***The Canterbury Tales*: Prologue**

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| **Here bygynneth the Book  of the tales of Caunterbury** | **Here begins the Book of the Tales of Canterbury** |
| 1: Whan that aprill with his shoures soote 2: The droghte of march hath perced to the roote, 3: And bathed every veyne in swich licour 4: Of which vertu engendred is the flour; 5: Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breeth 6: Inspired hath in every holt and heeth 7: Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne 8: Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne, 9: And smale foweles maken melodye, 10: That slepen al the nyght with open ye 11: (so priketh hem nature in hir corages); 12: Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages, 13: And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes, 14: To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes; 15: And specially from every shires ende 16: Of engelond to caunterbury they wende, 17: The hooly blisful martir for to seke, 18: That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke. | When April with his showers sweet with fruit The drought of March has pierced unto the root And bathed each vein with liquor that has power To generate therein and sire the flower; When Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath, Quickened again, in every holt and heath, The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun Into the Ram one half his course has run, And many little birds make melody That sleep through all the night with open eye (So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)- Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage, And palmers to go seeking out strange strands, To distant shrines well known in sundry lands. And specially from every shire's end Of England they to Canterbury wend, The holy blessed martyr there to seek Who helped them when they lay so ill and weal |
| 19: Bifil that in that seson on a day, 20: In southwerk at the tabard as I lay 21: Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage 22: To caunterbury with ful devout corage, 23: At nyght was come into that hostelrye 24: Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye, 25: Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle 26: In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle, 27: That toward caunterbury wolden ryde. 28: The chambres and the stables weren wyde, 29: And wel we weren esed atte beste. 30: And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, 31: So hadde I spoken with hem everichon 32: That I was of hir felaweshipe anon, 33: And made forward erly for to ryse, 34: To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse. | Befell that, in that season, on a day In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay Ready to start upon my pilgrimage To Canterbury, full of devout homage, There came at nightfall to that hostelry Some nine and twenty in a company Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all That toward Canterbury town would ride. The rooms and stables spacious were and wide, And well we there were eased, and of the best. And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest, So had I spoken with them, every one, That I was of their fellowship anon, And made agreement that we'd early rise To take the road, as you I will apprise. |
| 35: But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space, 36: Er that I ferther in this tale pace, 37: Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun 38: To telle yow al the condicioun 39: Of ech of hem, so as it semed me, 40: And whiche they weren, and of what degree, 41: And eek in what array that they were inne; 42: And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne. | But none the less, whilst I have time and space, Before yet farther in this tale I pace, It seems to me accordant with reason To inform you of the state of every one Of all of these, as it appeared to me, And who they were, and what was their degree, And even how arrayed there at the inn; And with a knight thus will I first begin. |