

Name _____

Date _____

Geoffrey Chaucer - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London around the year 1342 to a middle-class family. His father was a wine maker who worked on the king's court. This connection to English high society set the tone for Chaucer's own political ambitions, as he pursued his own positions within the court as an adult. The social privilege that came with being a diplomat led him to living throughout Europe, including an appointment in Italy where the writings of various Italian poets left their influence on his own verse. The variety of tones, subjects, and styles in Chaucer's writing can be attributed to the diversity of his travels and reading.

Why does this passage mention the influence of Italian poetry on Chaucer's writing?

- A. To highlight the importance of Italian poets' contribution to literature
- B. To draw parallels between Chaucer and the writers who inspired him
- C. To demonstrate the effect Chaucer's life as a diplomat had on his writing
- D. To contextualize Chaucer's writing within European politics



- C. To demonstrate the effect Chaucer's life as a diplomat had on his writing

According to the passage, much of Chaucer's writing "can be attributed to the diversity of his travels and reading," including "an appointment in Italy where the writings of various Italian poets left their influence on his own verse."

2. *The Canterbury Tales* depicts a large group of people from different circumstances all traveling together on a pilgrimage toward the shrine of Saint Thomas. The cast of characters includes people from varying professions and social strata, including a monk, a miller, and a knight, among others. Chaucer writes in a variety of tones and styles to both illustrate these social differences and create parallels between them. For instance, the Miller's Tale is raunchy and scandalous, while the Knight's takes a more chivalrous tone. Each reflects the speaker's positions in English society.

Why did Chaucer include so many characters in *The Canterbury Tales*?



- A.** To depict the differences between social classes in medieval England
- According to the passage, "The cast of characters includes people from varying professions and social strata," and "Chaucer writes in a variety of tones and styles to illustrate these social differences and create parallels between them."*
- B.** To reinforce social order by suggesting some professions are more noble than others
- C.** To create stories that are true to each character's life and experience
- D.** To provide comic relief when writing from the point of view of "low" members of society

3. While **The Canterbury Tales** has been considered an important work of English literature for centuries, there have been many different interpretations of its themes throughout history. Due to the complexity and variety of human experiences depicted in the work, some adaptations have focused on the text's religious themes. Others emphasize the more scandalous characters like the Miller and the Cook. Some critics zero in on Chaucer's bending of the allegory genre. Consequently, there have been as many interpretations of Chaucer's personality and disposition, ranging from a stuffy, conservative member of high society to a lighthearted persona that enjoyed satirizing his peers as a court jester lambasts kings. The conflicting interpretations of Chaucer's personality go hand in hand with the depth of emotions and experiences presented in **The Canterbury Tales**.

Based on the passage, what can you infer about **The Canterbury Tales**?

- A. They are rigid in nature and depict only a handful of different types of people, suggesting that Chaucer was straightlaced and conservative.
- B. They promote a specific social order, which Chaucer believed in preserving above all else.
- C. They are all comedic, never delving into philosophical topics, as a result of Chaucer's clownish sense of humor.
- ✓ D. They depict a wide variety of human experiences, which creates some debate about what Chaucer himself was like.

*According to the passage, the "complexity and variety of human experiences" in **The Canterbury Tales** has led to "conflicting interpretations of Chaucer's personality."*