Teacher Notes

The Rise and Fall of Medieval Society

Activity 2: Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales

Activity at a Glance

- **Subject:** Social Studies
- **Subject Area:** World History
- **Category:** Middle Ages
- **Topic:** Medieval Society
- **Grade Level:** 9 – 12
- **Prerequisites:** None
- **Total Teaching Time:** 50 minutes

Materials

- TI-84 Plus/TI-83 Plus
- TI External Keyboard
- TI Connectivity Cable
- StudyCards™ software
- StudyCards™ AppVar
  TALES.8xv
- NoteFolio™ application
- NoteFolio™ AppVar
  TALES2.8xv
- Teacher's Reading Guide to Chaucer's "General Prologue" (optional)
- Student Work Sheet

Activity Overview

Students will read and analyze the primary source document, "The General Prologue," from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to identify aspects of medieval culture. Students will then write character sketches to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of living during the Middle Ages.

Teachers may use the optional Teacher's Reading Guide to "The General Prologue" for background information and an example of a character sketch based on the description of the Miller.
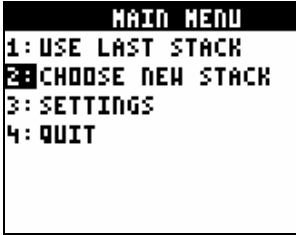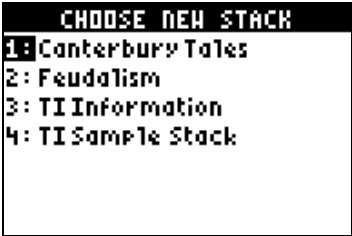
Directions

Before the Activity Begins

1. Develop a coding system for student assignments. The code might be the student number and name of the activity, or the first initial and four letters of the student's last name, in addition to the activity. This coding will allow ease of grading throughout the lesson.

2. Students should be familiar with navigating within the StudyCards™ software and NoteFolio™ application.

3. Download the StudyCards™ stack, **TALES.8xv**, and the NoteFolio™ file, **TALES2.8xv**, to each of the graphing calculators using either the TI Connectivity Cable or the TI-Navigator™ classroom network.

4. Students will use the StudyCards™ stack to answer questions in the NoteFolio™ file, **TALES2.8xv**.

5. Students rename and save their NoteFolio™ answers following the coding, or naming convention, provided by the teacher. The commands for doing this are **File > Save As >** *Type New Name* **> OK**.

6. Have students define and discuss the term *vernacular* either in small groups or as a class activity.

7. Place students in small groups of three or four.

During the Activity

Procedure

1. Ask students to read the beginning passage of "The General Prologue," within their groups, and then paraphrase selections from "The General Prologue," to better understand the meaning of Chaucer's writing.

2. Student teams open both the **TALES.8xv** and the NoteFolio™ file, **TALES2.8xv**, on separate graphing calculators.

3. Students open the StudyCards™ software and stack.

   a. Press APPS, scroll until you see **StudyCrd**, and then press Í   . The StudyCards™ software opens.

   b. Press any key to continue.

   c. Scroll to **CHOOSE NEW STACK**, and then press Í   .

   MAIN MENU
   1: USE LAST STACK
   2: CHOOSE NEW STACK
   3: SETTINGS
   4: QUIT

   d. Scroll to **Canterbury Tales**, and then press Í   .

   CHOOSE NEW STACK
   1: Canterbury Tales
   2: Feudalism
   3: TI Information
   4: TI Sample Stack

e. Press any key to continue. The first side of the first card is displayed after the StudyCards™ software identification screen clears.

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The following excerpt is
taken from The General
Prologue of The Canterbury
Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Please use this StudyCard
stack to answer questions
(scroll down)
MENU YES  NO  FLIP STAT
```

f. Scroll using ⊡ to read the entire card. Press r   to flip the card. Scroll using ⊡, as necessary.

4. Students open the NoteFolio™ application and file.

a. Press [APPS], scroll until you see **NoteFlio**, and then press Í   . The NoteFolio™ application opens.

b. Press any key to continue.

c. Press **FILE** (s   key), select **Open**, and then press Í   . Scroll to **TALES2**, and then press Í   .

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1:New      ◆N
2:Open...   ◆O
3:Save     ◆S
4:Save As...
5:Review ◆R
6:Exit
FILE EDIT WRAP HELP INFO
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      Open...
     CONTRCT2
     CORPLPUN
     HAMMRBI
     PLAGUE
     TALES2
     UTOPIA
   OK          CANCEL
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Ledieval Society
- Activity 2
Canterbury Tales


Please use the
StudyCard stack,
TALES2          MENU
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5. Ask students to review the StudyCards™ stack, **Canterbury Tales**, and enter answers into the NoteFolio™ file, **TALES2**.

7. Ask students to determine the purpose of Chaucer's pilgrimage.

8. Ask students to, individually, complete character sketches of ten characters in the "The General Prologue."

9. Ask students to, individually, write a paper identifying the advantages and disadvantages of living in medieval society.

10. Ask students to, individually, save and rename a NoteFolio™ file to turn in at the end of class. To rename the file, press **File > Save As >** *Type New Name* **> OK**.

Summary

Collect the student NoteFolio™ files using the TI Connectivity Cable or TI-Navigator™ classroom network. Using the NoteFolio™ Plug-in for Microsoft® Word, you may store, edit, print, e-mail, or re-send students' NoteFolio™ files.

After the Activity

Extension Ideas

1. Ask students to read an excerpt from Dante Alighieri's "The Inferno," from *The Divine Comedy,* and Thomas Aquinas' "Summa Theologica," to compare and contrast the literary styles of scholarly and vernacular literary styles.

Teacher's Reading Guide to Chaucer's "The General Prologue" (optional)

In April, Geoffrey Chaucer joins a group of pilgrims at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, across the Thames from London, on their way to the Shrine of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury. He describes almost all of the twenty-nine pilgrims in this company, each of whom practices a different trade (often dishonestly). The Host of the Tabard, Harry Bailey, proposes that he join them as a guide and that each of the pilgrims should tell tales (two on the outward journey, two on the way back); whoever tells the best tale would win a supper, at the other pilgrims' cost, when they return.

The pilgrims agree, and Chaucer warns his readers that he must repeat each tale exactly as he heard it, even though it might contain frank language. The next morning, the company sets out, pausing at the Watering of St. Thomas, where all draw straws, and the Knight is selected to tell the first tale.

Use the following pre-reading questions to familiarize students with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

What was the purpose of a medieval pilgrimage? For what reason was it considered useful to visit a saint's shrine or to touch his/her relics? How many pilgrims are there? Are they a homogeneous group?

Pay attention to the individual portraits of the pilgrims. From what walks of life do they come? As you read the various portraits, pick out a key word or phrase to describe each pilgrim. Pay attention to physical descriptions. What do the descriptions reveal about the pilgrims' characters? Which figures are painted in a positive or in a negative light?

Pay particular attention to the portraits of the various religious figures (Prioress, Monk, Friar, Parson, Pardoner). How would you describe each of these figures? What do we learn about their past lives and characters? What seems to be Chaucer's attitude toward the Church? Is he anti-religious?

Ask students to read and rewrite in their own words, on the Student Work Sheet, the following lines from the Introduction to "The General Prologue" (lines 1 – 42).

1   When April with its sweet-smelling showers
2   Has pierced the drought of March to the root,
3   And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid
4   By the power of which the flower is created;
5   When the West Wind also with its sweet breath,
6   In every wood and field has breathed life into,
7   The tender new leaves, and the young sun
8   Has run half its course in Aries,
9   And small fowls make melody,
10 Those that sleep all the night with open eyes
11 (So Nature incites them in their hearts),
12 Then folk long to go on pilgrimages,
13 And professional pilgrims (long) to seek foreign shores,
14 To (go to) distant shrines, known in various lands;

15 And specially from every shire's end
16 Of England to Canterbury they travel,
17 To seek the holy blessed martyr,
18 Who helped them when they were sick.

19 It happened that in that season on a day,
20 In Southwark at the Tabard Inn as I lay
21 Ready to go on my pilgrimage
22 To Canterbury with a very devout spirit,
23 At night had come into that hostelry
24 Well nine and twenty in a company
25 Of various sorts of people, by chance fallen
26 In fellowship, and they were all pilgrims,
27 Who intended to ride toward Canterbury.
28 The bedrooms and the stables were spacious,
29 And we were well accommodated in the best way.
30 And in brief, when the sun was (gone) to rest,
31 I had so spoken with everyone of them
32 That I was of their fellowship straightway,
33 And made agreement to rise early,
34 To take our way where I (will) tell you.

35 But nonetheless, while I have time and opportunity,
36 Before I proceed further in this tale,
37 It seems to me in accord with reason
38 To tell you all the circumstances
39 Of each of them, as it seemed to me,
40 And who they were, and of what social rank,
41 And also what clothing that they were in;
42 And at a knight then will I first begin.

Ask students to use the following description and sample character sketch of the Miller to guide them in creating their own character sketches, on the Student Work Sheet.

THE MILLER

The miller was a stout churl, be it known,
Hardy and big of brawn and big of bone;
Which was well proved, for when he went on lam
At wrestling, never failed he of the ram.
He was a chunky fellow, broad of build;
He'd heave a door from hinges if he willed,
Or break it through, by running, with his head.
His beard, as any sow or fox, was red,
And broad it was as if it were a spade.
Upon the coping of his nose he had
A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,
Red as the bristles in an old sow's ears;
His nostrils they were black and very wide.

A sword and buckler bore he by his side.
His mouth was like a furnace door for size.
He was a jester and could poetize,
But mostly all of sin and ribaldries.
He could steal corn and full thrice charge his fees;
And yet he had a thumb of gold, begad.
A white coat and blue hood he wore, this lad.
A bagpipe he could blow well, be it known,
And with that same he brought us out of town.

The Miller's Character Sketch

Profession: Miller – acquires food goods and sells them to the public

Physical Description: Large man; strong; red hair and beard; wart on nose

Character Traits: Loud; funny; entertaining; musical; thief; entrepreneurial

Name: _____

Date: _____

Translating lines from the Introduction to "The General Prologue"

Read the following translation of lines 1-18 of the Introduction to "The General Prologue."

1   When April with its sweet-smelling showers
2   Has pierced the drought of March to the root,
3   And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid
4   By the power of which the flower is created;
5   When the West Wind also with its sweet breath,
6   In every wood and field has breathed life into,
7   The tender new leaves, and the young sun
8   Has run half its course in Aries,
9   And small fowls make melody,
10 Those that sleep all the night with open eyes
11 (So Nature incites them in their hearts),
12 Then folk long to go on pilgrimages,
13 And professional pilgrims (long) to seek foreign shores,
14 To (go to) distant shrines, known in various lands;
15 And specially from every shire's end
16 Of England to Canterbury they travel,
17 To seek the holy blessed martyr,
18 Who helped them when they were sick.

On the lines below, rewrite the previous lines in your own words.

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Read the following translation of lines 19-34 of the Introduction to "The General Prologue."

19 It happened that in that season on a day,
20 In Southwark at the Tabard Inn as I lay
21 Ready to go on my pilgrimage
22 To Canterbury with a very devout spirit,
23 At night had come into that hostelry
24 Well nine and twenty in a company
25 Of various sorts of people, by chance fallen
26 In fellowship, and they were all pilgrims,
27 Who intended to ride toward Canterbury.
28 The bedrooms and the stables were spacious,
29 And we were well accommodated in the best way.
30 And in brief, when the sun was (gone) to rest,
31 I had so spoken with everyone of them
32 That I was of their fellowship straightway,
33 And made agreement to rise early,
34 To take our way where I (will) tell you.

On the lines below, rewrite the previous lines in your own words.

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Read the following translation of lines 35-42 of the Introduction to "The General Prologue."

35 But nonetheless, while I have time and opportunity,
36 Before I proceed further in this tale,
37 It seems to me in accord with reason
38 To tell you all the circumstances
39 Of each of them, as it seemed to me,
40 And who they were, and of what social rank,
41 And also what clothing that they were in;
42 And at a knight then will I first begin.

On the lines below, rewrite the previous lines in your own words.

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Character study – The Miller

Read the following description of the Miller.

THE MILLER

The miller was a stout churl, be it known,
Hardy and big of brawn and big of bone;
Which was well proved, for when he went on lam
At wrestling, never failed he of the ram.
He was a chunky fellow, broad of build;
He'd heave a door from hinges if he willed,
Or break it through, by running, with his head.
His beard, as any sow or fox, was red,
And broad it was as if it were a spade.
Upon the coping of his nose he had
A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,
Red as the bristles in an old sow's ears;
His nostrils they were black and very wide.
A sword and buckler bore he by his side.
His mouth was like a furnace door for size.
He was a jester and could poetize,
But mostly all of sin and ribaldries.
He could steal corn and full thrice charge his fees;
And yet he had a thumb of gold, begad.
A white coat and blue hood he wore, this lad.
A bagpipe he could blow well, be it known,
And with that same he brought us out of town.

Read the sample character sketch of The Miller.

The Miller's Character Sketch

Profession: Miller – acquires food goods and sells them to the public

Physical Description: Large man; strong; red hair and beard; wart on nose

Character Traits: Loud; funny; entertaining; musical; thief; entrepreneurial

Choose another of the characters from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and create your own character sketch.