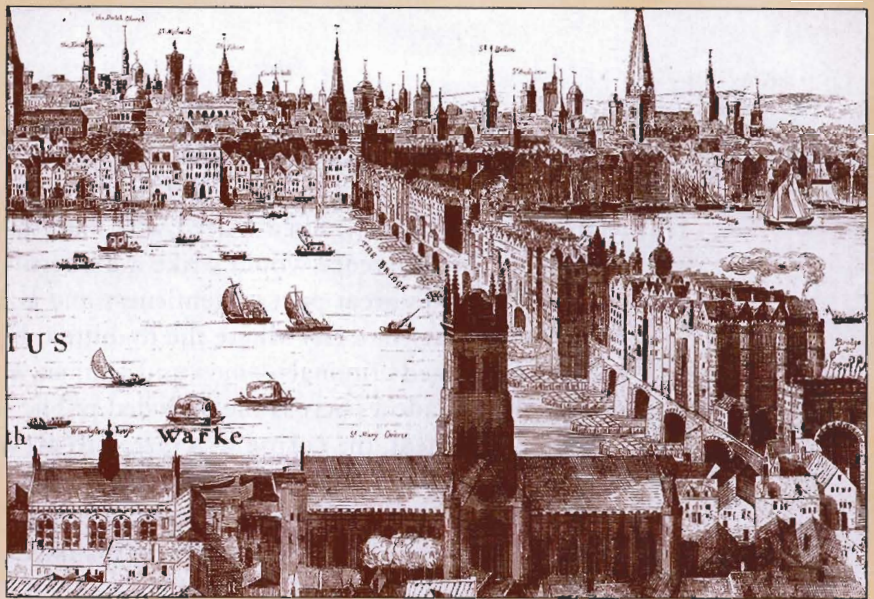


## Preparing to Read

### Build Background

John Gardner was a popular novelist as well as a medieval scholar. Among the best-known of his works of fiction is the novel *Grendel*, which tells the story of Beowulf's battle in Herot from the monster's point of view. *The Life and Times of Chaucer* is a lively nonfiction account of Chaucer and his age. The passage on these pages provides a horrifying glimpse into the administration of justice—and injustice—in London during the Middle Ages.



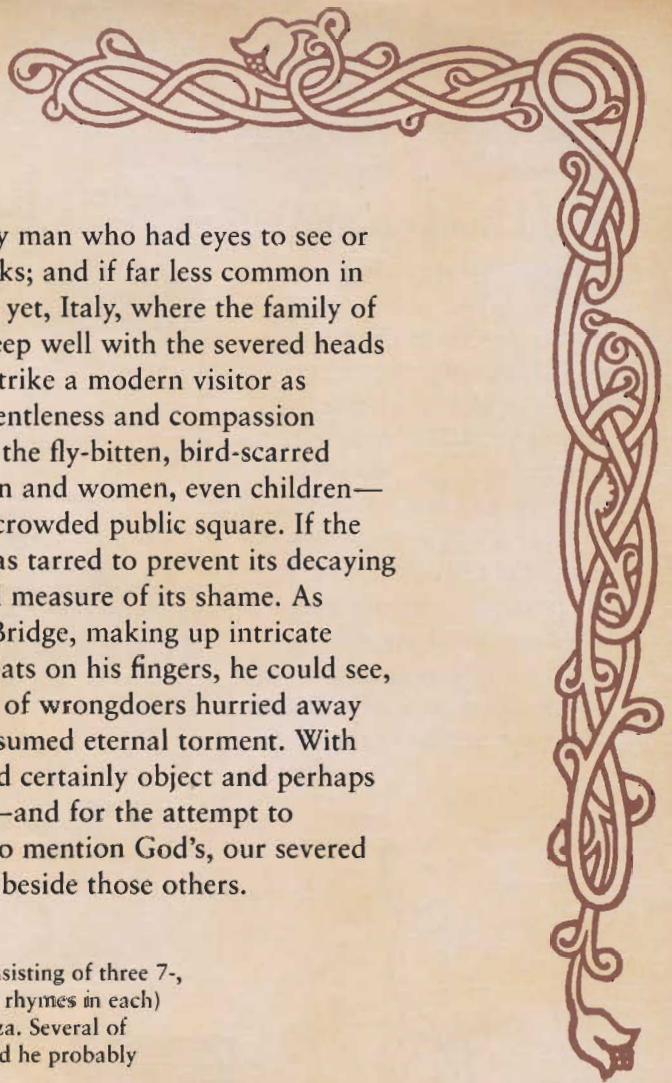
from  
*The Life and Times of*  
**CHAUCER**

Nonfiction by JOHN GARDNER



**L**T HARDLY NEEDS SAYING THAT THE WORLD INTO WHICH GEOFFREY CHAUCER WAS BORN WAS NOT LIKE OURS. After careful thought, if we were given the choice of living then or now, we might well decide to scrap our modern world; but on first transportation to Chaucer's time, we would probably have hated it—its opinions and customs, its superstitions, its cruelty, its hobbled intellect, in some respects its downright madness. One need not talk of such blood-curdling horrors as public hangings, beheadings, burnings-at-the-stake, drawing-and-quarterings,<sup>1</sup> public whippings, blindings, . . . or of imprisonments in chains and darkness without hope of deliverance; or of trials by combat,<sup>2</sup> or of torturings . . . —all these were common,

1. drawing-and-quarterings: executions in which the criminals' arms and legs were tied to four horses, which were then driven in different directions.
2. trials by combat: procedures in which disputants (or people selected by them) would fight to the death in order to determine who was in the right.



the unavoidable experience of any man who had eyes to see or ears not deaf to the victims' shrieks; and if far less common in England than in France or, worse yet, Italy, where the family of Malatesta ("Badhead") filled a deep well with the severed heads of victims, the difference would strike a modern visitor as trifling. England's great poet of gentleness and compassion walked every day in a city where the fly-bitten, bird-scarred corpses of hanged criminals—men and women, even children—draped their shadows across the crowded public square. If the crime was political, the corpse was tarred to prevent its decaying before the achievement of the full measure of its shame. As Chaucer strolled across London Bridge, making up intricate ballades<sup>3</sup> in his head, counting beats on his fingers, he could see, if he looked up, the staked heads of wrongdoers hurried away by earnest Christians to their presumed eternal torment. With our modern sensibilities we would certainly object and perhaps interfere—as Chaucer never did—and for the attempt to undermine the king's peace, not to mention God's, our severed heads would go up on the stakes beside those others.

- 
3. **ballades** (bɑ-lādz'): poems usually consisting of three 7-, 8-, or 10-line stanzas (with the same rhymes in each) along with an envoy, or closing stanza. Several of Chaucer's ballades have survived, and he probably composed a number of others.

## Thinking Through the Literature


1. In the light of the information Gardner presents, what adjectives would you use to describe the world into which Chaucer was born?
2. **Comparing Texts** Compare and contrast the world that Chaucer presents in the "Prologue" with the world that Gardner describes. Would you say that Chaucer entirely ignores the negative side of medieval life? Cite evidence to support your evaluation.
3. What are some of the brutalities or injustices to which people in the modern world often close their eyes? What do you think Chaucer might have disliked if he had been transported forward in time to our world?

## from The Pardoner's Tale

## from The Canterbury Tales

Poetry by GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Translated by NEVILL COGHILL

 Benchmark E.1.4.1  
FCAT Benchmark A.1.4.2

### Connect to Your Life

**Roots of Evil** "The love of money is the root of all evil," the Bible tells us. In a group discussion, share thoughts about the desire for money and the ways in which it influences human behavior. In what situations is the desire for money evil or harmful? When does the desire seem normal or legitimate to you?

### Build Background

**Begging Pardon** Among the more memorable of the Canterbury pilgrims is the Pardoner, described in lines 689–734 of the "Prologue" (pages 131–132). Licensed by the church to grant indulgences (documents forgiving peoples' sins), pardoners were in theory supposed to grant them only to people who showed great charity. In practice, however, many pardoners simply sold their pardons to make money for the church or for themselves. To spur sales, unethical pardoners often threatened reluctant buyers with eternal doom. Chaucer's Pardoner encourages buyers with a story that illustrates the dangers of the love of money.

#### WORDS TO KNOW Vocabulary Preview

adversary	parley
avarice	saunter
castigate	transcend
covetousness	vermin
pallor	wary

### Focus Your Reading


**LITERARY ANALYSIS MORAL TALE** A **moral tale** teaches a lesson about what is right and wrong in human behavior. In a moral tale, good characters usually triumph and evil characters come to a bad end. These outcomes send a message, or **moral** (which is often stated explicitly in the tale). In "The Pardoner's Tale," the moral is the biblical observation that "the love of money is the root of all evil." The Pardoner states this moral in Latin, the language of the medieval Roman Catholic Church:

*Radix malorum est cupiditas.*

As you read this tale, pay close attention to the actions of the characters, as well as those of the Pardoner, the teller of the tale.

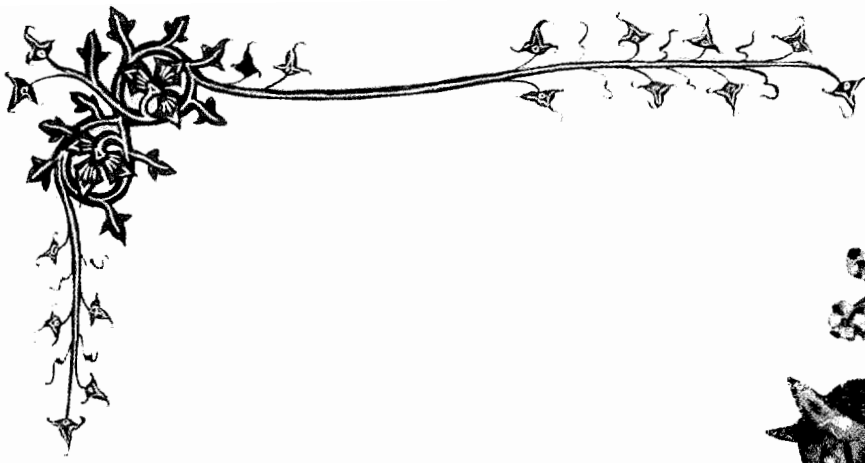
**ACTIVE READING PREDICTING** To make reasonable **predictions** about what will happen next and what will happen in the end, take the following into account:

- the characters, settings, and events presented in the story
- **foreshadowing**, or hints about what is going to happen
- your own knowledge of human behavior and experiences
- what you know of other literary works with similar characters, settings, or events

 **READER'S NOTEBOOK** As you read, jot down your predictions in a chart like this one. Continue reading to see if the events match your predictions.



My Prediction	Lines It's Based On	Actual Outcome



The Pardoner

from **The Pardoner's Prologue**

“My lords,” he said, “in churches where I preach  
I cultivate a haughty kind of speech  
And ring it out as roundly as a bell;  
I’ve got it all by heart, the tale I tell.

5 I have a text, it always is the same  
And always has been, since I learnt the game,  
Old as the hills and fresher than the grass,  
*Radix malorum est cupiditas.*



I preach, as you have heard me say before,  
10 And tell a hundred lying mockeries more.  
I take great pains, and stretching out my neck  
To east and west I crane about and peck  
Just like a pigeon sitting on a barn.  
My hands and tongue together spin the yarn  
15 And all my antics are a joy to see.  
The curse of avarice and cupidity  
Is all my sermon, for it frees the pelf.  
Out come the pence, and specially for myself,  
For my exclusive purpose is to win  
20 And not at all to castigate their sin.  
Once dead what matter how their souls may fare?  
They can go blackberrying, for all I care!



**GUIDE FOR READING**

**8** *Radix malorum est cupiditas*  
(ră'dīks mā-lōr'əm ɛst' kōō-pīd'ī-tās'): Latin for “The love of money is the root of all evil”—a quotation from the Bible (1 Timothy 6:10).

**10** **mockeries:** false tales.

**16** **cupidity** (kyōō-pīd'ī-tē): excessive desire for something, especially for money.

**17** **pelf:** riches, especially those that are acquired dishonestly.

**18** **pence:** pennies.

**19–22** What is the Pardoner's attitude toward those who listen to him preach?

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**avarice** (ăv'ə-rīs) *n.* an excessive desire for wealth; greed

**castigate** (kās'tī-gāt') *v.* to criticize harshly



And thus I preach against the very vice  
I make my living out of—avarice.  
25 And yet however guilty of that sin  
Myself, with others I have power to win  
Them from it, I can bring them to repent;  
But that is not my principal intent.  
Covetousness is both the root and stuff  
30 Of all I preach. That ought to be enough.



“Well, then I give examples thick and fast  
From bygone times, old stories from the past.  
A yokel mind loves stories from of old,  
Being the kind it can repeat and hold.  
35 What! Do you think, as long as I can preach  
And get their silver for the things I teach,  
That I will live in poverty, from choice?  
That’s not the counsel of my inner voice!  
No! Let me preach and beg from kirk to kirk  
40 And never do an honest job of work,  
No, nor make baskets, like St. Paul, to gain  
A livelihood. I do not preach in vain.  
There’s no apostle I would counterfeit;  
I mean to have money, wool and cheese and wheat  
45 Though it were given me by the poorest lad  
Or poorest village widow, though she had  
A string of starving children, all agape.  
No, let me drink the liquor of the grape  
And keep a jolly wench in every town!

39 kirk: church.



50 “But listen, gentlemen; to bring things down  
To a conclusion, would you like a tale?  
Now as I’ve drunk a draft of corn-ripe ale,  
By God it stands to reason I can strike  
On some good story that you all will like.  
55 For though I am a wholly vicious man  
Don’t think I can’t tell moral tales. I can!  
Here’s one I often preach when out for winning. . . .”

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**covetousness** (kūv’Y-tēs-nĭs) *n.* an excessive desire for wealth or possessions



## from **The Pardoner's Tale**

It's of three rioters I have to tell  
 Who, long before the morning service bell,  
 60 Were sitting in a tavern for a drink.  
 And as they sat, they heard the hand-bell clink  
 Before a coffin going to the grave;  
 One of them called the little tavern-knave  
 And said "Go and find out at once—look spy!—  
 65 Whose corpse is in that coffin passing by;  
 And see you get the name correctly too."  
 "Sir," said the boy, "no need, I promise you;  
 Two hours before you came here I was told.  
 He was a friend of yours in days of old,  
 70 And suddenly, last night, the man was slain,  
 Upon his bench, face up, dead drunk again.  
 There came a privy thief, they call him Death,  
 Who kills us all round here, and in a breath  
 He speared him through the heart, he never stirred.  
 75 And then Death went his way without a word.  
 He's killed a thousand in the present plague,  
 And, sir, it doesn't do to be too vague  
 If you should meet him; you had best be wary.  
 Be on your guard with such an adversary,  
 80 Be primed to meet him everywhere you go,  
 That's what my mother said. It's all I know."



**58 rioters:** rowdy people; revelers.

**61–62 hand-bell . . . grave:** In Chaucer's time, a bell was carried beside the coffin in a funeral procession.

**63 tavern-knave** (nāv): a serving boy in an inn.

**72 privy** (prĭv'ē): hidden; secretive.

**72–81** Death is personified as a thief in the night, who slays his victims and then flees. Bubonic plague killed at least a quarter of the population of Europe in the mid-14th century.

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**wary** (wār'ē) *adj.* cautious; on one's guard  
**adversary** (ăd'vər-sēr'ē) *n.* an enemy; opponent



The publican joined in with, "By St. Mary,  
What the child says is right; you'd best be wary,  
This very year he killed, in a large village  
85 A mile away, man, woman, serf at tillage,  
Page in the household, children—all there were.  
Yes, I imagine that he lives round there.  
It's well to be prepared in these alarms,  
He might do you dishonor." "Huh, God's arms!"  
90 The rioter said, "Is he so fierce to meet?  
I'll search for him, by Jesus, street by street.  
God's blessed bones! I'll register a vow!  
Here, chaps! The three of us together now,  
Hold up your hands, like me, and we'll be brothers  
95 In this affair, and each defend the others,  
And we will kill this traitor Death, I say!  
Away with him as he has made away  
With all our friends. God's dignity! Tonight!"



They made their bargain, swore with appetite,  
100 These three, to live and die for one another  
As brother-born might swear to his born brother.  
And up they started in their drunken rage  
And made towards this village which the page  
And publican had spoken of before.  
105 Many and grisly were the oaths they swore,  
Tearing Christ's blessed body to a shred;  
"If we can only catch him, Death is dead!"



When they had gone not fully half a mile,  
Just as they were about to cross a stile,  
110 They came upon a very poor old man  
Who humbly greeted them and thus began,  
"God look to you, my lords, and give you quiet!"  
To which the proudest of these men of riot  
Gave back the answer, "What, old fool? Give place!  
115 Why are you all wrapped up except your face?  
Why live so long? Isn't it time to die?"



The old, old fellow looked him in the eye  
And said, "Because I never yet have found,  
Though I have walked to India, searching round

**82 publican:** innkeeper; tavern owner.

**86 page:** boy servant.

**99–107** How might the rioters' drinking be affecting their judgment and behavior?

**109 stile:** a stairway used to climb over a fence or wall.



120 Village and city on my pilgrimage,  
One who would change his youth to have my age.  
And so my age is mine and must be still  
Upon me, for such time as God may will.



“Not even Death, alas, will take my life;  
125 So, like a wretched prisoner at strife  
Within himself, I walk alone and wait  
About the earth, which is my mother’s gate,  
Knock-knocking with my staff from night to noon  
And crying, ‘Mother, open to me soon!  
130 Look at me, mother, won’t you let me in?  
See how I wither, flesh and blood and skin!  
Alas! When will these bones be laid to rest?  
Mother, I would exchange—for that were best—  
The wardrobe in my chamber, standing there  
135 So long, for yours! Aye, for a shirt of hair  
To wrap me in!’ She has refused her grace,  
Whence comes the pallor of my withered face.

**129** The old man addresses the earth as his mother (compare the familiar expressions “Mother Earth” and “Mother Nature”).

**135 shirt of hair:** a rough shirt made of animal hair, worn to punish oneself for one’s sins.



“But it dishonored you when you began  
To speak so roughly, sir, to an old man,  
140 Unless he had injured you in word or deed.  
It says in holy writ, as you may read,  
‘Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head  
And honor it.’ And therefore be it said  
‘Do no more harm to an old man than you,  
145 Being now young, would have another do  
When you are old’—if you should live till then.  
And so may God be with you, gentlemen,  
For I must go whither I have to go.”

**142 hoary:** gray or white with age.



“By God,” the gambler said, “you shan’t do so,  
150 You don’t get off so easy, by St. John!  
I heard you mention, just a moment gone,  
A certain traitor Death who singles out  
And kills the fine young fellows hereabout.  
And you’re his spy, by God! You wait a bit.  
155 Say where he is or you shall pay for it,  
By God and by the Holy Sacrament!

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**pallor** (păl'ər) *n.* a lack of color; extreme paleness



I say you've joined together by consent  
To kill us younger folk, you thieving swine!"



160 "Well, sirs," he said, "if it be your design  
To find out Death, turn up this crooked way  
Towards that grove, I left him there today  
Under a tree, and there you'll find him waiting.  
He isn't one to hide for all your prating.  
You see that oak? He won't be far to find.  
165 And God protect you that redeemed mankind,  
Aye, and amend you!" Thus that ancient man.



At once the three young rioters began  
To run, and reached the tree, and there they found  
A pile of golden florins on the ground,  
170 New-coined, eight bushels of them as they thought.  
No longer was it Death those fellows sought,  
For they were all so thrilled to see the sight,  
The florins were so beautiful and bright,  
That down they sat beside the precious pile.  
175 The wickedest spoke first after a while.  
"Brothers," he said, "you listen to what I say.  
I'm pretty sharp although I joke away.  
It's clear that Fortune has bestowed this treasure  
To let us live in jollity and pleasure.  
180 Light come, light go! We'll spend it as we ought.  
God's precious dignity! Who would have thought  
This morning was to be our lucky day?"



"If one could only get the gold away,  
Back to my house, or else to yours, perhaps—  
185 For as you know, the gold is ours, chaps—  
We'd all be at the top of fortune, hey?  
But certainly it can't be done by day.  
People would call us robbers—a strong gang,  
So our own property would make us hang.  
190 No, we must bring this treasure back by night  
Some prudent way, and keep it out of sight.  
And so as a solution I propose  
We draw for lots and see the way it goes;  
The one who draws the longest, lucky man,  
195 Shall run to town as quickly as he can

**154–158** What accusations against the old man does the young man make?

**169 florins:** coins.

**178** "Fortune" here means "fate." Do you think the young men will be blessed by Fortune?



*The Three Living, from the Psalter and Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg, Duchess of Normandy.*



To fetch us bread and wine—but keep things dark—  
While two remain in hiding here to mark  
Our heap of treasure. If there's no delay,  
When night comes down we'll carry it away,  
200 All three of us, wherever we have planned.”

**196 keep things dark:** act in secret, without giving away what has happened.

He gathered lots and hid them in his hand  
Bidding them draw for where the luck should fall.  
It fell upon the youngest of them all,  
And off he ran at once towards the town.

205 As soon as he had gone the first sat down  
And thus began a parley with the other:  
“You know that you can trust me as a brother;  
Now let me tell you where your profit lies;  
You know our friend has gone to get supplies  
210 And here's a lot of gold that is to be  
Divided equally amongst us three.  
Nevertheless, if I could shape things thus  
So that we shared it out—the two of us—  
Wouldn't you take it as a friendly act?”

215 “But how?” the other said. “He knows the fact  
That all the gold was left with me and you;  
What can we tell him? What are we to do?”

“Is it a bargain,” said the first, “or no?  
For I can tell you in a word or so  
220 What's to be done to bring the thing about.”  
“Trust me,” the other said, “you needn't doubt  
My word. I won't betray you, I'll be true.”

“Well,” said his friend, “you see that we are two,  
And two are twice as powerful as one.  
225 Now look; when he comes back, get up in fun  
To have a wrestle; then, as you attack,  
I'll up and put my dagger through his back  
While you and he are struggling, as in game;  
Then draw your dagger too and do the same.  
230 Then all this money will be ours to spend,

**225–229** What does the young man's plan suggest about human nature and the desire for money?

WORDS  
TO **parley** (pär'lē) *n.* a discussion or conference  
KNOW



Divided equally of course, dear friend.  
 Then we can gratify our lusts and fill  
 The day with dicing at our own sweet will.”  
 Thus these two miscreants agreed to slay  
 235 The third and youngest, as you heard me say.

**233 dicing:** gambling with dice.

**234 miscreants** (mĭs'krē-ənts):  
 evildoers; villains.



The youngest, as he ran towards the town,  
 Kept turning over, rolling up and down  
 Within his heart the beauty of those bright  
 New florins, saying, “Lord, to think I might  
 240 Have all that treasure to myself alone!  
 Could there be anyone beneath the throne  
 Of God so happy as I then should be?”



And so the Fiend, our common enemy,  
 Was given power to put it in his thought  
 245 That there was always poison to be bought,  
 And that with poison he could kill his friends.  
 To men in such a state the Devil sends  
 Thoughts of this kind, and has a full permission  
 To lure them on to sorrow and perdition;  
 250 For this young man was utterly content  
 To kill them both and never to repent.

**243 Fiend:** the Devil; Satan.

**249 perdition:** damnation; hell.

**243–251** Why does the Devil have  
 influence over the young man?



And on he ran, he had no thought to tarry,  
 Came to the town, found an apothecary  
 And said, “Sell me some poison if you will,  
 255 I have a lot of rats I want to kill  
 And there’s a polecat too about my yard  
 That takes my chickens and it hits me hard;  
 But I’ll get even, as is only right,  
 With vermin that destroy a man by night.”



The chemist answered, “I’ve a preparation  
 Which you shall have, and by my soul’s salvation  
 If any living creature eat or drink  
 A mouthful, ere he has the time to think,  
 Though he took less than makes a grain of wheat,  
 260 You’ll see him fall down dying at your feet;  
 Yes, die he must, and in so short a while

WORDS  
 TO  
 KNOW

**vermin** (vŭr'mĭn) *n.* small animals that are destructive or carriers of disease



You'd hardly have the time to walk a mile,  
The poison is so strong, you understand."



270 This cursed fellow grabbed into his hand  
The box of poison and away he ran  
Into a neighboring street, and found a man  
Who lent him three large bottles. He withdrew  
And deftly poured the poison into two.  
He kept the third one clean, as well he might,  
275 For his own drink, meaning to work all night  
Stacking the gold and carrying it away.  
And when this rioter, this devil's clay,  
Had filled his bottles up with wine, all three,  
Back to rejoin his comrades sauntered he.



280 Why make a sermon of it? Why waste breath?  
Exactly in the way they'd planned his death  
They fell on him and slew him, two to one.  
Then said the first of them when this was done,  
"Now for a drink. Sit down and let's be merry,  
285 For later on there'll be the corpse to bury."  
And, as it happened, reaching for a sup,  
He took a bottle full of poison up  
And drank; and his companion, nothing loth,  
Drank from it also, and they perished both.



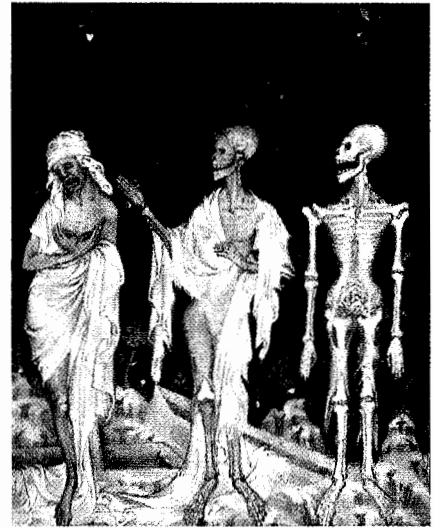
290 There is, in Avicenna's long relation  
Concerning poison and its operation,  
Trust me, no ghastlier section to transcend  
What these two wretches suffered at their end.  
Thus these two murderers received their due,  
295 So did the treacherous young poisoner too.



O cursed sin! O blackguardly excess!  
O treacherous homicide! O wickedness!  
O gluttony that lusted on and diced!



300 Dearly beloved, God forgive your sin  
And keep you from the vice of avarice!



*The Three Dead*, from the *Psalter and Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg, Duchess of Normandy* (14th century), fol.322r. Grisaille, color, gilt, and brown ink on vellum (4 15/16" x 3 9/16"). French, Paris. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Cloisters Collection

**288 nothing loth:** not at all unwilling.

**290 Avicenna's** (äv'Y-sën'ez) **long relation:** a medical text written by an 11th-century Islamic physician; it includes descriptions of various poisons and their effects.

**294** Why does the Pardoner say that the young men "received their due"?

**296 blackguardly:** worthy of a scoundrel; villainous.

**299** The Pardoner is now addressing his fellow pilgrims.

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**saunter** (sôn'ter) *v.* to walk in a slow and leisurely manner; stroll  
**transcend** (trăn-sënd') *v.* to go beyond; surpass



My holy pardon frees you all of this,  
Provided that you make the right approaches,  
That is with sterling, rings, or silver brooches.  
Bow down your heads under this holy bull!

305 Come on, you women, offer up your wool!  
I'll write your name into my ledger; so!  
Into the bliss of Heaven you shall go.  
For I'll absolve you by my holy power,  
You that make offering, clean as at the hour  
310 When you were born. . . . That, sirs, is how I preach.  
And Jesu Christ, soul's healer, aye, the leech  
Of every soul, grant pardon and relieve you  
Of sin, for that is best, I won't deceive you.

**304 bull:** an official document from the pope.

**311 leech:** physician.



One thing I should have mentioned in my tale,  
315 Dear people. I've some relics in my bale  
And pardons too, as full and fine, I hope,  
As any in England, given me by the Pope.  
If there be one among you that is willing  
To have my absolution for a shilling  
320 Devoutly given, come! and do not harden  
Your hearts but kneel in humbleness for pardon;  
Or else, receive my pardon as we go.  
You can renew it every town or so  
Always provided that you still renew  
325 Each time, and in good money, what is due.  
It is an honor to you to have found  
A pardoner with his credentials sound  
Who can absolve you as you ply the spur  
In any accident that may occur.  
330 For instance—we are all at Fortune's beck—  
Your horse may throw you down and break your neck.  
What a security it is to all  
To have me here among you and at call  
With pardon for the lowly and the great  
335 When soul leaves body for the future state!  
And I advise our Host here to begin,  
The most enveloped of you all in sin.  
Come forward, Host, you shall be the first to pay,  
And kiss my holy relics right away.  
340 Only a groat. Come on, unbuckle your purse!"

**319 shilling:** a coin worth twelve pence.

**330–331** The Pardoner reminds the other pilgrims that death may come to them at any time. Why does he emphasize this point?

**340 groat:** a silver coin worth four pence.

## Connect to the Literature

### 1. What Do You Think?

Discuss with a partner your reaction to the ending of this tale.

### Comprehension Check

- Why are the three rioters looking for Death?
- What do they expect to find under the tree, and what do they actually find?
- What happens to the rioters?

## Think Critically

2. **ACTIVE READING PREDICTING** Look back at the predictions you made in your **READER'S NOTEBOOK**. Were you surprised by the tale's ending? If not, explain what details led you to **predict** the ending. If you were surprised, explain what details led you to predict a different ending.

3. Why do you think the rioters set out to kill Death?

THINK ABOUT

- what they learn from the boy and the innkeeper
- their view of themselves
- other factors that may influence their judgment

4. In what sense is the old man's statement that the rioters can find Death under the oak tree true?

5. Why do you think the **character** of the old man is included in the tale?

THINK ABOUT

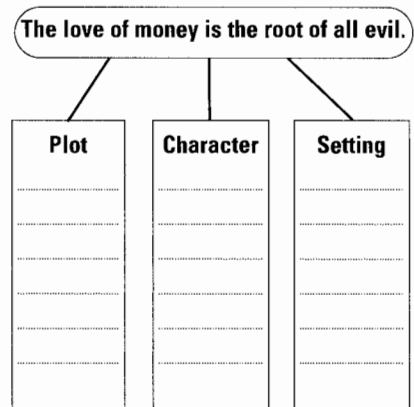
- the story of his life
- his views about Death
- his directions for finding Death

6. In the light of the Pardoner's true **motives**, as revealed in the "Prologue," why is the moral of this tale **ironic**?

## Literary Analysis

**MORAL TALE** "The Pardoner's Tale" is a **moral tale**, a story that teaches a lesson about good and evil or about what is right and wrong in human behavior. In it, the Pardoner teaches that "the love of money is the root of all evil" by showing how characters who suffer from the sin of avarice, or love of money, destroy themselves in the end.

**Paired Activity** Working with a partner, analyze how the story's elements work together to teach the moral. Among the elements to consider are the events of the plot, the personalities and motives of the characters, and the details of the setting. You might organize the elements in a chart like this one.



## Extend Interpretations

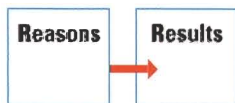
7. **What If?** If the Pardoner hadn't revealed so much information about his practices, how might the other pilgrims have responded to his tale?

8. **Connect to Life** Do you think this story could serve as an effective warning against greed to people today? Why or why not?

## Writing Options

**1. Ye Olde News** Write a news article about the discovery of the rioters' bodies and the events that led up to it. Include interviews with characters.

**2. Personification Paragraph** Write a paragraph explaining the personification of death in "The Pardoner's Tale." First explain the reasons why the Pardoner may have decided to personify death (turn death into a figure with human qualities). Then explain the effects you think this device has on readers. You might organize your ideas in a cause-and-effect diagram like this one.



### Writing Handbook

See page 1368: Cause and Effect.

**3. Moral Tale** Think of other proverbs or quotations about good and evil or right and wrong human behavior—for example, "Cheaters never prosper" or "What goes around, comes around." Then write a brief moral tale with that as its moral. You might state the moral at the start or the end of the tale.

## Activities & Explorations

**1. Oral Retelling** Simplify the language and details of the tale to suit an audience of younger children. Arrange to tell the tale at a library or an elementary school. ~ **SPEAKING AND LISTENING**

**2. Video Adaptation** View the performance of "The Pardoner's Tale." Focus on the portrayals of

the characters, particularly that of the old man. Then, in a class discussion, compare the portrayals with Chaucer's descriptions. ~ **VIEWING AND REPRESENTING**



Literature in Performance

**3. Ballad Version** Turn "The Pardoner's Tale" into a ballad set to music. The music can be original or borrowed from an existing song. Perform the ballad live or audiotape it. ~ **MUSIC**

## Inquiry & Research

**Plague** Write a brief research paper on the outbreak of plague in mid-14th-century Europe. Include information about its origins and its effects on European life and culture. Be sure to document your sources.

## Vocabulary in Action

**EXERCISE A: CONTEXT CLUES** On your paper, fill in each blank with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

1. Filled with distrust, the rioters were \_\_\_\_\_ of one another.
2. Did the rioter \_\_\_\_\_, or did he walk swiftly?
3. Death brought a \_\_\_\_\_ to her once-rosy face.
4. Does the Pardoner tell the tale to \_\_\_\_\_ sinners?
5. It is hard to \_\_\_\_\_ our sinful impulses, but we should try to move beyond them.

**EXERCISE B: MEANING CLUES** On your paper, indicate whether each statement is true or false. Give a reason for your choice.

1. Guests at the inn most likely ordered **vermin** for dinner.
2. Someone who counts his or her money all the time may be guilty of **avarice**.
3. Giving money away is a sign of **covetousness**.
4. You should expect an **adversary** to agree with you.
5. A **parley** might lead to peace between warring factions.

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

adversary  
avarice  
castigate  
covetousness

pallor  
parley  
saunter  
transcend

vermin  
wary

### Building Vocabulary

Several Words to Know in this lesson contain prefixes and suffixes. For an in-depth study of word parts, see page 1104.