

Money



UNIT A3

This unit explores attitudes to money and possessions. Because of the material it uses, it would work well as an introduction to Chaucer and/or a study of language change over time.

Aims

- To explore attitudes to money and possessions.
- To consider wider issues of value assessment and judgment.
- To help pupils to make value judgments for themselves.

Using the unit

3.2 Role play

The focus is on exploring how money affects loyalty and friendship. Encourage discussion of the issues involved.

Seven virtues/seven deadly sins

3.4 Virtues and vices?

Virtues and vices are qualities from which actions spring. They contrast with the popular concept of 'sin' as 'things that people do' and focus instead on 'what makes them the kind of people that they are'.

Pupils may need to begin by finding definitions of the 'seven deadly sins'.

In search of death

The BBC Animated *Pardoner's Tale* is probably the best way into this Chaucer text. Otherwise, the tale itself is one of the most readily accessible straight from the Middle English and higher ability pupils especially will respond to the challenge. If preferred, one of the modern translations, such as Nevill Coghill's, can be used.

3.9 Reflections

If pupils make notes during the performances, this could be set for homework.

3.10 Themes

The major themes are: greed; love of money; death; friendship; deceit; folly.

3.11 The Pardoner

This is both a character study exercise and an opportunity to recapitulate the story. Should you wish, there is scope here for extended group work aimed at producing a video or a sound recording.

Money



UNIT A3

This unit explores the attitudes we take to our money and possessions.

3.1

Brainstorming

- In pairs or groups, brainstorm your responses to this question: What sort of feelings might be stirred up when someone wins a large sum of money?

Jot down your answers under the headings:

- Good feelings
- Bad feelings



3.2

Role play

- You are out with a good friend, who lends you some cash to buy a packet of crisps, as you are hungry but don't have enough money. When you open the bag of crisps, you discover that you have won a prize of £500! Your friend didn't see you open the bag.

Improvise the scene up to the point where you open the bag.

- Now, do you tell your friend of your good fortune? Do you share the money with your friend? If you lie, how will you react to your £500 win?

Improvise your version of the aftermath of the win.

3.3

Reading the signs

In some plays, one character talks directly to the audience without other characters hearing. These comments are called *asides*. The aside can be either what the speaker is really thinking or what the attitude of the listener is.

- Look at the following lines of dialogue.

Character A: Don't be daft! You paid for them! (*Aside*) And I paid for everything else today.

Character B: But you paid for the burgers earlier. (*Aside*) He's actually paid for everything so far today.

Asides help to tell you more about the characters.

- Play your improvised scene (3.2) again but this time just think the asides rather than saying them.

How will you show the feelings you have?

- Now play the scene again saying the asides.

- Now play the scene with silences lasting 3 seconds after each actual spoken line. Miss out the asides.

Which version of your scene do you like best?

Seven virtues / seven deadly sins

In the Middle Ages people tried to sum up the qualities that made for a good or bad character in what they called the 'seven virtues' and the 'seven deadly sins', based on teaching from the Bible. Notice how the meaning of some of the words has changed (charity, for example). These virtues and vices sometimes appeared as characters in plays and stories of the time, in which Bible verses, such as those printed here next to each of the seven deadly sins, were illustrated.

THE SEVEN VIRTUES . . .

FAITH (trust in God)

FORTITUDE (perseverance and courage in difficult circumstances)

HOPE (confidence and trust in God for the future)

JUSTICE (fairness in one's dealings with others)

CHARITY (selfless love)

PRUDENCE (wisdom and common sense)

TEMPERANCE (self-control and moderation)

3.4

Virtues and vices?

- Think about life around you, as shown for example in advertisements, magazines and films.

Are some of the virtues presented as vices?

Are some of the vices made to seem attractive or valuable?

- Look again at the lists of virtues and vices. Are some things missing that should be there?

- Discuss these questions with the person next to you. See how many examples of each you can find.

AND THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS . . .

PRIDE: 'Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall' (Proverbs 16 v 18)

WRATH: 'In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry' (Ephesians 4 v 26)

ENVY: 'Resentment kills a fool and envy slays the simple' (Job 5 v 2)

COVETOUSNESS: 'You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbour' (Exodus 20 v 17)

GLUTTONY: 'Their god is their stomach' (Philippians 3 v 19)

SLOTH: 'Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider its ways and be wise' (Proverbs 6 v 6)

AVARICE: 'The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' (1 Timothy 6 v 10)



3.5

Stories with a moral

From earliest times, story tellers have delighted in illustrating virtues and vices through the tales they tell and the characters they describe. Often the point of their story has been to demonstrate a moral truth. Some - Aesop in his *Fables*, for example - have even concluded each one with a sentence summary of that moral. Others have taken one of the seven virtues or the seven deadly sins as their title for a story commending the good or warning about the bad.

- Taking one of the seven virtues or the seven deadly sins as your title, write a story about it.

Make sure that you keep to the point and that your story is really about the subject in the title.

In search of death

Read Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* or watch the BBC Animated Version of the Tale.

3.6

Understanding the tale

- What did you think about the theme of friendship in the story?
- What do you think is the moral of this story?
What is it trying to get us to think about ourselves and the way we behave?
- What caused the death of the men?
- Write down your responses to these questions and then compare your answers with others around you.



3.7

Still images

(For an explanation of still images see section 2.8, unit A2.)

For this exercise on the *Pardoner's Tale*, you will need to be in groups of four or five.

- Make a list of people in your group.
- Choose six key moments in the story.
- For each key moment work out a strong still image.
- Work out a caption to be spoken before each image is shown.

Set it out like this for each one:

Still image:

Caption:

3.8

Acting them out

•Using the key moments that you identified, in your groups go on to develop the moments into dramatic scenes.

To stage the scenes you have to show things like:

guilt joy

greed friendship

drunkenness deceit

fear

How will you show these on stage? Glances? A rare spoken aside?

What physical actions will show the events?

You could have an action sequence for the murder / fight.

The resulting play can be staged in many ways.

Try it at normal speed with lots of noise.

Try it in silence and in slow motion.

Which is the more effective?

You may wish to use the Pardoner as narrator - or the old man.

Try adding a summary at the end.

•Now present your play to the rest of the class.



3.9

Reflecting on presentations of *The Pardoner's Tale*

Use a copy of the Reflections notepad to jot down your opinions of the performances.

Reflections notepad

1. Which group's performance did you enjoy the most? Give your reasons:

2. What were the problems your group found when staging your scene?

3. Which actor's performance did you enjoy the most? Give your reasons:

4. How did you feel about your own performance? What would you change?

5. Was the Pardoner telling an optimistic tale or a pessimistic tale?

Now write up your reflections as a personal review of the performances.

In his Prologue (introduction) to *The Canterbury Tales* of which *The Pardoner's Tale* is one of the best known, Chaucer describes him in the following way:

This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heng, as dooth a strike of flax;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;
But thinne it lay by colpons oon and oon;
But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walet.

bunch of flax
In bunches

in wisps

Him thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.

latest fashion
He rode hatless, except for a skull-cap, with hair flowing

A vernicle hadde he sowed upon his cappe;
His walet lay biforn him in his lappe
Bret-ful of pardon, come from Rome all hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot;
No berd hadde he, ne never sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.

a 'St Veronica' or small picture of Christ

brimful
high-pitched

But of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware
Ne was ther swich another pardoner,
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that, he seyde, was oure lady veyl;
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seint Peter hadde whan that he wente
Upon the see till Jhesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.

bag; pillow-case

small piece

took
brass

But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge up on lond,
Upon a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes
He made the person and the peple his apes.

a poor (and simple) country parson

false

But, trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
Wel coude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie,
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche and wel affyle his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel coude;
Therefore he song so merrily and loude.

fine preacher

*best of all was his singing of the offertory prayer
because he knew that then he had to
preach (persuade) hard with smooth tongue
to get (the people's) money - he could do that very well*



3.11

Character study

- What does Chaucer suggest about the Pardoner in this extract? See what other information you can find about him and his job.

Imagine that you interview him - for Radio Canterbury perhaps. Write down the questions that you would ask him and the replies that he might make.

You could ask him about his story, . . . his job, . . . the pilgrimage to Canterbury.

Ask him, too, about the rights and wrongs of what he is doing.

Interviewers are often quite aggressive. They ask awkward questions and won't let the person being interviewed get away with vague answers.

What awkward questions would you ask the Pardoner?

- Act out your interviews in pairs.



3.12

For the twenty-first century

The things that Chaucer writes about in *The Pardoner's Tale* are timeless: where money and possessions are concerned, people still try to cheat one another, even on occasions to the point of committing murder. While most of us stop short of criminal action, we all face difficult decisions when it comes to sharing what we have or deciding what to give to others.

- Write an up-date version of the Tale for present day readers.

How much do you think you will have to change?

What setting will you choose?

How will you make the characters up to date?

What will the quarrel be about? A winning lottery ticket, or a disputed inheritance perhaps?

How will the characters plot against each other?

How will you end your story?

