"General Prologue," *Canterbury Tales*: Informational/explanatory Writing and Close Reading Task

Text grade band placement: 11-12	
Text	**Text Complexity Analysis**
Title: General Prologue, *The Canterbury Tales* **Author:** Geoffrey Chaucer **Citation/Publication info:** Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales.* Trans. Nevill Coghill. *Prentice Hall Literature: The British Tradition.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012. 97-119. Print. **Link:** http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/CT-prolog-para.html	**Quantitative:** Lexile: 1310L

	Qualitative:
	  Meaning - Several levels/layers and competing elements of meaning that are difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit or subtle, often ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text
	
	  Text Structure - Narration: Complex and/or unconventional; many shifts in point of view and/or perspective; Order of Events: Not in chronological order; heavy use of flashback
	
	  Language Features - Conventionality: Dense and complex; contains abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language; Vocabulary: Some use of unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language
	
	  Knowledge Demands - Life Experiences: Explores many complex and sophisticated themes; experiences are distinctly different from the common reader; Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge: Some references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements; Subject Matter Knowledge: requires some prior content knowledge

	Reader and Task: The Common Core State Standards name *The Canterbury Tales* as an exemplar text for the 11-12 grade band. It is important to note that even in a translated version, the text remains a challenge given the complexities of meaning, text structure, language features and knowledge demands placed upon the reader.
ELA Common Core Standards addressed by task	

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

What key insights should students take from this text?

- Through reading Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* students will gain a better understanding of fourteenth-century English society.
- Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in the *General Prologue* as they relate to medieval society.
- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it: specifically, the author's implied meaning.

Text-Dependent Questions

1. **Comprehension** What is the tone of the first sentence?
2. **Comprehension** How does Chaucer identify the pilgrims?
3. **Interpretation** Who is the narrator and what is the role of the narrator in the *General Prologue*?
4. **Comprehension** What is significant about Canterbury? What is the purpose of the pilgrimage?
5. **Significance** What is the most significant characteristic used to describe each of the following characters? How does it relate to Chaucer's view of medieval society?
   a. Prioress
   b. Monk
   c. Merchant
   d. Wife of Bath
6. **Analysis** What hierarchy exists among the pilgrims with regards to the order in which they are introduced?
7. **Analysis** How does Chaucer's use of characterization vary among the pilgrims? What affect does this have on the reader?
8. **Analysis** What is the purpose of the General Prologue? Cite examples from the text to support analysis.

Writing Mode	Writing Prompt
Informational/explanatory	Consider: How does literature shape or reflect society? Write an essay in which you analyze how the characters in the General Prologue reflect the social classes of medieval society. How do these characters reveal the author's purpose? Support your analysis with evidence, citing specific examples from the text, including Chaucer's use of social commentary. Your essay will be evaluated using the TN 9-12 Informational/explanatory rubric. Writing Rubric: http://tncore.org/english_language_arts/assessment/scoring_resources.aspx

Scaffolding and support for special education students, English language learners, and struggling readers:
Encouraging students to make use of footnotes, side notes, and dictionaries (electronic or otherwise); to break down long passages to the clause or phrase level; to read and re-read; and to check their own understanding throughout will help them to achieve success.