



A Companion to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

By Margaret Hallissy

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This do-it-yourself course for the first-time Chaucer reader is geared specifically to high school and undergraduate students because it systematically proceeds through a clear explication of each tale and makes the tales accessible to those unfamiliar with Chaucer's work. Reading this book along with *Canterbury Tales*, tale by tale, will help the reader to understand and appreciate each tale, Chaucer's world, and his language. This book differs from other guides to the tales because it takes the reader along on the pilgrimage through each tale and assumes no previous experience with Chaucer's work. Middle English and modern English paraphrases of passages from the tales are arranged together for the ease of the novice. Whether the reader is seeking assistance with a single tale or with the whole work, this companion provides a level of instruction appropriate for high school and college courses.

In individual essays, Hallissy introduces the literary pilgrim to Chaucer the writer, his world, and his language. An explicatory essay is provided for the General Prologue and for each major tale—the Knight, the Miller, the Reeve, the Man of Law, the Wife of Bath, the Friar, the Summoner, the Clerk, the Merchant, the Franklin, the Physician, the Pardoner, the Shipman, the Prioress, the Nun's Priest, the Second Nun, the Canon's Yeoman, and the Manciple. Six lesser-read tales are treated in an appendix. The tales are interpreted in terms of key patterns of medieval thought that Chaucer shared with his original audience. Hallissy's style is clear, readable, and jargon-free. Explications are thorough and consistent, and connections are drawn between the tales. Medieval visual images illuminate the text and suggestions for further reading have been selected specifically for high school and undergraduate students. This work can be used as a reference volume for a reader interested in a single tale or for the entire *Canterbury Tales* and will be of great value to high school and college students reading Chaucer's work for the first time, as well as to high school teachers preparing for classes.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

YA?This readable presentation of the often bawdy and lusty tales is designed specifically for first-time readers. It is indeed a companion and makes YAs feel the tremendous sweep of this pilgrimage across England with this motley crew comprised of knights, clergymen and women, scholars, tradespeople, laborers, and peasants. In addition, it provides students with simple interpretations and amplifications and makes their journey through this great unfinished work enjoyable and rewarding. Particularly helpful are the opening sections on Chaucer's world and language. There are essays of explanation as well on each of the major tales. Medieval ways of thought, religion, dress, and behavior are dealt with for the various levels of society and these facets are related to the structure of the pilgrimage. Portions of the text are set forth with translation into contemporary English. The appendixes cover six of the less-revered selections and also discuss the importance of the links between the tales and the unifying force of the character Harry Bailly, who leaves his inn to join the pilgrimage.?Frances Reiher, Fairfax County Public Library, VA
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Review

"Imagining her book as a "do-it-yourself course" on Chaucer, Hallissy writes for the first-time reader unfamiliar with Chaucer's work or with medieval studies. Hallissy's discussions are guided less by the "first-time reader" than by the reality of the modern reader who is no longer culturally literate in the constellation of terms, motifs, values, and genres that constitute the framework of medieval society and culture. Hallissy writes with a simple, jargon-free clarity accessible to high school students as well as college undergraduates. Highly recommended for public high school, and undergraduate libraries."-Choice

"A wonderfully lucid guide for the first-time reader, to accompany a reading of Chaucer either in the original Middle English or in translation. The guide is best used in the manner of a college course, read along with The Canterbury Tales, tale by tale."-Reference & Research Book News

"[Hallissy's] explanation of Chaucer's world and language make for excellent introduction to the major medieval writer in English. Of special interest to the high school teacher in particular is the superb capsule analysis given of each pilgrim...Highly recommended for high school, undergraduate, and all public libraries."-Reference Book Review

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Language Notes

Text: English

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eduardo Baro:

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