

ss: head of a convent
; Saint Eligius, known
ct manners.

rd-atte-Bowe:
convent near London
or French was spoken.

15. What details
description of the
far suggest that the
ks she is putting on
, trying to appear
and "high class"
ly is?

antington

With roasted flesh, or milk, or fine white bread.
And bitterly she wept if one were dead
Or someone took a stick and made it smart;
She was all sentiment and tender heart.
155 Her veil was gathered in a seemly way,
Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-gray;
Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,
Her forehead, certainly, was fair of spread,
Almost a span° across the brows, I own;
160 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
165 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.

The Monk

A *Monk* there was, one of the finest sort
170 Who rode the country; hunting was his sport.
A manly man, to be an Abbott 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,
175 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
180 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,
185 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
190 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.°
195 Hunting a hare or riding at a fence



159. *span n.*: nine inches. A span was supposed to be the distance between the extended thumb and little finger.

162. *coral adj.*: In the Middle Ages, coral was a defense against worldly temptations—but it was also a love charm.

163. *a set of beads . . . green*: Beads are a rosary, or a set of prayer beads and a crucifix on a string or chain. Every eleventh bead is a gaud, a large bead indicating when the Lord's Prayer is to be said.

166. *Amor vincit omnia* (ä'môr' vin'chit òm'nē·ä'): Latin for "Love conquers all."

167. *cell n.*: small convent connected to a larger one.

177. *St. Benet or St. Maur*: Saint Benet is Benedict (c. 480–c. 547), who founded numerous monasteries and wrote a famous code of regulations for monastic life. Saint Maur is Maurice, a follower of Benedict.

190. *Austin*: Saint Augustine (354–430), bishop of Hippo in North Africa. He criticized lazy monks and suggested they do hard manual labor.

194. *course v.*: cause to chase game.



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n.: horse.

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en. **shrift** n.:

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- 240 For he sang well and played the hurdy-gurdy.^o
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
- 245 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
- 250 Of wretched lepers; nothing good can come
Of commerce with such slum-and-gutter dwellers,
But only with the rich and victual-sellers.^o
But anywhere a profit might accrue
Courteous he was and lowly of service too.
- 255 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,
- 260 So pleasant was his holy how-d'ye-do
He got his farthing^o 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
- 265 To arbitrate disputes on settling days^o
(For a small fee) in many helpful ways,
Not then appearing as your cloistered scholar
With threadbare habit hardly worth a dollar,
But much more like a Doctor or a Pope.
- 270 Of double-worsted^o was the semi-cope^o
Upon his shoulders, and the swelling fold
About him, like a bell about its mould
When it is casting, rounded out his dress.
He hisped a little out of wantonness^o
- 275 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.

Vocabulary

eminent (em'ə-nənt) *adj.*: high-standing; great.

accrue (ə-krōōⁿ) *v.*: increase over time.

arbitrate (ār'bə-trāt') *v.*: settle or decide by listening to both sides of an argument.

240. **hurdy-gurdy** *n.*: lutelike instrument played by turning a crank.

252. **victual-sellers**: merchants, especially of food.

? 256–279. What details in these lines show the Friar's love of luxury? How does this Friar compare with your expectations of a religious figure?

261. **farthing** (fār'thin) *n.*: former British coin worth one fourth of a penny.

265. **settling days**: days on which disputes could be settled out of court by independent negotiators. Though friars often acted as negotiators (for a fee), they were officially forbidden to do so.

270. **double-worsted**: a high-quality woven wool. **semi-cope** *n.*: capelike garment.

274. **wantonness** *n.*: here, pretense.



The Merchant

280 There was a *Merchant* with a forking beard
And motley^o 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
285 In solemn tones, he harped on his increase
Of capital; there should be sea-police
(He thought) upon the Harwich-Holland ranges;^o
He was expert at dabbling in exchanges.
This estimable Merchant so had set
290 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.

281. m
colored

287. I
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port c
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A CLOSER LOOK: RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE

Chaucer's pilgrims are hardly alone in their faith that visiting a holy site will have spiritual benefits. Besides Canterbury, many Christians of Chaucer's time made pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem, both sites that the Wife of Bath, something of a professional pilgrim, had visited. Today Christian pilgrims still travel to Jerusalem and Rome.

In ancient times Jews also made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, during three major festivals: Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles). These pilgrimages, associated with festivals that mark the Jews' escape from Egypt and journey to Israel, were ex-

to make the trip must
least once in their lives

Varanasi, a city on
India and the site of fi
is visited by more tha
pilgrims each year. Th
main Hindu shrine th
god Shiva. Pilgrims w
Ganges at Varanasi b
merit in this life, and
Varanasi believe they
from endless rebirth

The Grand Shrine



The Oxford Cleric

295 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;
300 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
305 And black, of Aristotle's^o philosophy,
Than costly clothes, fiddle, or psaltery.^o
Though a philosopher, as I have told,
He had not found the stone for making gold.^o
Whatever money from his friends he took
310 He spent on learning or another book
And prayed for them most earnestly, returning
Thanks to them thus for paying for his learning.
His only care was study, and indeed
He never spoke a word more than was need,
315 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.

The Lawyer

A *Sergeant at the Law* who paid his calls,
320 Wary and wise, for clients at St. Paul's^o
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
325 By letters patent,^o 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^o as he;
All was fee-simple^o to his strong digestion,
330 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

305. **Aristotle's** (ar'is·tāt'ŏlz): reference to the Greek philosopher (384–322 B.C.).

306. **psaltery** (sōl'tər·ē) *n.*: stringed instrument that is plucked.

308. **stone . . . gold**: Alchemists the time were searching for a stone that was supposed to turn ordinary metals into gold.

? **295–318.** Which details the sketch of the Oxford Cleric match the stereotype of the starving student? In what significant ways is the Oxford Cleric different from the Prioress, the Monk, and the Friar?

320. **St. Paul's**: London cathedral. Lawyers often met outside it to discuss their cases when court sessions were closed.

325. **letters patent**: letters from the king permitting people to act as judges at the Assizes, court sessions held periodically.

328. **conveyancer** *n.*: person who draws up documents transferring ownership of land. The Lawyer is transferring the ownership to himself.

329. **fee-simple** *n.* used as *n.*: absolute ownership of real property; in other words, full absolute possession of estate.

Geoffrey Chaucer

335 Ever recorded since King William's time.
He could dictate defenses or draft deeds;
No one could pinch a comma from his screeds^o
And he knew every statute off by rote.
He wore a homely parti-colored^o coat,
340 Girt with a silken belt of pin-stripe stuff;
Of his appearance I have said enough.

The Franklin

There was a *Franklin*^o with him, it appeared;
White as a daisy-petal was his beard.
A sanguine^o man, high-colored and benign,
345 He loved a morning sop of cake in wine.
He lived for pleasure and had always done,
For he was Epicurus^o very son,
In whose opinion sensual delight
Was the one true felicity in sight.
As noted as St. Julian^o was for bounty
350 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
355 It positively snowed with meat and drink
And all the dainties that a man could think.
According to the seasons of the year
Changes of dish were ordered to appear.
He kept fat partridges in coops, beyond,
360 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.
365 As Justice at the Sessions^o none stood higher;
He often had been Member for the Shire.^o
A dagger and a little purse of silk
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
As Sheriff he checked audit, every entry.
370 He was a model among landed gentry.

Vocabulary

benign (bi·nin') *adj.*: kind; gracious.

336. **screeds** *n. pl.*: tiresome, lengthy writings.

338. **parti-colored** *adj.*: multi-colored.

341. **Franklin**: well-to-do landowner who is not of the nobility.

343. **sanguine** (san'gwin) *adj.*: ruddy-complexioned. In Chaucer's day this was considered a sign of a cheerful temperament; today the word signifies optimism.

346. **Epicurus**: Epicurus (c. 341-270 B.C.), an ancient Greek philosopher, taught that the goal of life is pleasure, which is achieved through virtue and moderation. Most people do not like to think of Epicureans as pleasure seekers.

349. **St. Julian**: patron saint of hospitality.

365. **Justice at the Sessions**: a court meeting.

366. **Member for the Shire**: a representative in Parliament.



The Franklin, from the Ellesmere manuscript.

Fol. 123v. By permission of The Huntington Library,
San Marino, California.



The Guildsmen

A *Haberdasher*,^o a *Dyer*, a *Carpenter*,
 A *Weaver*, and a *Carpet-maker* were
 Among our ranks, all in the livery^o
 Of one impressive guild-fraternity.
 375 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^o
 A like display on girdles and on pouches.
 Each seemed a worthy burgess,^o fit to grace
 380 A guild-hall with a seat upon the dais.
 Their wisdom would have justified a plan
 To make each one of them an alderman;^o
 They had the capital and revenue,
 Besides their wives declared it was their due.
 385 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.

The Cook

They had a *Cook* with them who stood alone
 390 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.
 395 But what a pity—so it seemed to me,
 That he should have an ulcer on his knee.
 As for *blancmange*,^o he made it with the best.

The Skipper

There was a *Skipper* hailing from far west;
 He came from Dartmouth, so I understood.
 400 He rode a farmer's horse as best he could, —
 In a woollen gown that reached his knee.
 A dagger on a lanyard^o falling free

371. *Haberdasher* (hab'ər dash'ər): seller of men's clothing and accessories.

373. *livery* *n.*: traditional uniform associated with particular trade.

377. *avouches* (ə·vouch' guarantees.

379. *burgess* *n.*: citizen.

382. *alderman* *n.*: head and therefore a town-c member.

? 371–388. Whose do you learn more these lines: the character of the guildsmen or the character of their wives? Explain.

397. *blancmange* (French for "white food")
Chaucer's day this dish containing dice milk, sugar, and alcohol.

402. *lanyard* (lan·yard)

Hung from his neck under his arm and down.
 The summer heat had tanned his color brown,
 405 And certainly he was an excellent fellow.
 Many a draught of vintage, red and yellow,
 He'd drawn at Bordeaux, while the trader stored.
 The nicer rules of conscience he ignored.
 If, when he fought, the enemy vessel sank,
 410 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.
 415 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;
 420 The barge he owned was called *The Maudelayne*.

The Doctor

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,
 425 He watched his patient closely for the hours
 When, by his horoscope, he knew the powers
 Of favorable planets, then ascendent,
 Worked on the images for his dependent.
 The cause of every malady you'd got
 430 He knew, and whether dry, cold, moist, or hot;^o
 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.
 435 All his apothecaries^o 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^o too
 440 And what Hippocrates and Rufus knew
 And Dioscorides, now dead and gone,
 Galen and Rhazes, Hali, Serapion,

Vocabulary

guile (gil) *n.*: sly dealings; skill in deceiving.

? 408–410. Read these lines carefully. What does “his prisoners home” actually mean? How does this fit with the narrator’s observation of the Skipper: “The nicer rules of conscience he ignored”?



The Physician, from a medieval manuscript.

Fol. 133r. By permission of the University and Jepson Library, San Marino, California.

430. dry...hot: In medieval times, people believed that the body's health depended on the balance of four humors and mental conditions. A dry, hot temperament was influenced by the major humors, cholera and yellow bile (hot and dry), and phlegm (cold and wet).

435. apothecaries: *apothecary* (ker'ez) *n. pl.*: pharmacists.

439. Aesculapius: A Roman mythological figure associated with medicine. The Roman gods were early Greek gods. Aesculapius was an Eastern, and a major authority.

Read these lines
 that does "sent
 me" actually
 is this fit in with
 observation about
 the nicer rules of
 "mored"?



from the Ellesmere
 version of The Huntington
 Manuscript, California.

t: People of the
 that one's physical
 conditions were
 the balance of four
 humors, or fluids, in the
 body (hot and wet,
 cold and dry), phlegm
 and black bile

aries: (ə·pāth'ə·
 pharmacists.
 Asclepius: in Greek and
 Roman mythology, the god of
 medicine; names that follow
 the Greek, Roman, Middle
 Ages, and medieval medical

Averroes, Avicenna, Constantine,
 Scotch Bernard, John of Gaddesden, Gilbertine.
 445 In his own diet he observed some measure;
 There were no superfluities^o for pleasure,
 Only digestives, nutritives and such.
 He did not read the Bible very much.
 In blood-red garments, slashed with bluish gray
 450 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.

The Wife of Bath

455 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.^o
 460 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;^o
 I dared have sworn they weighed a good ten pound,
 465 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
 470 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.
 And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,
 475 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,^o set widely, truth to say.
 Easily on an ambling horse she sat
 480 Well wimpled^o 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
 485 And knew the remedies for love's mischances,
 An art in which she knew the oldest dances.

446. **superfluities:** (sōō'pār·
 flōō'ə·tēz) *n. pl.*: excesses.

451–454. How did the
 Doctor get his gold?

458. **Ypres (ē'pr')** and of Ghent
 Flemish centers of the wool
 trade.

463. **ground** *n.*: type of cloth.

455–486. Does the Wife
 of Bath remind you of any
 comic female stereotypes?
 Explain.



478. **gap-teeth:** In Chaucer's
 time, gap-teeth on a woman
 were considered a sign of boldness.
 They were said to indicate an
 attraction for love and travel.
 480. **wimpled** *adj.*: A wimple
 is a linen covering for the hair
 and neck.