

Topic Page: [Canterbury Tales](#)

Summary Article: **Canterbury Tales, The**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Unfinished collection of stories in prose and verse (c. 1387) by Geoffrey Chaucer, told in Middle English by a group of pilgrims on their way to Thomas à Becket's tomb at Canterbury. The tales and preludes are remarkable for their vivid character portrayal and colloquial language, and they were a major influence on the development of English literature.

Each of the thirty or so pilgrims was meant to tell two stories on the way, and two on the return journey. Though it comprises 17,000 lines of prose and verse, including prologues and epilogues, the 24 stories only constitute less than a fifth of the projected work, which was never put into any proper order. They range from the romance of the 'Knight's Tale' to the mock heroism of the 'Nun's Priest's Tale' (a lesson against vanity), the comedy of the 'Merchant's Tale', and the bawdy humour of the 'Miller's Tale'.

audios

Chaucer, Geoffrey The Canterbury Tales

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Canterbury tales, the. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/chaucer_geoffrey_d_1400_canterbury_tales



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