

Geoffrey Chaucer -- Why he is called the father of English Literature

U.G. Semester III

MJC – 04

Unit 1

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Geoffrey Chaucer is often called the "Father of English literature" due to his significant contributions to the development of English literature. His impact on language, poetic form, and literary themes set the foundation for English poetry as we know it today. Here are some key reasons for this title:

1. He elevated English as a Literary Language

During Chaucer's time, Latin and French dominated literature, while English was considered a lower-class language. By writing *The Canterbury Tales* and other works in Middle English, Chaucer demonstrated that English could be a language of high literature, paving the way for its future dominance.

2. He standardized Middle English

Chaucer's works, especially *The Canterbury Tales*, were written in the East Midland dialect, which later influenced the development of Modern English. His widespread readership helped shape a more uniform English language.

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3. He mastered and popularized Iambic Pentameter

Chaucer was one of the first poets to use iambic pentameter, a rhythmic structure that later became the foundation of English poetry, most notably in Shakespeare's works.

4. He Introduced New Poetic Forms and Influences

Drawing from French, Italian, and Latin sources, Chaucer blended different poetic traditions. He introduced rhyme royal (a seven-line stanza) and experimented with different verse forms, enriching English poetry.

5. He Created Complex and Realistic Characters

In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer presents a vivid cross-section of medieval society. His characters, from the Knight to the Wife of Bath, display deep psychological realism, making them some of the first truly developed literary figures in English literature.

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6. He used humor, satire, and social commentary

Unlike earlier poets who focused on religious or heroic themes, Chaucer's works engaged with everyday life, often using humor and irony to critique society, the Church, and human nature.

7. His influence on later poets

Chaucer's innovations inspired later poets like John Lydgate, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare. His work established a literary tradition that shaped English poetry for centuries.

Conclusion

By choosing to write in English, developing poetic techniques, and creating a body of work rich in realism and social insight, Chaucer laid the groundwork for English poetry. His literary genius and innovation earned him the title of the "Father of English Poetry."

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