

Student Essay on The Prioress

The Prioress

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Essay

The Prioress

Some people believe the portrait Geoffrey Chaucer painted of the prioress is not a clear one, but a biased one. Upon analyzation of the prioress in the "Prologue" to the Canterbury Tales, we can easily come to this conclusion. Chaucer indirectly describes the prioress as being a beautiful, superficial, gentlewoman.

Due to Chaucer's outlandish descriptions of the prioress, some people have come to think that Chaucer held a crush on her. His characterizations of the Prioress are more fitting to a beloved lady in a romance, than a nun. "Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-grey;/ Her mouth was very small, but soft and red" (Lines 156-157)

Chaucer writes of the Prioress with his utmost admiration, and with all of the respect a gentlewoman deserves. "And well she sang a service, with a fine/ Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,/ And she spoke daintily in French, extremely..." (Lines 126-128) Chaucer speaks of the Prioress' manners as if he has been examining her every move for quite some time.

Chaucer hints at the Prioress' attempt to appear refined. However, her

attempt was made in vain, and her refinement, superficial. Chaucer clearly shows this in the following: "She certainly was very entertaining/ Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining/ To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace,/ A stately bearing fitting to her place,/ And to seem dignified in all her dealings." (Lines 141-145)

As we can see, upon only minor analyzation, Chaucer's portrait of the Prioress is indeed corrupted. Although Chaucer describes the Prioress as being a beautiful gentlewoman, he also recognizes the fact that she is indeed superficial.