

Introduction

My intention has been to produce a study guide for “The Miller’s Tale” which is valid for any kind of study: coursework or examination. However, I have also specifically geared it to the AQA A/S 5741 syllabus (Unit 3 “Texts in Context”).

Including the extract about the miller from “The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales” as well as the prologue to the tale itself, I have divided the text into ten units. Each unit contains the text in original Middle English as well as a Modern English “translation” and an assignment for students to pursue. In addition, there are detailed notes for each section, in part, but not exclusively, slanted towards the assignment for that unit. A teacher can choose to use these notes to support teaching, or, can issue the notes to the students for personal study or revision.

As most examinations would expect an understanding of the context of “The Miller’s Tale” (compulsory in AQA 5741) I have included four introductory summaries including the context of the tale itself as well as the context of medieval society.

I have also appended the study guide with three essays covering the most frequently asked questions on “The Miller’s Tale”: Alison, Realism in the Tale and the vexed question about whether the tale suits the teller. These are supported by a list of crucial quotes and main revision areas.

The final section is specific to AQA syllabus 5741.

On a personal note, I have always enjoyed teaching “The Miller’s Tale” because it is the most accessible tale to a majority of young people, both in terms of its language and content! I have found myself labouring through so many texts over the years desperately trying to force my students to “enjoy” it, as the examiners rather optimistically hope they will do. However, “The Miller’s Tale” is one of the most significant texts in my teaching experience which lends itself to student enjoyment without too much prompting on my part.

I hope this study text will assist in the teaching and learning experience, but, more significantly, I hope it opens a few doors towards enjoyment.

David Bunting, 2003