

# THE KNIGHT'S TALE

These three extracts below are from different versions of the Canterbury Tales. The first is the version in the language that would have been used in medieval Britain. The second version sees a modernised version of the same text, also in verse. The final version is a simplified prose version.

Use the different versions of the text to answer the questions below:

This duc, of whom I make menciou恩,  
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun  
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,  
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,  
Where that ther kneled in the heighe weye  
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,  
Ech after oother clad in clothes blake;  
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make  
That in this world nys creature lyvynge  
That herde swich another waymentynge;  
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten  
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.

This duke, of whom I make mention,  
When he was come almost unto the town,  
In all his prosperity and in his most pride,  
He was aware, as he cast his eye aside,  
Where there kneeled in the high way  
A company of ladies, two by two,  
Each after another, clad in black clothes;  
But such a cry and such a woeful (lament) they make  
That in this world is no living creature  
That (ever) heard lamentation such as this;  
And of this cry they would not ever stop  
Until they seized the reins of his bridle.

Duke Theseus, that great soldier and ruler of Athens was riding back one day from a campaign at the head of his army when, nearing the walls of his city, he passed on the highway a company of women dressed in black. They were kneeling by the side of the road, howling with grief and tearing their hair. As the Duke approached, one of the women caught at his bridle.

- 1) The third extract is called 'prose'. What does this mean?
- 2) In the modernised rhyming version there are some couplets which do not rhyme. Firstly, identify the pairs of lines which do not rhyme. Explain why the writer could not maintain the rhyming for those parts of the text.
- 3) There are several words which have not changed since the original text was written in the fourteenth century. Find 3 examples of words which appear in both the original and the simplified text. What do you notice about these words?
- 4) The original text uses only one full-stop in 12 lines. What other punctuation is used to break up the text? Can you explain why it is used?
- 5) The simplified version omits some more challenging words. Use a dictionary to explain the meanings of these words from the modernised poetry version:  
**prosperity      lamentation      woeful**
- 6) All three extracts are mainly in the third person. Who, then, is the person described as "I" in the original text?
- 7) The second version uses some unusual language and structure to allow it to retain its verse form. The third version is in more common language, but misses some sections out to suit a younger audience.  
Re-write the original text into modern English prose, trying to keep as much of the original detail as possible. You could start:

*This Duke, whom I've mentioned before, was coming back to town...*