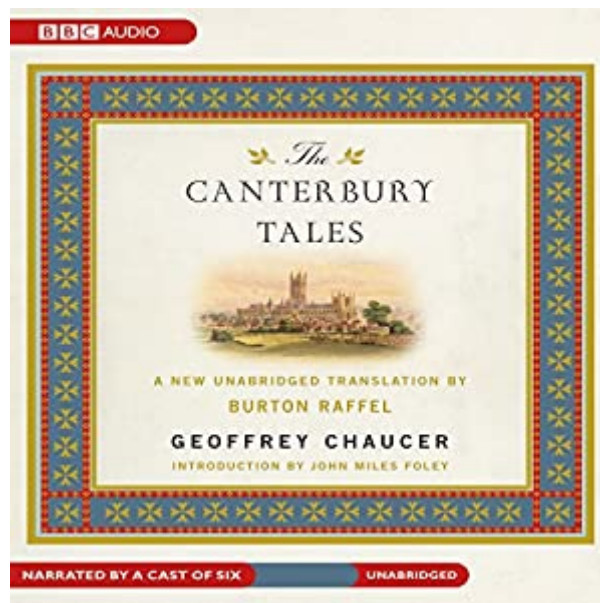




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# The Canterbury Tales: A New Unabridged Translation By Burton Raffel



## Synopsis

It would be impossible to overstate the influence of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. A work with one metaphorical foot planted in the Florentine Renaissance literary tradition of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the other in works ranging from John Bunyan, Voltaire, and Mark Twain to the popular entertainments of our own time, *The Canterbury Tales* stands astride the cultures of Great Britain and America, and much of Europe, like a benign colossus. Beyond its importance as a cultural touchstone and literary work of unvarnished genius, Chaucer's unfinished epic poem is also one of the most beloved works in the English language and for good reason: It is lively, absorbing, perceptive, and outrageously funny—an undisputed classic that has held a special appeal for generations of readers. Chaucer has gathered twenty-nine of literature's most indelible archetypes—from the exalted Knight to the bawdy Wife to the besotted Miller to the humble Plowman—in a vivid group portrait that captures the full spectrum of late-medieval English society and both informs and expands our discourse on the human condition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As with most people, my first exposure to Chaucer was in a Brit Lit class in college. This translation from Middle English to Modern English by Neville made it very accessible to our class. I had no idea of the breadth of story-telling included in *Canterbury Tales*. Clean, dirty, adventurous, domestic, you name it, one of the characters is telling a story about it. The basis, of course, is that a group of travelers are making a pilgrimage to Canterbury and as they travel, they have a story-telling

competition. The initial prologue describes all the characters and then they each, in turn, tell their story. Even if you never fall in love with Chaucer, reading at least some of the tales gives a great idea of how English literature developed. Reading a good translation like this one may even help you fall in love with this book. Anyone with an interest in British literature needs to read Chaucer at least once.

Those who might think reading Shakespeare a tedious trip to an outgrown time must regard reading Chaucer as pointless antiquarian torture. But there's a reason the classics endure to be rediscovered by every generation. These stories may come dressed in the garb of an ancient time but tell timeless tales seen through a lens of genius. Of course, this is a library of short stories told by Chaucer in different voices. The first tale is "the knight's tale" which is ornate and erudite. The next story is "the miller's tale" which couldn't be more different. The miller is cautioned to tell his story later as he is drunk. The miller admits his drunken state but insists on continuing. His story is lewd, coarse, and quite funny. The funniest moments occur when the pilgrims use their tales to make malicious jabs at their fellow travelers. "The friar's tale" followed by a rebuttal in "the summoner's tale" is laugh-out-loud funny. Especially the description of a friar's place in hell. Some of these are deeply offensive to our sensibilities, and properly so, as for example : The prioress' tale. Others are as crude and randy as the latest teen movie ( complete with fart jokes.) Though, unlike teen movies, Chaucer does not shy away from explicit sex. I began Chaucer mostly with curiosity but left with the awe and respect due to a first-class magician of a storyteller. Understand though: this book is a (masterful) translation by J.U.Nicolson. I've read much of Chaucer in the original but this was easier and more fun. The actual book itself is a thing of beauty. It is elegantly bound with decorative covers and magnificent illustrations. Though published in 1934 it has the pristine look of a book rarely touched by human hands. Too bad for those unknown owners: they had a treasure in their possession but never knew it.

This review is for Kindle version of the Penguin Classics edition of the Canterbury Tales, edited by Neville Coghill. This version is in modern English. The Canterbury Tales follow a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, a cathedral town in England. Having all coincidentally stayed in the same inn, the group decides to go Canterbury together. The inn's owner, the Host, decides to make the journey more interesting by asking everyone in the party to tell a story: whoever tells the best story, in his opinion, will win a free dinner. The author, Geoffrey Chaucer, is a member of the party and serves as the narrator, and even tells a couple stories himself. Thus follows a series of poems. The

topics vary wildly, and include faith, romance, gender equality, and wealth. Western culture has changed a lot since the Tales were written--but in some ways, we haven't changed at all. There is also occasional vulgar and perverted humor (my favorite--and not something I was expecting from medieval poetry). Just as the Tales vary wildly in topic, so too do they vary in quality. Some are quick, enjoyable, absorbing reads, while others are snooze fests that are a chore to get through. This is the main reason I have given the Tales four stars. The Tales are incomplete. Some of the poems were left unfinished with no in-story explanation, while others are interrupted by other characters. The metanarrative is never resolved (ie, the Host never picks the winner). The Penguin Classics edition also cuts the two prose tales, The Tale of Melibee and the Parson's Tale, and replaces them with summaries.

Beautiful book - I love all the Usborne illustrated collections. The cover and printing is of a quality that reminds me of the way things used to be made, not cheap like so many books are nowadays.

It seems that the dual language format (side by side pages) has been supplanted by the interlinear format (original language line followed by a modern English translation line). The latter is easier to compare directly. One such example is the Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (Selected), An Interlinear Translation, by Vincent Hopper, third ed., 2012, available on . It is 608 pages. A free alternative interlinear version on the internet is at [...]. Both the hard copy and internet version will have a place. My dual language copy (this product; 421 pages) dates from 1964 and, while in good shape, is yellowed and musty- a newer printing will be desirable so I am moving to Hopper's newer interlinear edition noted above.

I was looking for a well-structured side-by side version of the Canterbury Tales. Bantam Classics normally does a great jobs on books, but whoever transcribed it to kindle did not know kindle at all, left it unstructured and the translation all over the place, intermingled with the lines, translating the wrong verses and generally just all over the place. Practically, I am reading four lines middle-english, five lines modern, three lines middle-english, 2 lines modern, 6 lines middle-english, and so forth. There is no connection between the middle-English and its translation. That was a wasted 5.99 USD for kindle version and a HUGE disappointment :( ...

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