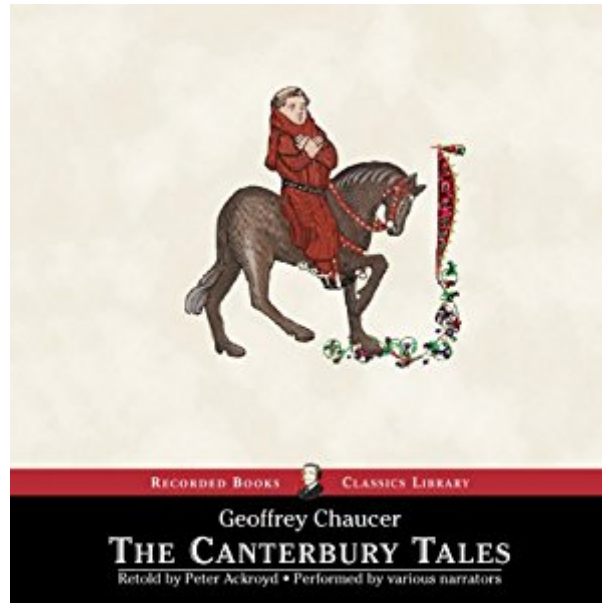


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The Canterbury Tales: A Retelling



Synopsis

Author Peter Ackroyd has won the Somerset Maugham Award, the Whitbread Novel of the Year, and the Guardian Fiction Prize, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Based on Geoffrey Chaucer's immortal work, this retelling of The Canterbury Tales follows a party of travelers as they tell stories amongst themselves about love and chivalry, saints and legends, travel and adventure. Through allegory, satire, and humor, the tales help pass the time during their journey.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

The first great piece of English literature is translated and retold in brilliant "prose" by Peter Ackroyd, maintaining all the meaning, pacing, poetry, significance, voice, and beauty of Chaucer's work of genius, while making it thoroughly engaging and readable. I am so infinitely delighted that the first great piece of English literature is staggeringly beautiful poetry mixed with boob and fart jokes, feminist treatise, and bitchings about love and marriage. Absolutely hilarious, many of the tales (some of the greatest short stories ever crafted) are extended jokes with clever punch lines, being poignant and thought-provoking, as well as beautiful. The characters, the concerns (of fortune and marriage, love, courage, life, death, and god), the stories, are just as fresh and human 600 years later. Grade: A+++

The Canterbury Tales is the greatest poem ever written in Middle English. Its author is Geoffrey Chaucer a London born merchant, soldier, diplomat, poet and gentleman about town. His work has been newly translated with brilliance by the prolific modern novelist Peter Ackroyd. The book is an

entry in the attractively bound Penguin Classics Series. *The Story*: A group of London pilgrims meet for their journey at the Tabard Inn. The host of the pilgrimage is Harry Bailey. Their goal is to take a one day pilgrimage to the shrine of the martyred Thomas a Becket at Canterbury. Along the way, each of the travellers is to tell one or two tales for the instruction, amusement and religious edification of the pilgrims. Bailey promises that whoever tells the best story will be rewarded with a prize. We never learn who won this accolade. The pilgrims come from a variety of social strata in 14th century England. This was the time when the Black Death was a recent memory and English had just begun to be spoken in Parliament. Chaucer wrote in English influencing such much later writers as Charles Dickens. Among the most entertaining stories are those told by the Wife of Bath, the Miller's Tale, The Knight, the Summoner, the Prioress, the Canon's Yeoman and others. The stories are a mixture of bawdy tales with scatological humor, sermons, morality tales and fables. None of the stories are dull! The language is bluntly realistic and the humor is broad. Chaucer took as his model for his story series such progenitors of the art as Ovid, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Stories from the Bible and classical literature are also used. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as retold by Ackroyd will entertain you. Join the pilgrims on the way to Canterbury in one of English literature's greatest works of art!

This particular modern-day translation is delightful. Preserving original word meanings, it manages to keep the beauty and flow of the original language, but in modern English. I was soon howling with laughter at the Wife of Bath's saucy advice on what women really want (I always admired her) and snorting at Chaucer's clever asides. Seems that Chaucer, like his female character, had insightful, modern ideas about women and their relationships with men. Every time I read *Canterbury Tales* I'm in awe of his genius. Also, I'm always startled to see how many old jokes (Take my wife! No, really..PLEASE take her!), sayings and ideas come from the tales.

I was quite impressed with this book. The pace, the story rendering and the capturing of Chaucer's humour in modern language was enlightening. I had read Chaucer, in middle english and in various editions, but all readings were literary and thus distorted by the sainthood bestowed upon Chaucer. Going back after enjoying Ackroyd's rendering illuminated both the Original in Middle English and fine tuned the resonance therein. Highly recommended, especially for anyone making a first foray into the tales.

Chaucer's masterwork is difficult for the modern man as it is written in a language more alien than

Russian or Chinese to the average American. Peter Ackroyd's retelling opens these marvelous stories to the masses.

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