

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

Eng 1210

Today...

1. Next lesson: Paper Draft (Formatting = 25%)
2. Group seminars....
3. Bumper quiz! **Histories, key terms** (Parabasis, etc).
4. Today: Background to medieval language
5. Background to Canterbury Tales
6. Nun's Priest Tale (faith & God)
7. Knights' Tale (love & friendship group)
8. Miller's Tale (Beauty & art)
9. Reeve's Tale (Justice & War)

Lord of the Rings & Harry Potter: Which Is More Artistic?

Humphrey Bloggs

T0000123

DR S Jones|

ENG 1000

Both Harry Potter by JK Rowling and Lord of the Rings by JR Tolkien represent both the best selling fantasy novels and films of all time (Mackay, 2018, p.35). The film franchises have a combined worldwide sales of more than 8 billion US dollars and combined book sales of more than one billion (Mackay, p.38). Despite the hugely popular appeal of both works, and shared

FORMATTING:

1. Double spaced essays;
2. Paragraphs indented
3. 12pt Times Roman or Arial
4. No paragraph breaks
5. No running headers required
6. No cover page required
7. Download as PDF

Medieval Contributions To Culture



How Dark Were the Dark Ages?

“Lost and strangled meanings”

A number of words at use in modern English had either (1) no cognates at all in medieval thought (or anywhere in antiquity); or (2) had meanings that have since been distorted or, to use an apt turn-of-phrase, “strangled.”

These modern words therefore are completely **anachronistic** to medieval and ancient thought and begin to take on their modern and limited definitions beginning in the Romantic period.

“Race”

Probably no word in modern English is more poisonous and contentious as the concept of “race.” The way we use the word today is the product of 17th century scientism, and has no cognates in any language prior to this time.

Etymology: “race” (to run fast); or “res” people with a shared occupation or shared culture.

“Love”

NOT a kind of “feeling” or emotion (this becomes the dominant interpretation in the Romantic era, beginning in the 17th century).

The concept of love, as it emerges throughout dramatic history, is universally understood to be a strong action, a willing to do what needs to be done for the good of another.

“Rights”

Another word used in a way today which has **no** medieval or ancient cognate.

The Anglo-saxon concept “right” (from the root, ‘richt’) meant “to be morally good.”

“Right” in medieval times meant to “do the right thing”, or an “obligation to perform actions in a morally upright manner.”

Following the Enlightenment, the term became used to express personal “entitlement” **without any metaphysical foundation.**

“Science”

This word certainly **did exist** in medieval thought, in fact can be found in Greek and Roman thought, too.

But the scope of the word was much broader then, than now. Today, we have “strangled” the word so that it is only used in reference to things like chemistry, biology, and physics (**scientism**).

Until the Enlightenment, the word “science” (from the Latin verb **scire**, “to know”) referred to any systematic body of knowledge that helped us understand the truth of the world, including **philosophy and theology**.

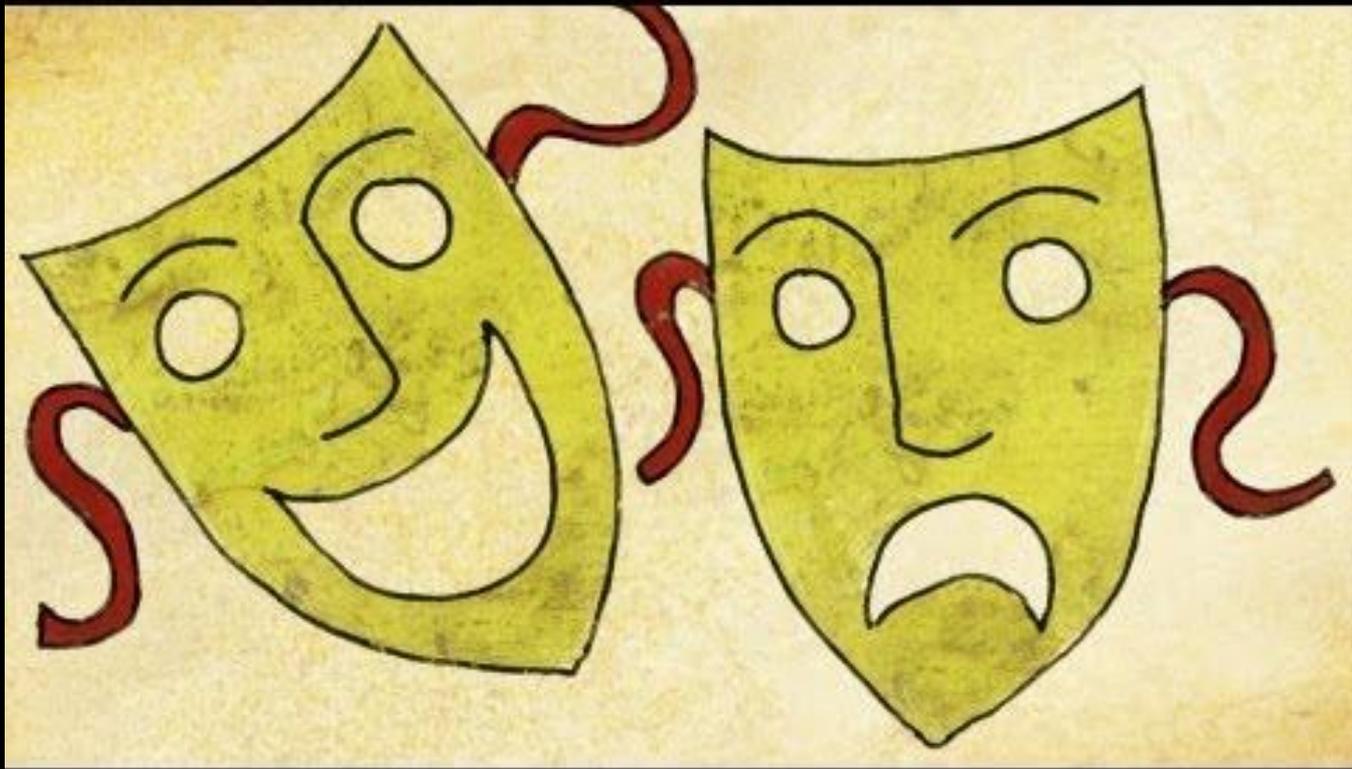
Mini Presentations:

Groups on Canterbury Tales

Mystery Plays

Miracle Plays

Morality Plays



Geoffrey Chaucer

B.1343 (at the outbreak of the Black Death) - **d. 1400** (before he completed his Canterbury Tales).

Chaucer died before he could complete the Tales; he managed to complete 20+ tales, and so the epic work is “unfinished” but still considered the greatest work of medieval literature.

Indeed, Chaucer has long been considered the founder of “English Literature” as a whole.



Chaucer's
Middle
English



Medieval Pilgrimage Sites



Shrine at Canterbury

Place of martyrdom of St
Thomas Becket (d. 1170).

Pilgrims would make an
annual trip to Canterbury to
pray for health and
well-being.



Medieval Genres found in the Canterbury Tales

Fabliau (pl. fabliaux): comedic genre originating in France; typically bawdy and crude in nature and include popular “**cradle-trick**” narratives common in the day.

Beast Fable: anthropomorphized animals proving moral instruction. The genre is often attributed to the Greek poet, Aesop (Aesop’s fables).

Apologue: similar to a fable, this is typically a comedic narrative with a moral to be told. Unlike the fable, the moral is the focus of the story, but not explicitly stated, and often exaggerated for effect.

Courtly Love: common in the medieval period, tales of courtly love explore the concepts of chivalry, the meaning of personal sacrifice, and the paradoxical nature of love.

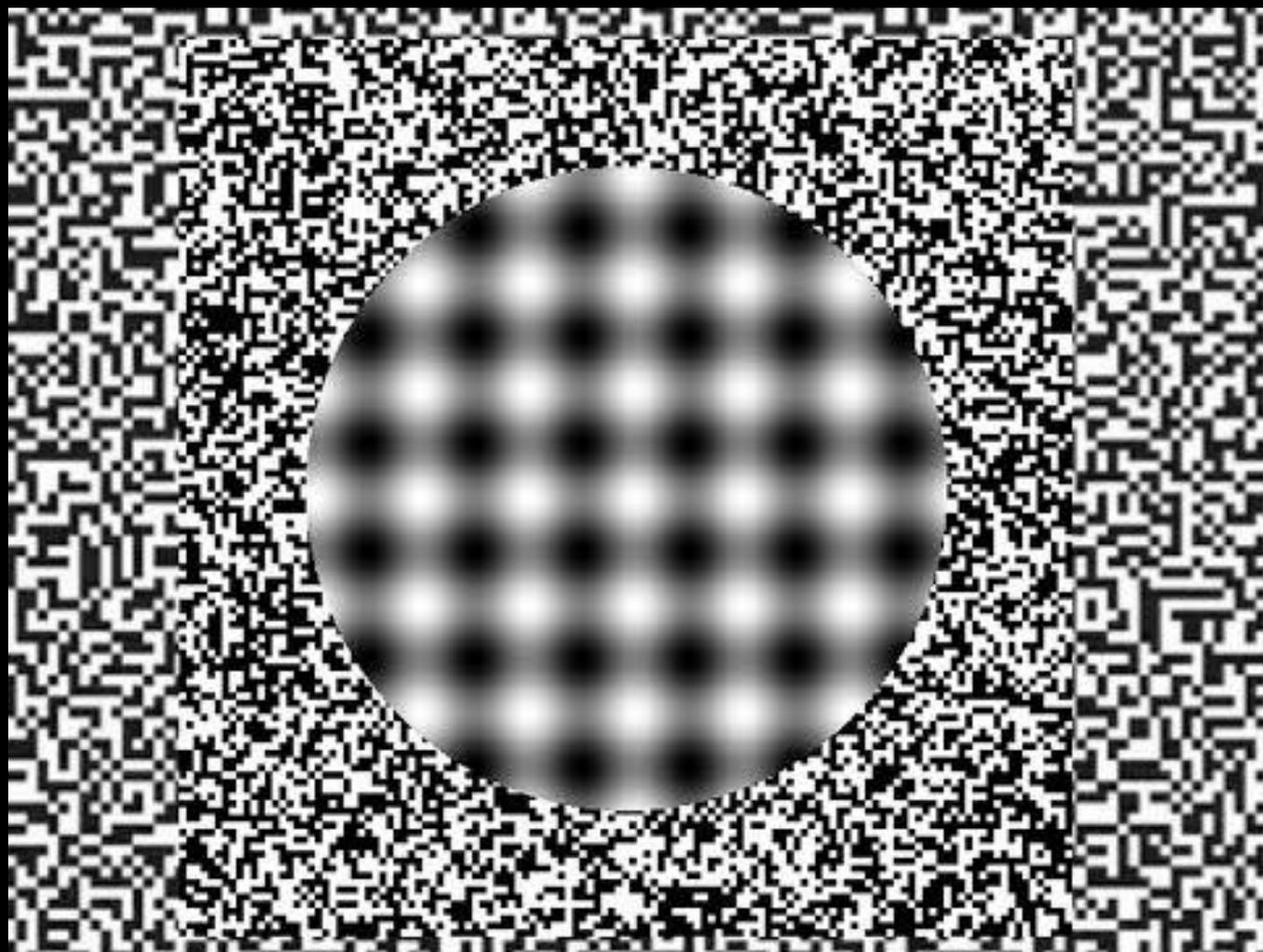
The Nun's
Priest Tale
& The
Knight's
Tale



Looking ahead (2):

1. Quiz
2. Nature of **illusion (Drama)**
3. Chaucer's Knight's & Nun's Priest Tales
4. Chaucer's Reeve's and Miller's tale
5. Essay uploads
6. Essay formatting
7. Essay consultation (end of class)
8. Review - language and perception





“ILLUSION” and “Cradle Tricks” (fabliau)

illusion (n.)

mid-14c., "mockery, scorning, derision;" late 14c., "act of deception; deceptive appearance, apparition; delusion of the mind," from Old French *illusion* "a mocking, deceit, deception" (12c.), from Latin *illusionem* (nominative *illusio*) "a mocking, jesting, jeering; irony," from past-participle stem of *illudere* "mock at," literally "to play with," from assimilated form of *in-* "at, upon" (from PIE root ***en** "in") + *ludere* "to play" (see **ludicrous**). Sense of "deceptive appearance" first developed in Church Latin. Related: *Illusioned* "full of illusions" (1920).

“ILLUSION” and “Cradle Tricks” (fabliau)

offense (n.)

late 14c., "hurt, harm, injury, pain;" also "breach of the law, wrongdoing; transgression against God, sin;" also "the causing of displeasure, act or fact of wounding the feelings of or displeasing another;" also "displeasure, annoyance, umbrage," from Old French *ofense* "offense, insult, wrong" (13c.) and directly from Latin *offensa* "an offense, injury, affront, crime," literally "a striking against," noun use of fem. past participle of *offendere* (see **offend**).

Meaning "action of attacking" is from c. 1400. Sporting sense of "the team on the attack, at bat, with the ball," etc. is by 1894.

The
Reeve's
& Miller's
Tale



Group/Homework

Read the tale corresponding to your discussion group in Canterbury Tales (you have the full, modern English text on your eHub).

Identify:

1. What type of sub-genre is the tale?
2. How is your theme treated in this tale?
3. What does the tale tell us about medieval attitudes?