

Geoffrey Chaucer

- Born c. 1343
- From a London family of vintners
 - Bourgeois - Middle Class
- Fought in The Hundred Years War –
Taken Prisoner and Ransomed by
King Edward III
- Held many positions of court
 - His travels put him in contact with people of many different ranks of life
- Legacy: *The Canterbury Tales*
- First legitimate use of the English vernacular
 - First to coin a work focusing on multiple classes
- Died of unknown causes c. 1400
- First person buried at “poet’s corner”



The Canterbury Tales

- A pilgrimage of “assorted lots” to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket
 - English Archbishop assassinated by followers of Henry II for standing against a corrupt rule
 - Canonized for his loyalty and moral stance
- First respected work written in common English
- First use of varied 1st person
(diction/syntax/vernacular/idioms/idiosyncrasies)
- Covered a wide range of English castes:
 - **Church:** Prioress (nun), Monk, Friar, Parson, Summoner, Pardoner
 - **Court/Nobility:** Knight, Squire, Sergeant at Law, Franklin, Manciple, Reeve
 - **Commoner:** Yeoman, Merchant, Oxford Cleric, Haberdasher, Dyer, Carpenter, Carpet Maker, Cook, Skipper, Doctor, Wife of Bath, Plowman, Miller, Host, Narrator
- Never completed