

CHAUCER

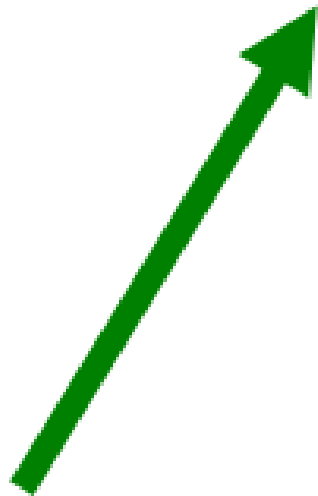
(1343-1400?)

Chaucer was a diplomat



journeys to Italy in 1372-1378

In Italy Chaucer read
Boccaccio's *Decameron*



BOCCACCIO'S *DECAMERON*
(1348-1353?)

FRAMEWORK

During the time of the Black Death (Black Plague), a group of seven young women and three young men escape from Florence (because of the plague): they go to a villa in the countryside of Fiesole for two weeks.

To pass the evenings, every member of the group tells a story each night (except for four days).

**At the end of the two weeks
they have told 100 stories.**

The Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer

Canterbury Tales



The tales are structured as a series of stories told by a group of thirty pilgrims who are going to Canterbury on a pilgrimage to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket.



Thomas Becket was the **Archbishop of Canterbury**. He was murdered in 1170 by order of the King Henry II of England.

The whole cycle is prefaced by a **General Prologue**, in which the narrator gives us a brief (= *short*) description of each of the pilgrims, and each tale is preceded by a prologue in which the pilgrim tells us something about himself/herself.

The pilgrims meet at a tavern in Southwark, near London: the Tabard Inn.

It is the host of this tavern, Harry Bailly, who proposes **a tale-telling competition** as a way of passing the time on the journey.

Every pilgrim will have to tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two stories on the way back.

And there will be a prize (a free dinner) for the best story.

How many stories should
The Canterbury Tales contain?

→ 30 pilgrims ...

... each pilgrim should tell

→ four stories (two + two)...

$$30 \times 4 = 120$$

Chaucer should have written 120 tales. Unfortunately, he died before finishing his work: he wrote only 24 stories.