



## THE BRIGHT STAR OF THE MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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### Abstract

This article remembered us The Medieval literature, Geoffrey Chaucer-the bright star of English literature, his life and great masterpieces, works. We can get information about ``The Canterbury Tales``.

**Keywords:** Middle English period, Geoffrey Chaucer, “Father of the English language”, The French period, The Italian period, The English period, “The Canterbury Tales”, “The Legend Good Women”, “The House of Fame”, “The Parliament of Fowls”, “Troilus and Criseyda”.

The sky of literature is full with vivid stars that poets, novelists, writers and dramatists. They are not among us, however their unforgettable works are with us. If we talk about Middle period of literature, firstly we should begin with Geoffrey Chaucer. Since modern poetry gets start with one of the most prominent people of the Middle English period – Geoffrey Chaucer, diplomat, soldier and scholar.

Most scholars consider Geoffrey Chaucer is one of the three greatest poets in English literature (along with William Shakespeare and John Milton). We know him as ``Father of the English language``. It is a pity that we do not know any details of his early life and education. So far as we know, he was born between 1340 and 1345, probably in London, into a French middle – class family.(1,3) His father John was a prosperous wine merchant and held minor court office as Butler, if only intermittently. At his seventeen, he attended St. Paul`s Almonry where he got knowledge more than a smattering of Latin and also, Chaucer appreciated Ovid`s poetry, which to be a major source of inspiration for him. His life was very active. Geoffrey Chaucer was a soldier in the English army in France. Great poet worked as commercial agent for the English government in Italy. In 1366, he got married to Philippa Payne Roet. After his marriage Chaucer rose socially. Geoffrey Chaucer was assigned one of the King`s esquires in 1368. At that time it meant he worked in the administrative department of the King`s government. He was responsible for acting





as a government ambassador on foreign Diplomatic missions. Chaucer visited first to France and later to Italy for diplomatic missions. A series of misfortunes, the great, last English writer of the middle Ages and the first of the Renaissance Geoffrey Chaucer died on 25<sup>th</sup> of October in 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in a Section, which later called as the Poet`s Corner.

Geoffrey Chaucer is well known as the greatest literary figure of his time and considered as the main forefather of modern Standard English. His enduring world-wide appeal stems from his capacity to dignify the melting pot of dialects- Anglo – Saxon, French, and Latin- as a suitable vehicle for literary purpose, freed from any foreign influence (1, 3).

As well as, because of his capability for creating true- to -life characters, his sense of humour, psychological world- view, and the grace also technical excellence of Chaucer`s narrative vein, he is properly considered as the forerunner of the English novel as well. Chaucer`s poetry consisted of three periods:

### **1.The French period.**

When he was in France, Chaucer met with French literature, his initial poems were written about French romances. He translated ``The Romance of the Rose`` from French a famous allegorical poem of the thirteenth century.

### **2.The Italian period.**

Chaucer was sent to Genoa to control a commercial treaty. In Italy he learned Italian life and culture, classical authors and also, Chaucer became acquainted with the newer Italian works of Dante, Petrarch, the tales of Boccaccio. Chaucer did not want to get influence from the French and nourished an enthusiastic admiration for Dante, Boccaccio. To the Italian period can be assigned ``The House of Fame``, a didactic poem; ``The Parliament of Fowls`` (birds), an allegorical poem satirizing Parliament; ``Troilus and Criseyda``, which is considered to be the predecessor of the psychological novel in England, and ``The Legend of Good Women``, a dream-poem. (2,15)

### **3.The English period.**

When he came back to London, Chaucer considered a customs official at the port of there. In 1386 he decided to give up his job, then began composing his masterpiece ``The Canterbury Tales``, but it remained unfinished. Chaucer`s name is





remembered with ``The Canterbury Tales`` long poem with a general introduction (``The Prologue``). In the prologue we can see thirty men and women from all ranks of society. They pass before the readers` eyes. Chaucer draws a rapid portrait of each traveller, thus showing his character. (2,15) Geoffrey was going to include 120 stories, but he could only twenty-four, some of them not completed. There are different kinds of individual stories: fables, fairy tales, sermons, religious stories, legends, and courtly romances. In that period a lot of short story writers learned much about their craft from Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chaucer introduced each pilgrim in the prologue. It gave us chance to know about them through stories they tell. He keeps the whole poem alive by interspersing the tales themselves with the talk, the quarrels, and the opinions of the pilgrims (2,16). The following below is a part from the prologue, where the author introduces a plowman:

There was a Plowman with him there, his brother  
Many aloud 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 (2,16).

This Pattern consists of 10 syllables: unaccented and accented in each line. The lines may or may not rhyme. In English poetry iambic pentameter was widely used. Geoffrey Chaucer tried to show different types of people that lived during his time and especially through these people he showed a true picture of the life of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In Chaucer`s time the English language was divided by dialects, though Great Britain was rapidly making East Midland into standard language. Chaucer is considered the founder of a new literary language. He decided to write the popular language of common people in English, though his time` read and spoke French. Geoffrey Chaucer was the creator of English literature.

He was a man of the Middle Ages, but his attitude towards mankind was so broad-minded that his time is timeless. He is the initial English poet who may still be read for pleasure today.





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