

### Instructions/questions for class

In preparation for the class, please read the whole text, including the 'Text G' Prologue (in the right-hand column in the Riverside Chaucer), which is assumed to be Chaucer's later revision. Please also choose one of the women's tales upon which to focus. You should come prepared to speak briefly about the tale if called upon. You might like to think about the following questions in relation to the tale you have chosen:

Is the woman in this tale 'good', and if so in what ways? What ideas about virtue are on offer and what questions or problems are raised by the way that virtue is defined? What do you notice about the narrator and his attitudes towards the tale? How does he affect your response to the story? What is the role and significance of an overtly male narrator in these tales of female misfortune? What place is given to female voices?

We will also consider some of the following issues in class, together with any other questions that the class wishes to discuss:

How does the Prologue relate to what follows? Is the text a demonstration of the God of Love's failings as a literary critic?

The text is ostensibly about women, but could one argue it is really about books and reading?

What does it have to say about these topics?

Is it a critique of one-sided reading? Does it present ironically the very notion of 'good' women?

Does it condemn bad men and satirise the antifeminist tradition? Or are the tales to be enjoyed as examples of pathos?

Are the women rebels against authority, prototypes of the Wife of Bath, or helpless and pathetic, or something else?