Geoffrey Chaucer
&
*The Canterbury Tales*
Chaucer’s Life

- He was born in London (c. 1343)
- He had middle-class origins
- He was a diplomat at Edward III’s Court
- He was captured by the French in 1359
- He went to the Flanders and to Italy
- He was buried in Westminster Abbey (1400)
Chaucer’s production can be divided into three phases:

1. The French phase
2. The Italian phase
3. The English phase
1. The French Phase

- His poetic models were long and allegorical poems about courtly love
- He translated *Le Roman de la Rose* in English
2. The Italian Phase

- *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385)
- This work is a rendering of Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*
- It shows great technical ability
- Discussion about human love’s nature
3. The English Phase

- *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1386 -1393)
- It is a collection of verse tales
- It is one of the major works in English Literature
The ‘father of English Poetry’

• He established the East Midlands and London dialect
• He introduced the iambic pentameter, a five-stress line

A wôrthy wôman frôm besìde Bath cìty
The Canterbury Tales

- A collection of sketches of life told in verse
- The framework is the pilgrimage to Thomas Becket’s shrine in Canterbury
- The work is indebted to Boccaccio’s Decameron
- It is written in couplets of iambic pentameters
Chaucer’s Pilgrims

- They are both individuals and stock types
- They suggest a portrait of the middle-class England in the late XIV century
- Nobles and peasants are excluded from the group of pilgrims
- Chaucer is himself a pilgrim
- Fine irony