

Learning objective: Revise what we know about the knight and the impression Chaucer gives of him. Compare and contrast him to the Prioress. Continue to look at the change in language from Middle English to modern.

Starter:

Students answer following questions on the Knight's portrait

How much do you know about the knight?

1. What five characteristics is the knight said to love?
2. How many 'mortal batailles' has the knight been to?
3. Can you find some of the names of the countries?
4. How do we know that he was paid for his fighting?
5. What sort of condition is his horse in?

Introduction:

Next we are going to look at the Prioress's portrait. What is a Prioress? Listen to the Prioress's portrait at: http://academics.vmi.edu/english/audio/GP_Prioress_Baragona.html.

Development:

Students should have a go at the sheet on the Prioress, working out where the modern translation of the Prioress's portrait goes on the Middle English version and then answer the questions underneath. Circulate and help students as needed – point out how they can identify some words because they are either identical or nearly the same. Suggest students start by looking for the opening line.

Extension:

Students continue to add to their own glossaries of 'language change' from Middle English to modern English. Can they see any patterns in the Middle English words?

Plenary:

Ask students what comparisons and contrasts we can make between the Knight and the Prioress – What sort of clothes do they wear? What does this suggest about them? Do they seem happy or sad characters? How religious do they seem? How does Chaucer feel about them?

The portrait of the Prioress

Some of the modern translation of the Prioress's Portrait is written below but it has all been muddled up. See if you can match the lines up to their Middle English version.

She was so charitable and piteous
A string of beads and gauded all with green;
Caught in a trap, though it were dead or bled.
Whereon there was first written a crowned A,
But certainly she had a fair forehead;
There was also a nun, a prioress,
Of coral small about her arm she'd bear
Right decorous her pleated wimple was;
And under, <i>Amor vincit omnia</i>
That she would weep if she but saw a mouse
At table she had been well taught withal,
And therefrom hung a brooch of golden sheen

Write these lines next to the correct Middle English line on your copy of the Prioress's Portrait.

1. What sort of impression do you get of the Prioress from these lines?
2. Can you work out what else Chaucer writes about her in the rest of her Portrait?
3. What do you think Chaucer thought about the Prioress? Explain your reasons.
4. Why might Chaucer feel this way?
5. Can you find out what *Amor vincit omnia* means?
6. Does this alter what you think Chaucer's attitude is towards the Prioress?

The Prioress's Portrait from the General Prologue in Middle English

Ther was also a Nonne, a prioresse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy;
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenssh of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel ytaught was she with alle;
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fynGRES in hir sauce depe;
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.
Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.
And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to counterfete cheere
Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,
Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after *Amor vincit omnia*.

A modern translation of the Prioress's Portrait

There was also a nun, a prioress,
Who, in her smiling, modest was and coy;
Her greatest oath was but By Saint Eloy!
And she was known as Madam Eglantine.
Full well she sang the services divine,
Intoning through her nose, becomingly;
And fair she spoke her French, and fluently,
After the school of Stratford-at-the-Bow,
For French of Paris was not hers to know.
At table she had been well taught withal,
And never from her lips let morsels fall,
Nor dipped her fingers deep in sauce, but ate
With so much care the food upon her plate
That never driblet fell upon her breast.
In courtesy she had delight and zest.
Her upper lip was always wiped so clean
That in her cup was no iota seen
Of grease, when she had drunk her draught of wine
Becomingly she reached for meat to dine.
And certainly delighting in good sport,
She was right pleasant, amiable- in short.
She was at pains to counterfeit the look
Of courtliness, and stately manners took,
And would be held worthy of reverence.
But, to say something of her moral sense,
She was so charitable and piteous
That she would weep if she but saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, though it were dead or bled.
She had some little dogs, too, that she fed
On roasted flesh, or milk and fine white bread.
But sore she'd weep if one of them were dead,
Or if men smote it with a rod to smart:
For pity ruled her, and her tender heart.
Right decorous her pleated wimple was;
Her nose was fine; her eyes were blue as glass;
Her mouth was small and therewith soft and red;
But certainly she had a fair forehead;
It was almost a full span broad, I own,
For, truth to tell, she was not undergrown.
Neat was her cloak, as I was well aware.
Of coral small about her arm she'd bear
A string of beads and gauded all with green;
And therefrom hung a brooch of golden sheen
Whereon there was first written a crowned A,
And under, Amor vincit omnia

From: www.canterburytales.org