, to be without a famous name. Therefore he tried to fit him with one that would signify what he had been before his master turned knight-errant, and what he now was; for it was only right that as his master changed his profession, the horse should change his name for a sublime and high-sounding one, befitting the new order and the new calling he professed. So, after many names invented, struck out and rejected, amended, canceled and remade in his fanciful mind, he finally decided to call him Rocinante,[10] a name

Big Idea Acts of Courage *Do you think Don Quixote is ready to perform acts of courage? Explain.*

Vocabulary

redress (ri dres′) *v.* to correct or compensate for wrong or loss

7. The *groat*, an old coin, was worth four pence (four pennies). Don Quixote's horse was so bony that it appeared to have more than four quarters (the part of an animal's body that includes a leg).
8. Pietro *Gonella* was a famous court jester. He had a horse that was equally famous for being skinny.
9. *Bucephalus* was the favorite horse of Alexander the Great (356–323 BC). *Babieca* was the horse of El Cid (Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, 1040–1099), Spain's national hero.
10. *Rocinante* is a combination of two Spanish words: *rocín*, meaning "nag or old horse," and *ante*, meaning "before or first." Rocinante could be translated into English with several meanings: as "the first old horse," "premiere (and therefore best) old horse," or "former old horse."

Literary Element Parody *How is Cervantes parodying typical knight behavior with Don Quixote's behavior here?*

which seemed to him grand and sonorous, and to express the common horse he had been before arriving at his present state: the first and foremost of all hacks in the world.

Having found so pleasing a name for his horse, he next decided to do the same for himself, and spent another eight days thinking about it. Finally he resolved to call himself Don Quixote. And that is no doubt why the authors of this true history, as we have said, assumed that his name must have been Quixada and not Quesada, as other authorities would have it. Yet he remembered that the valorous Amadis had not been content with his bare name, but had added the name of his kingdom and native country in order to make it famous, and styled himself Amadis[11] of Gaul. So, like a good knight, he decided to add the name of his country to his own and call himself Don Quixote de la Mancha. Thus, he thought, he very clearly proclaimed his parentage and native land and honored it by taking his surname from it.

Now that his armor was clean, his helmet made into a complete headpiece, a name found for his horse, and he confirmed in his new title, it struck him that there was only one more thing to do: to find a lady to be enamored of. For a knight-errant without a lady is like a tree without leaves or fruit and a body without a soul. He said to himself again and again: "If I for my sins or by good luck were to meet with some giant hereabouts, as generally happens to knights-errant, and if I were to overthrow him in the encounter, or cut him down the middle or, in short, conquer him and make him surrender, would it not be well to have someone to whom I could send him as a present, so that he could enter and kneel down before my sweet lady and say in tones of humble submission: 'Lady, I am the giant Caraculiambro, lord of the island of Malindrania, whom the never-sufficiently-to-be-praised knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha, conquered in single combat and ordered to appear before your Grace, so that your Highness might dispose of me according to your will'?" Oh, how pleased our knight was when he had made up this speech, and even gladder when he found someone whom he could call his lady. It happened, it is believed, in this way: in a village near his there was a very good-looking farm girl, whom he had been taken with at one time, although she is supposed not to have known it or had proof of it. Her name was Aldonza Lorenzo, and she it was he thought fit to call the lady of his fancies; and, casting around for a name which should not be too far away from her own, yet suggest and imply a princess and great lady, he resolved to call her Dulcinea del Toboso—for she was a native of El Toboso—a name which seemed to him as musical, strange and significant as those others that he had devised for himself and his possessions.

In spite of the arguments of his family and friends, Don Quixote is determined to live out his dream. Most knights-errant in books were accompanied by a squire—a young man of noble birth aspiring to knighthood. Don Quixote's squire is slightly different. . . .

from Chapter VII

Of the Second Expedition of our good knight Don Quixote de la Mancha.

All this while Don Quixote was plying a laborer, a neighbor of his and an honest man—if a poor man may be called honest—but without much salt in his brainpan. In the end, he talked to him so much, persuaded him so hard and gave him such promises that the poor yokel[12] made up his mind to go

11. *Amadis* was the protagonist of the romance *Amadís de Gaula (Amadis of Gaul)*. *Amadís de Gaula* was the foremost chivalric romance, written in the late thirteenth century. The character Amadis was widely considered the ideal knight: the most handsome and courageous of all. *Amadís de Gaula* was the object of parody for much of *Don Quixote*.

12. *Yokel* describes a naïve or gullible inhabitant of a rural area or small town.

Big Idea Acts of Courage *What kind of person does Don Quixote choose as a squire? Is he a suitable choice? Why or why not?*

Don Quixote and Sancho, 19th century. Alexandre Gabriel Decamps. Oil on canvas.

out with him and serve him as squire. Don Quixote told him, amongst other things, that he ought to feel well disposed to come with him, for some time or another an adventure might occur that would win him in the twinkling of an eye some isle, of which he would leave him governor. These promises and others like them made Sancho Panza—for this was the laborer's name—leave his wife and children and take service as his neighbor's squire. Then Don Quixote set about raising money, and by selling one thing, pawning another, and making a bad bargain each time, he raised a reasonable sum. He also fixed himself up with a shield, which he borrowed from a friend, and patching up his broken helmet as best he could, he gave his squire Sancho notice of the day and the hour on which he proposed to set out, so that he should provide himself with all that was most needful; and he particularly told his squire to bring saddlebags. Sancho said that he would, and that he was also thinking of bringing a very fine donkey he had, for he was not too good at much traveling on foot. At the mention of the donkey Don Quixote hesitated a little, racking his brains to remember whether any knight-errant ever had a squire mounted on donkey back; but no case came to his memory. But, for all that, he decided to let him take it, intending to provide him with a more proper mount at the earliest opportunity by unhorsing the first **discourteous** knight he should meet. He provided himself also with shirts and everything else he could, following the advice which the innkeeper had given him. And when all this was arranged and done, without Panza saying good-bye to his wife and children, or Don Quixote taking leave of his housekeeper and niece, they departed from the village one evening, quite unobserved, and rode so far that night that at daybreak they thought they were safe, and that even if anyone came out to search for them they would not be found.

Sancho Panza rode on his donkey like a patriarch,[13] with his saddlebags and his leather bottle, and a great desire to see himself governor of the isle his master had promised him. It chanced that Don Quixote took the same route and struck the same track across the plain of Montiel as on his

13. A *patriarch* is the oldest and most respected male member of a family.

Reading Strategy Evaluating Characters *What do Panza's and Don Quixote's actions here tell you about them?*

Vocabulary

discourteous (dis kurʹ tē əs) *adj.* impolite

first expedition; but he traveled with less discomfort than before, as it was the hour of dawn, and the sun's rays, striking them obliquely, did not annoy them. . . .

from Chapter VIII

Of the valorous Don Quixote's success in the dreadful and never before imagined Adventure of the Windmills, with other events worthy of happy record.

At that moment they caught sight of some thirty or forty windmills, which stand on that plain, and as soon as Don Quixote saw them he said to his squire: "Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we could have wished. Look over there, friend Sancho Panza, where more than thirty monstrous giants appear. I intend to do battle with them and take all their lives. With their spoils we will begin to get rich, for this is a fair war, and it is a great service to God to wipe such a wicked brood from the face of the earth."

"What giants?" asked Sancho Panza.

Sancho Panza, 1839. Charles Robert Leslie.
Oil on panel, 12 x 9 in.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

"Those you see there," replied his master, "with their long arms. Some giants have them about six miles long."

"Take care, your worship," said Sancho; "those things over there are not giants but windmills, and what seem to be their arms are the sails, which are whirled round in the wind and make the millstone turn."

"It is quite clear," replied Don Quixote, "that you are not experienced in this matter of adventures. They are giants, and if you are afraid, go away and say your prayers, while I advance and engage them in fierce and unequal battle."

As he spoke, he dug his spurs into his steed Rocinante, paying not attention to his squire's shouted warning that beyond all doubt they were windmills and no giants he was advancing to attack. But he went on, so positive that they were giants that he neither listened to Sancho's cries nor noticed what they were, even when he got near them. Instead he went on shouting in a loud voice: "Do not fly, cowards, vile creatures, for it is one knight alone who assails you."

At that moment a slight wind arose, and the great sails began to move. At the sight of which Don Quixote shouted: "Though you wield more arms than the giant Briareus, you shall pay for it!" Saying this, he commended himself with all his soul to his Lady Dulcinea, beseeching her aid in his great peril. Then, covering himself with his shield and putting his lance in the rest, he urged Rocinante forward at a full gallop and attacked the nearest windmill, thrusting his lance into the sail. But the wind turned it with such violence that it shivered his weapon in pieces, dragging the horse and his rider with it, and sent the knight rolling badly injured across the plain. Sancho Panza rushed to his assistance as fast as his donkey could trot, but when he came up he found that the knight could not stir. Such a shock had Rocinante given him in their fall.

Big Idea **Acts of Courage** *Do you think Don Quixote is behaving courageously here or foolishly? Explain.*

"O my goodness!" cried Sancho. "Didn't I tell your worship to look what you were doing, for they were only windmills? Nobody could mistake them, unless he had windmills on the brain."

"Silence, friend Sancho," replied Don Quixote. "Matters of war are more subject than most to continual change. What is more, I think—and that is the truth—that the same sage Friston who robbed me of my room and my books has turned those giants into windmills, to cheat me of the glory of conquering them. Such is the **enmity** he bears me; but in the very end his black arts shall avail him little against the goodness of my sword."

"God send it as He will," replied Sancho Panza, helping the knight to get up and remount Rocinante, whose shoulders were half dislocated.

As they discussed this last adventure they followed the road to the pass of Lapice where, Don Quixote said, they could not fail to find many and various adventures, as many travelers passed that way. He was much concerned, however, at the loss of his lance, and, speaking of it to his squire, remarked: "I remember reading that a certain Spanish knight called Diego Perez de Vargas, having broken his sword in battle, tore a great bough or limb from an oak, and performed such deeds with it that day, and pounded so many Moors, that he earned the surname of the Pounder, and thus he and his descendants from that day onwards have been called Vargas y Machuca.[14] I mention this because I propose to tear down just such a limb from the first oak we meet, as big and as good as his; and I intend to do such deeds with it that you may consider yourself most fortunate to have won the right to see them. For you will witness things which will scarcely be credited."

"With God's help," replied Sancho, "and I believe it all as your worship says. But sit a bit more upright, sir, for you seem to be riding lopsided. It must be from the bruises you got when you fell."

"That is the truth," replied Don Quixote. "And if I do not complain of the pain, it is because a knight-errant is not allowed to complain of any wounds, even though his entrails[15] may be dropping out through them."

"If that's so, I have nothing more to say," said Sancho, "but God knows I should be glad if your worship would complain if anything hurt you. I must say, for my part, that I have to cry out at the slightest twinge, unless this business of not complaining extends to knights-errants' squires as well."

Don Quixote could not help smiling at his squire's simplicity,[16] and told him that he could certainly complain how and when he pleased, whether he had any cause or no, for up to that time he had never read anything to the contrary in the law of chivalry.

Sancho reminded him that it was time for dinner, but his master replied that he had need of none, but that his squire might eat whenever he pleased. With this permission Sancho settled himself as comfortably as he could on his donkey and, taking out what he had put into the saddlebags, jogged very leisurely along behind his master, eating all the while; and from time to time he raised the bottle with such relish that the best-fed publican[17] in Malaga might have envied him. Now, as he went along like this, taking repeated gulps, he entirely forgot the promise his master had made him, and reckoned that going in search of adventures, however dangerous, was more like pleasure than hard work. . . .

14. The name *Machuca* comes from the Spanish verb *machucar*, "to crush."

Literary Element Parody *How does this scene parody traditional tales of knighthood?*

Vocabulary

enmity (en′ mə tē) *n.* hatred or ill will

15. *Entrails* are internal organs, especially the intestines.
16. Here, *simplicity* means "innocence" or "silliness."
17. *Publican* is another term for innkeeper.

Reading Strategy Evaluating Characters *What characters traits does Don Quixote reveal here?*