

# “THE KNIGHT’S TALE”

from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

## OVERVIEW

Chaucer combines Christian and pagan elements in “The Knight’s Tale.” Theseus makes reference to God and His providence and puts aside his pagan-based traditions of war and vengeance to promote the Christian ideologies of love, peace, and forgiveness. However, characters visit Greek temples and offer prayers to Greek gods.

“The Knight’s Tale” takes place in an unexpected setting: ancient Greece.

## THEMES

- Brotherhood of knights
- Chivalry
- Courtly Love
- Friendship vs. Love
- Chaos vs. Order
- Violence vs. Morality

## ELEMENTS OF CHIVALRY

Chivalry was the code of conduct and manners associated with knights in the Middle Ages. Although the system developed over time, certain elements and themes are typical of chivalric romances. [NOTE: They do not all appear in “The Knight’s Tale.”]

- a wise and just leader
- trustworthy knights who were loyal, courteous warriors
- people who behaved with honor and kept promises
- a struggle or contest, often to win the hand of a lady
- detailed descriptions of clothing, discussions, or other elements
- an unattainable woman who was often loved from afar
- an idealized rather than realistic or physical love
- the involvement of destiny, fate, chance, or the gods
- ceremonial events, such battles, tournaments, weddings
- a dragon, a monster, or some other supernatural element

## VOCABULARY PREVIEW

amity n. friendship

boon n. favor, especially one given in answer to a request

lamentation n. wailing to show grief