

## UNIT 1 – CHAUCER TO SHAKESPEARE

### Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 – 1400)

Geoffrey Chaucer known as the Father of English literature, is widely considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages and was the first poet to be buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. He, like Dante, was a kind of bridge between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He is even called the Evening Star of the Middle Ages and the Morning Star of the Renaissance. While he achieved fame during his lifetime as an author, philosopher, and astronomer, Chaucer also maintained an active career in the civil service as a bureaucrat, courtier and diplomat. Chaucer was a crucial figure in developing the legitimacy of the vernacular, Middle English, at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were French and Latin. It is difficult to get the date of publication for his works; only approximately it can be stated.

His major works are:

#### **The Book of the Duchess (1369 -1374)**

**The Book of the Duchess** is the first of Chaucer's major poems. It is an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster (who died in 1369).

#### **Troilus and Criseyde (1374 -1386)**

**Troilus and Criseyde** is a significant poem by Geoffrey Chaucer which re-tells in Middle English the tragic story of the lovers Troilus and Criseyde set against a backdrop of war during the Siege of Troy. It was composed using rime royale and probably completed during the mid 1380s. Many Chaucer scholars regard it as the poet's finest work. As a finished long poem it is more self-contained than the better known but ultimately uncompleted **Canterbury Tales**. This poem is often considered the source of the phrase: "all good things must come to an end."

#### **The Legend of Good Women (1374 – 1386)**

**The Legend of Good Women** is a poem in the form of a dream vision by Geoffrey Chaucer.

The poem is the third longest of Chaucer's works, after **The Canterbury Tales** and **Troilus and Criseyde** and is possibly the first significant work in English to use the iambic pentameter or decasyllabic couplets which he later used throughout the **Canterbury Tales**. This form of the heroic couplet would become a significant part of English literature, no doubt inspired by Chaucer.

# English Unit I Chaucer To Shakespeare

**Jianjun Gao**



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