



Geoffrey Chaucer

The Canterbury Tales



- An **English author, poet, philosopher, bureaucrat, courtier and diplomat**
- One of the greatest narrative poet of English
- Father of the English poetry, who made a crucial contribution to English literature in using English at a time when much court poetry was still written in Anglo-Norman or Latin.



EARLY LIFE

- c.1340-1400
- Born to a **middle** class family
- His family name derives from the French ***chausseur***, meaning ***“shoemaker”***
- Son of a prosperous wine merchant



-In mid teens, he was placed in the service of the Countess of Ulster so he could obtain more education and be schooled in court and society life

-Thus, he would have learned Latin and some Greek as well as perhaps some French and Italian



- Different jobs** = page, courtier, diplomat, civil servant,
- Travelled all over **Europe**
 - Chaucer joined the royal household and became a **trusted messenger** and minor diplomat
 - Chaucer was frequently sent to the continent on **secret business for the King**
 - Some of these trips were to Italy where he became acquainted with the works of the great Italian authors:
Boccaccio, Dante, Petrarch



LATER LIFE

- Fluent in English, Italian, Latin, and French
- Worked as a government official under three different kings = **high social status**
- Was captured as a prisoner during the **Hundred Year's War** □ King paid his ransom
- Died of unknown causes –
- Chaucer was one of the first writers to be buried in the **Poets' Corner** in Westminster Abbey.





3 PERIODS OF ACTIVITY:

1)The first period includes his early work (to 1370), which is based largely on *French models.*

2)The second period (up to c.1387) is called his *Italian period.*

3)The final period, in which he achieved his fullest artistic power, with his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales* (written mostly after 1387) is known as *English period.*



CHAUCER'S WORKS:

The Canterbury Tales

Book of the Duchess

The House of Fame

The Parliament of Fowles

The Legend of Good Women

Troilus and Criseyde



WRITING STYLES

- Often called **the father of English poetry**
- Most scholars still wrote in **Latin**
- He wrote in the **vernacular** or language of the commoners □ Now known as **Middle English**
- **Allegory:**
 - A story in which the character, settings, and events stand for abstract or moral concepts.
 - It has a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning.
 - Popular in the Middle Ages.
- **Satire:** witty language used to convey insult
- **Rhythmic pattern**



THE CANTERBURY TALES

- *The Canterbury Tales* is considered one of the greatest works in the English language
- The narrator meets 29 pilgrims at an inn and travels with them to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury. They decide to have a contest: whoever can tell the best tale wins a free dinner at the inn.
- *Canterbury Tales* can be considered “estates satire”
- Three “Estates” in European feudal society
 - **Peasants** work (agricultural labor)
 - **Clergy** pray
 - **Nobles** fight (and rule)
- Begun: **1386**
- Planned: **120** tales
- Completed: **24** (3 unfinished)



CHAUCER'S PLAN

- A Prologue followed by a series of stories and linking dialogues and commentaries
- Each character would tell 2 stories going and 2 stories coming home
 - Traveling TO???
- **Canterbury** of course. That is why his work is called :

The Canterbury Tales



London

Edenbridge
(Hever Castle)

Canterbury

Dover

Brighton



-Chaucer wrote in **English** (*Middle English*), rather than French or Latin like many of his fellow writers.

-It meant that ordinary folk could enjoy ***The Canterbury Tales*** and their vivid characters.

-Thus, the stories, with their earthy humor and vivid dialogue, were a runaway success.



-The book **frames a story** of characters on a religious pilgrimage to Canterbury, so it is composed in the form of **framework!!!**

-The **characters represent a concise portrait of an entire nation.**

-The characters tell stories that reflect “**everyman**” in the universal pilgrimage of life.



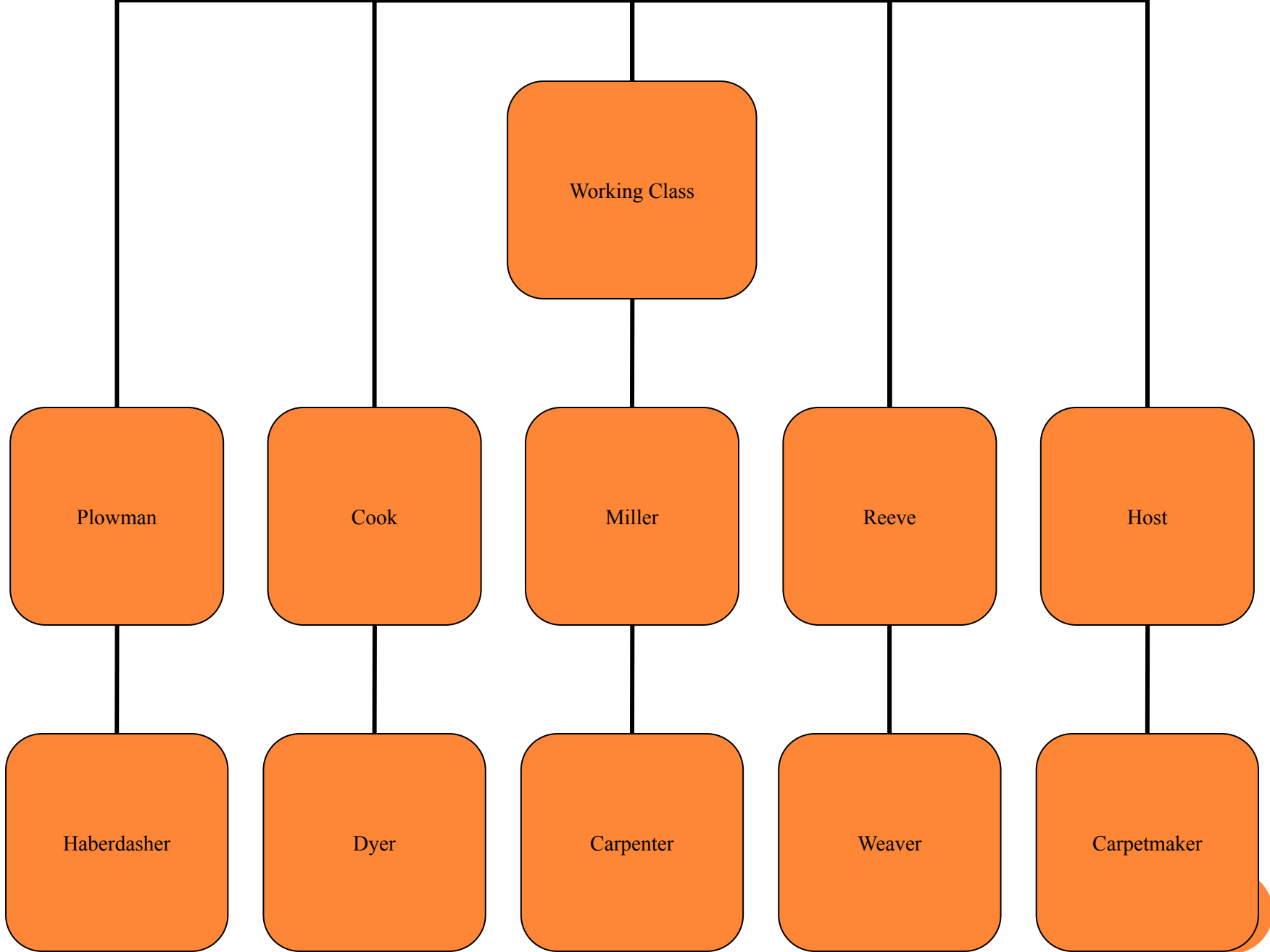


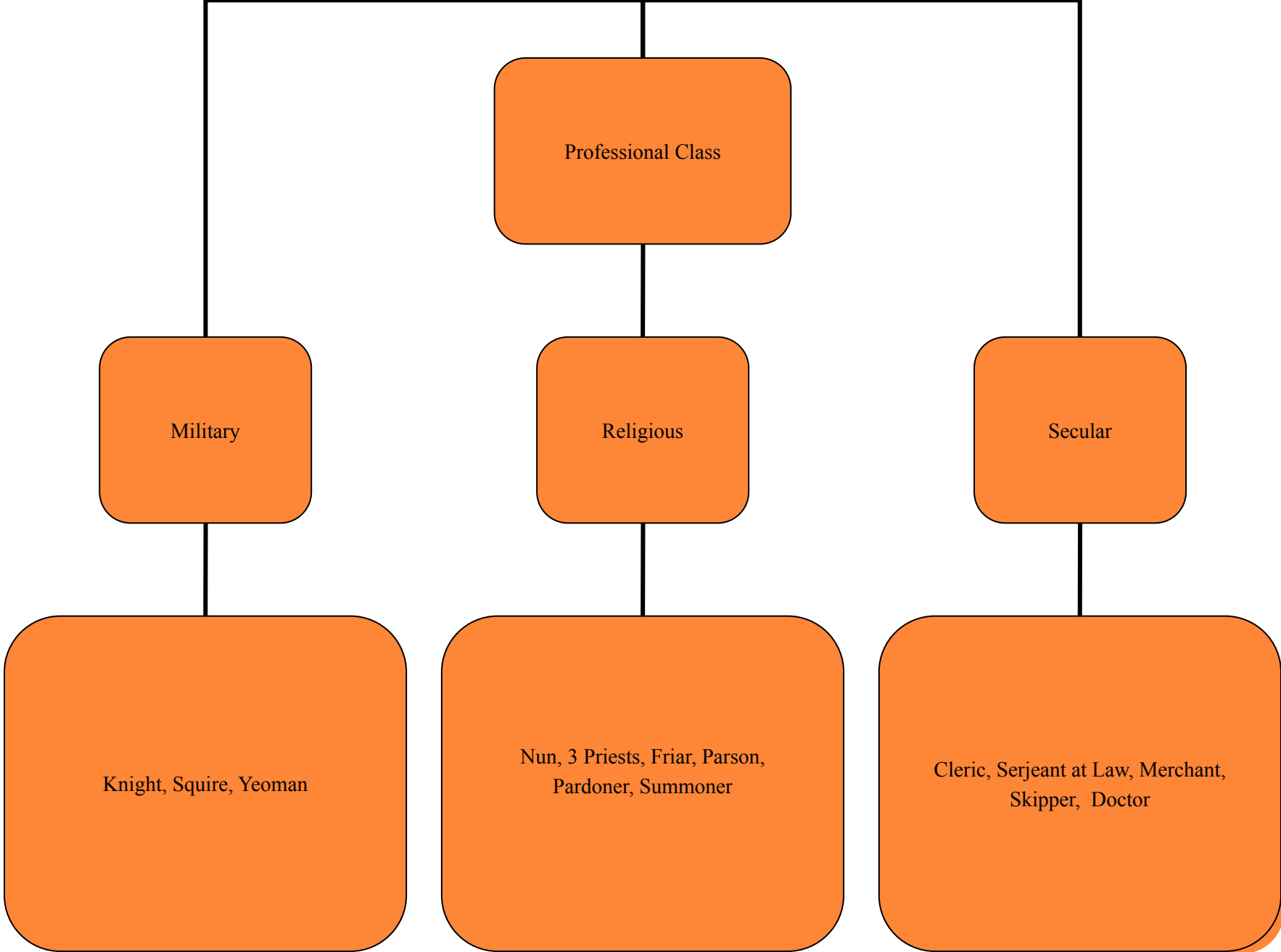


CHARACTERS

- Narrator (“Chaucer”)
- Host
- Knight
- Squire
- Yeoman
- Prioress
- Second Nun
- Three Priests
- Monk
- Friar
- Merchant
- Oxford Clerk
- Man of Law
- Franklin
- Haberdasher, D, C, W,C-M
- Cook
- Shipman
- Physician
- Wife of Bath
- Parson
- Plowman
- Manciple
- Reeve
- Miller
- Summoner
- Pardoner







CHAUCER'S *CANTERBURY TALES*

-Takes **representatives of English society** on a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral (Shrine of Archbishop Thomas Becket)

-**Pilgrims** — each has speech and tale that matches a real person during his (Chaucer's) time



THE PROLOGUE – MEDIEVAL ENGLISH

- Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
- The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
- And bathed every veyne in swich licour
- Of which vertu engendred is the flour,
- Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
- Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
- The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
- Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
- And smale foweles maken melodye,
- That slepen al the nyght with open ye
- (so priketh hem Nature in hir corages),
- Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,



THE PROLOGUE – MODERN ENGLISH

- 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,



PILGRIM PRESENTATIONS: THE MILLER

- *“Chap of sixteen stone” (561)*
- *“Big in brawn and bone” (562)*
- *“Broad, knotty and short-shouldered” (565)*
- *“Broad, red beard” (568-569)*
- *“Wart with red, bristly hair growing on his nose” (571-572)*
- *“Black nostrils and mighty mouth” (573-575)*
- *Wore blue hood with a white coat (582)*



STORIES TOLD BY PILGRIMS:

- THE KNIGHT'S TALE
THE MILLER'S TALE.
THE REEVE'S TALE.
THE COOK'S TALE.
THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.
THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.
THE FRIAR'S TALE.
THE SOMPNOUR'S TALE.
- THE CLERK'S TALE.
THE MERCHANT'S TALE.
THE SQUIRE'S TALE.
THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.



THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

CHAUCER'S TALE OF SIR THOPAS.

CHAUCER'S TALE OF
MELIBOEUS.

THE MONK'S TALE.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S
TALE.

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

THE PARSON'S TALE.

