



**Medieval Literature**

**Poetry**

**Geoffrey Chaucer**

- lived at a crucial point in the history of Britain
- King's man wide exposure to men and matters
- Earliest Poems **The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame**
- Rhyme Royal seven line stanzaic form
- Parlement of Fowles** allegory: used beast fables
- Troilus and Criseyde** tale of love gained and betrayed: background of Trojan war
- Canterbury Tales** stories told by a group of pilgrims journeying from London to the Shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury

**John Gower**

- Confession Amantis** long poem, octosyllabic couplets
- confessions of a lover to a priest of Venus
- each tale deals with one of the seven deadly sins
- mostly adaptations from Ovid
- "moral Gower"

**William Langland**

- The Vision Concerning Piers the Plowman** a dream poem in alliterative style
- combination of popular and theological traditions
- social satire, symbolic allegories of salvation

Ballads and folk songs

- pale imitations of Chaucer
- Thomas Hoccleve: **The Governail of Princes**
- William Dunbar: **The Thistle and the Rose**

Verse Romance

- Sir Gawain and the Green Knights** anonymous author
- conveys the need for integrity in all aspects of life

**Prose**

- Impact of William Caxton and the Printing Press books came within the reach of the common man
- Publication of the English Bible
- notable writers

**Drama**

- Mystery Plays/Corpus Christi Cycles** long cyclic dramas of Creation, Fall and Redemption of mankind
- usually financed and presented by Craft guilds
- Eg. **The Second Shepherd's Play**
- Morality Plays** allegorical dramas
- depicted the progress of a single character from the cradle to the grave
- these characters represent the whole of mankind: abstract ones, often personified
- Eg. **Everyman**