



The Canterbury Tales (Dover Thrift Editions)

Geoffrey Chaucer

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A group of pilgrims bound for Canterbury Cathedral agree to pass the weary miles by taking turns at storytelling. The travelers ? noble, coarse, jolly, and pious ? offer a vibrant portrait of fourteenth-century English life. Their narratives form English literature's greatest collection of chivalric romances, bawdy tales, fables, legends, and other stories.

The Canterbury Tales reflects a society in transition, as a middle class began to emerge from England's feudal system. Craftsmen and laborers ride side by side with the gentry on the road to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, and their discussions and arguments about ethical issues mirror their changing world. The pilgrims' conversations and stories also reveal their individual personalities, and Chaucer's vivid, realistic characterizations assured the *Tales* an instant and enduring success. Each pilgrim's story can be read separately and appreciated in its own right; all appear here in a lucid translation into modern English verse by J. U. Nicolson.

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