

# Online Chaucer Resources

This document collects some suggested external resources for further reading. You may also be interested in [online Chaucer resources from The Bodleian Libraries](#).

## General Resources and Online Texts

[Open Canterbury Tales](#) offers university-level chapters on a wide range of topics, including [Protest, Complaint and Uprising in the Miller's Tale](#), [Love and Marriage](#) and [Rape and Justice](#) in The Wife of Bath's Tale, as well as reference chapters on Chaucer's language and contemporary social and political history.

[Harvard's Chaucer pages](#) contain a wealth of useful information on contemporary authors, medieval literary genres, medieval life and culture, tips on reading Middle English, as well as [texts and translations of all the tales](#) to clarify any lines you find tricky. For another digital edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, including analysis and notes, visit [Owleyes.org](#). The full teaching notes on different topics are subscription only, but the online text and annotations are useful.

The [British Library's Chaucer homepage](#) includes a timeline to see Chaucer manuscripts and contemporary medieval texts in chronological order. You can read [Caxton's influential edition of Chaucer](#) and see some images of William Morris's gorgeous [Kelmescott edition](#). The BL's online resources include [essays on medieval texts and literary themes](#), including [a close reading of The Merchant's Tale](#) and [gender roles in The Wife of Bath's Tale](#). For wider context, the articles on [Caxton](#), [Women Writers](#), and [Saints](#) may also be of interest.

Oxford University currently offers [ten podcasts about Chaucer](#).

In Our Time is a Radio 4 programme where university researchers discuss a topic in detail: there is an [In Our Time episode on Chaucer](#) but there are also many [programmes on medieval topics](#) to expand your understanding of the period: episodes on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Thomas Becket, Christine de Pizan, Chivalry, Tristan and Iseult, Greyfriars and Blackfriars, Dante's Inferno, The Black Death, Le Morte d'Arthur, The Peasants' Revolt and The Medieval University would all offer wider context for Chaucer's works.

[This New Yorker article makes the case for Chaucer's continuing popularity](#) and explores his bawdiness and celebration of everyday life and language, as well as discussing the merits of various translations.

## Middle English and Chaucer's Language

If you're interested in Chaucer's language, [this article by David Crystal on the development of Middle English](#) is a good introduction. Oxford's [Simon Horobin provides more detail about Chaucer's Middle English in this article](#). [This Harvard article covers the relationship between French, English and Latin, and the different dialects of Middle English](#).

[The History of English Podcast](#) is a mammoth project telling the story of the English language from its ancient Indo-European origins, and has now reached Chaucer, with episodes about [the background to the Canterbury Tales](#), [the Canterbury Tellers](#) and [Chaucer and vulgarity](#) (NSFW language in this last one.)

To stick with Middle English but have a change from Chaucer, [the Skelton Project site](#) has editions of many poems by John Skelton, poet to Henry VIII, but the most fun is ['Speke Parott'](#).

If you want to start learning how to read old handwriting, try the [interactive palaeography](#)

[tutorials from the University of Nottingham](#), or this [palaeography tutorial from the National Archives](#).

[This student thesis on dialects and idiolects](#) explores the variation in voice and narrative style throughout the in the Reeve's and Miller's Tales.

Although medieval society was dominated by the codes of religion, Chaucer's world is anything but solemn. [This student thesis covers Chaucer's use of scatological language](#) at length ('scatological' means related to excrement, and it's 94 pages long...) We couldn't find online access to [Peter J. Smith's book on scatology in English Literature, \*Between Two Stools\*](#), but there is a [short review here](#) and [a short introduction to Chaucer's most famous fart joke can be found here](#).

## Medieval Historical Context

For a basic recap of medieval social structures and daily life, this [BBC Bitesize page summarizing life in the middle ages](#) could be a good start.

Written for university students, The Open Access Companion to the *Canterbury Tales* has two essays on Chaucer's historical context: [English Society 1340-1400](#), and [Everyday Life in Late Medieval England](#).

The website for this [online exhibition on Chaucer from the University of Glasgow](#) is now a little outdated, but there is useful contextual detail on medieval life and beautiful manuscript images to browse.

Oxford University Press has some blogs on Chaucer: [a quick introduction to socio-historical readings of the Canterbury Tales](#), [the debate over whether Chaucer was a 'writer'](#), [Chaucer's management of his own reputation and his interest in classical texts](#), and [attitudes to marriage and gender equality in the Franklin's Tale](#).

The Ashmolean Museum has many medieval objects. This is a [brief guide to items in the Ashmolean which shed light on the material culture of Chaucer's England](#).

This website from a past Bodleian exhibition curated by Dr Nicholas Perkins, [The Romance of the Middle Ages](#), has a 12-minute video introduction to medieval Romance and has brief sections on The Wife of Bath's Tale and Sir Thopas as well as providing wider context on Medieval Romance as a genre. [This article on manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales examines the manuscripts in which Chaucer's works survive](#), and looks at how Chaucer uses books as a symbol of the imperfection of human knowledge.

If you are interested in Chaucer's doctor of physic and medieval medicine, this [Glasgow University mini-exhibition, 'Medicine, Magic & Monks'](#) is useful, the [British Library has a helpful introduction to medieval medicine](#), and this mini-site focuses on discussion of the four humours and how the body was understood: [Corpus: Representing the Body in Medieval Manuscripts](#).

## Chaucer's Life and its Impact on his Work

Professor Marion Turner's recent biography, [Chaucer: A European Life](#), explores Chaucer's life as the first Anglo-European poet, and is also available as an audiobook. For a quick introduction, Marion has done several radio interviews: [the first half of this radio programme features an interview with Marion](#) (starting with Chaucer's scandalously fashionable teenage outfits), she also discusses the book on [Start the Week](#) with Andrew Marr, and on [American National Public Radio](#). [This excellent article summarises some of Professor Turner's key arguments](#), and contains five recommended books for enriching your understanding of Chaucer, and [this Aeon article focuses on Chaucer's identity as a European poet](#), not simply a great English author.

[This Guardian article by Paul Strohm is a helpful introduction to Chaucer's life and creative process.](#) This [essay by Bruce Holsinger looks at the limits of what we can know about Chaucer,](#) and the difficulty of writing his biography.

## Critical Responses to Chaucer

This [chapter by Corinne Saunders is a thorough summary of the development of critical approaches to Chaucer.](#) '[Recent Chaucer Criticism: New Historicism, New Discontents](#)' is a subscription resource available on [JStor](#), but you can access a limited number of free articles by signing up.