

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: Prologue

When April with his showers sweet with fruit
The drought of March has pierced unto the root
And bathed each vein with liquor that has power
To generate therein and sire the flower;

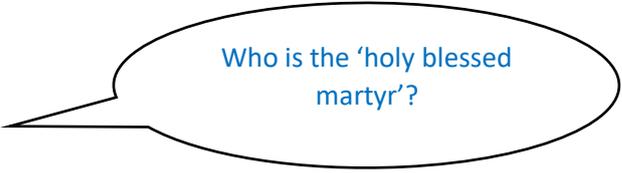
...

Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,
And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,
To distant shrines well known in sundry lands.
And specially from every shire's end
Of England they to Canterbury wend,
The holy blessed martyr there to seek
Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak.

Befell that, in that season, on a day
In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay
Ready to start upon my pilgrimage
To Canterbury, full of devout homage,
There came at nightfall to that hostelry
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
That toward Canterbury town would ride.
The rooms and stables spacious were and wide,
And well we there were eased, and of the best.
And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest



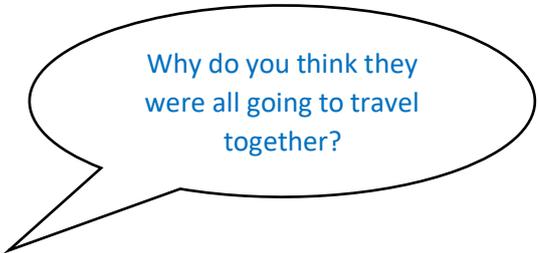
What month did people
go on pilgrimage?



Who is the 'holy blessed
martyr'?



How were they travelling?



Why do you think they
were all going to travel
together?

So had I spoken with them, every one,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And made agreement that we'd early rise
To take the road, as you I will apprise.

...

A knight there was, and he a worthy man,
Who, from the moment that he first began
To ride about the world, loved chivalry,
Truth, honour, freedom and all courtesy.

...

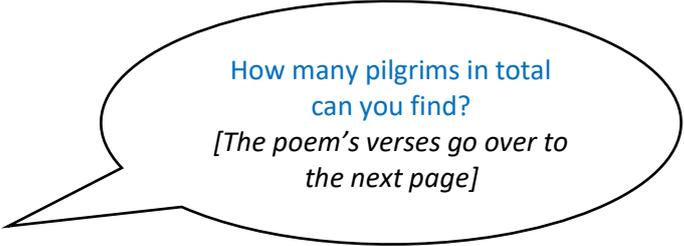
With him there was his son, a youthful squire,
A lover and a lusty bachelor,
With locks well curled, as if they'd laid in press.
Some twenty years of age he was, I guess.

...

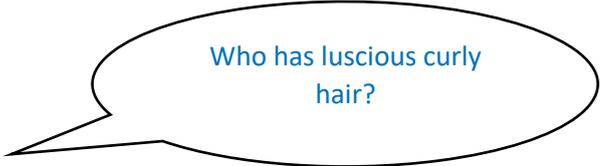
A yeoman had he, nor more servants, no,
At that time, for he chose to travel so;
And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
A sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen
Of woodcraft knew he all the useful ways.
A forester he truly was, I guess.

...

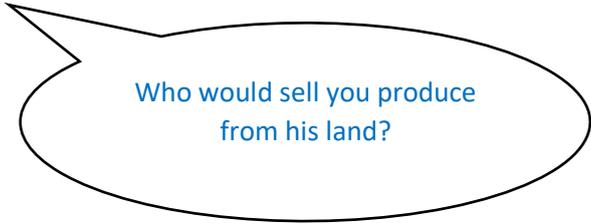
With him there was a plowman, was his brother,
That many a load of dung, and many another
Had scattered, for a good true toiler, he,
Living in peace and perfect charity,
He loved God most, and that with his whole heart
He paid his taxes, fully, fairly, well,
Both by his own toil and by the stuff he sell.



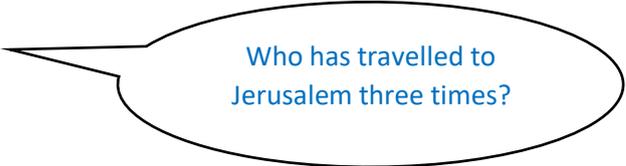
How many pilgrims in total
can you find?
*[The poem's verses go over to
the next page]*



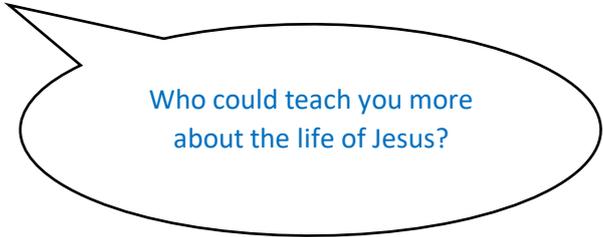
Who has luscious curly
hair?



Who would sell you produce
from his land?



Who has travelled to
Jerusalem three times?



Who could teach you more
about the life of Jesus?

In a tabard he rode upon a mare.

...

There was a housewife come from Bath, or near,

Who – sad to say – was deaf in either ear.

At making cloth she had so great a bent

She bettered those of Ypres and even of Ghent.

In all the parish there was no goodwife

Should offering make before her, on my life;

And if one did, indeed, so wroth was she

It put her out of all her charity.

Her kerchiefs were of the finest weave and ground;

Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.

She'd been respectable throughout her life,

Three times she'd journeyed to Jerusalem;

At Rome she'd been, and she'd been in Boulogne,

In Spain at Santiago, and at Cologne.

...

There was a good man of religion too,

A country parson, poor, I warrant you;

But rich he was in holy thought and work.

He was a learned man also, a clerk,

Who Christ's own true gospel truly sought to preach;

Devoutly his parishioners would he teach.

And holy though he was, and virtuous,

To sinners he was not impiteous,

Or haughty in his speech, nor too divine,

But in all teaching prudent and benign.

To lead folk into Heaven but by stress

Of good example was his busyness.