

The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, lines 1-18

Directions: You will read and listen to the poem in Middle English as Chaucer originally wrote it. Some of the words are similar to Modern English. Before you listen to the audio, read through the poem and circle any words you recognize. While listening to the audio version, be aware of the musical quality that is created by the rhythm and rhyme that Chaucer uses to tell about the pilgrims' journey. You may also find more words that you recognize based on the reader's pronunciation. Circle those as you listen.

Middle English Version

- 1 **Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote**
- 2 **The droghte of March hath perced to the roote**
- 3 **And bathed every veyne in swich licour**
- 4 **Of which vertu engendered is the flour,**
- 5 **Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth**
- 6 **Inspired hath in every holt and heeth**
- 7 **The tender croppes, and the yonge sonne**
- 8 **Hath in the Ram his half cours y-ronne,**
- 9 **And smale foweles maken melodye**
- 10 **That slepen al the nyght with open eye,**
- 11 **So priketh hem Nature in hir corages,**
- 12 **Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,**
- 13 **And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,**
- 14 **To ferne halwes kouthe in sundry londes,**
- 15 **And specially, from every shires ende**
- 16 **Of Engeland, to Caunterbury they wende,**
- 17 **The holy, blissful martir for to seke**
- 18 **That he m hath holpen whan that they were**
seeke

5. **Zephyrus:** in Greek mythology, god of the west wind.

8. **Ram:** Aries, first sign of the zodiac. The time is mid-April.

13. **Palmeres:** people who had visited the Holy Land and wore palm fronds to show it.

16. **Wend:** go, travel