

Reading for Information



Use with selections from
The Canterbury Tales,
page 142.



READING 9A Summarize a text in a manner that captures the author's viewpoint, its main ideas, and its elements without taking a position or expressing an opinion. **9D** Synthesize ideas and make logical connections among multiple texts representing similar or different genres and technical sources and support those findings with textual evidence. **11B** Evaluate the structures of text for their clarity and organizational coherence and for the effectiveness of their graphic representations.

Pilgrimages: Journeys of the Spirit

- Book Excerpt, page 201
- Magazine Article, page 202
- Map and Illustrations, page 204

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written as if they were told by pilgrims on their way to a holy site. The following selections describe what it was like to travel on a pilgrimage in Chaucer's time and also reveal why this ancient tradition still thrives today. As you read, consider how the information in these selections enhances your understanding of the characters in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Skill Focus: Synthesize

Whenever you put together facts, ideas, and details from different sources to form your own understanding of a topic, you are **synthesizing**. You can usually gain deeper insight into a topic by synthesizing from several sources than by just reading one source.

Use a chart like the one below to synthesize details about pilgrims. Skim through "The Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales*, looking for information about pilgrims and pilgrimages. Add to the chart any information that would help you answer the questions provided. Then, read the selections that follow, and add more details about pilgrims to your chart.

When your chart is complete, **summarize**, or briefly encapsulate, in no more than a few sentences, the purpose of taking a pilgrimage and what such a journey is like based on the information you collected about each work. Your purpose is not to form an opinion, but simply to sum up each author's viewpoint about pilgrimages and their importance.

| Source | <u>The Canterbury Tales</u> | <u>A Distant Mirror</u> | <u>"In the Footsteps of the Faithful"</u> | <u>"Pilgrimage Sites" Map</u> |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| What kinds of people go on pilgrimages? | | | | |
| Why do they go? | | | | |
| What is the journey like? | | | | |
| How does the pilgrimage affect them? | | | | |

In *A Distant Mirror*, historian Barbara Tuchman describes the hardships, including the difficulties of travel, faced by people of all classes in 14th-century Europe.

A Distant Mirror

Barbara Tuchman

Travel, “the mother of tidings,” brought news of the world to castle and village, town and countryside. The rutted roads, always either too dusty or too muddy, carried an endless flow of pilgrims and peddlers, merchants with their packtrains, bishops making visitations, tax-collectors and royal officials, friars and pardoners, wandering scholars, jongleurs and preachers, messengers and couriers who wove the network of communications from city to city. Great nobles like the Coucys, bankers, prelates, abbeys, courts of justice, town governments, kings and their councils employed their own messengers. The King of England at mid-century kept twelve on hand who accompanied him at all times, ready to start, and were paid 3d. a day when on the
10 road and 4s. 8d. a year for shoes. . . .

The voyage from London to Lyon took about 18 days and from Canterbury to Rome about 30 days depending on the Channel crossing, which was unpredictable, often dangerous, sometimes fatal, and could take anywhere from three days to a month. One knight, Sir Hervé de Léon, was kept 15 days at sea by a storm and, besides having lost his horse overboard, arrived so battered and weakened “that he never had health thereafter.” It was no wonder that, according to a ballad, when pilgrims took to sea for the voyage to Compostella or beyond, “Theyr hertes begin to fayle.” . . . **A**

Travelers stopped before nightfall, those of the nobility taking shelter in some
20 nearby castle or monastery where they would be admitted indoors, while the mass of ordinary travelers on foot, including pilgrims, were housed and fed in a guest house outside the gate. They were entitled to one night’s lodging at any monastery and could not be turned away unless they asked for a second night. Inns were available to merchants and others, though they were likely to be crowded, squalid, and flea-ridden, with several beds to a room and two travelers to a bed—or three to a bed in Germany, according to the disgusted report of the poet Deschamps, who was sent there on a mission for the French King. Moreover, he complained, neither bed nor table had clean linen, the innkeeper offered no choice of foods, a traveler in the Empire could find nothing to drink but beer; fleas, rats, and mice were unavoidable,
30 and the people of Bohemia lived like pigs. **B**

Given the hardships and the length of time consumed, people journeyed over long distances to an astonishing degree—from Paris to Florence, from Flanders to Hungary, London to Prague, Bohemia to Castile, crossing seas, alps, and rivers, walking to China like Marco Polo or three times to Jerusalem like the Wife of Bath.

A SYNTHESIZE

Reread lines 1–18. What were the hardships of traveling in the Middle Ages?

B SYNTHESIZE

What was it like for a pilgrim to stay at an inn?



Many people today still go on pilgrimages, often walking for long distances along ancient routes. Canadian writer Taras Grescoe writes about his journey to one of the most famous European pilgrimage sites.

In the Footsteps of the Faithful

Taras Grescoe

Little by little, the road to Santiago de Compostela was changing me. When I started off on the Camino Francés—a 1,200-year-old route across northern Spain to one of Catholicism’s holiest shrines—I was unprepared for the camaraderie this pilgrimage fosters. Since A.D. 813, when the bones of St. James the Apostle were discovered in a cave at the western tip of Galicia, devout pilgrims from all over Europe have tramped hundreds of miles across the snow-streaked Pyrenees and the sun-baked plains of Castile in a quest for absolution and spiritual growth. Beginning the walk in the French town of St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, I was part of this rare band of travelers for three weeks. **C**

20 In the shade of eucalyptus forests and olive groves, over tuna sandwiches and chocolate bars, I heard stories by turns touching and inspiring. A young mother—a Danish athlete—was alternately carrying and pushing her two blond-haired infants over the mountain trails and switchbacks, a feat of almost superhuman endurance. A 60-year-old man in disintegrating sandals and with
30 a long white beard paused just long enough to tell me he’d walked all the way from Rome, 40 miles a day. Next to a purling stream, I came across a pilgrim who’d lost his right leg and was being borne to Santiago on his trusty mare Lorena—named after his daughter, herself only recently recovered from leukemia.

C SYNTHESIZE

Reread lines 8–16. What are some reasons why people go on pilgrimages today?

The Camino Francés, which wends
 40 past storks on the chimney stacks of
 Rioja and seagulls on the moss-covered
 church spires of Galicia, is a crash
 course in medieval European history,
 with daily seminars in Romanesque
 architecture and the arcane
 iconography of the Knights Templar.
 I found myself walking on the original
 paving stones of Roman roads, staining
 my shoes on the red earth of the
 50 vineyards of Rioja, and losing my way
 in the fog of the Pyrenees. In a little
 town outside Logroño, I joined the
 queue at an unattended tap at a stone
 wall, from which Navarran red wine
 flowed free of charge, a local winery's
 gift to passing pilgrims.

As I walked, materialism and
 concern about self-image fell by
 the wayside; I divested myself of
 60 guidebooks and excess clothing, and
 sought only to fill my belly with
 nourishing food and to find simple
 lodgings each evening. I learned to
 expect the warm westerly wind that
 crosses the land just before sunset, the
 cool *tramontana* from the north, and

the afternoon breeze that sends
 iridescent ripples through the fields. I
 realized I'd never truly seen the world
 70 go by at this human pace, three miles
 an hour, hour after hour, day in, day
 out—nor understood that the quality
 of one's travel experience is inversely
 proportional to the speed at which
 one travels. **D**

I finally walked into Santiago in
 the midst of a record spring heat wave.
 Sweaty and unshaven, I approached
 the wildflower- and lichen-covered
 80 cathedral where the bones of St. James
 the Apostle rested—a fantastic
 barnacle-encrusted reef looming over
 waves of stone houses. As I strode up
 the last set of stairs before my goal, I
 was overwhelmed by a connection with
 all those who, over the ages, had risked
 losing home, family, and life to follow
 their faith to some marvelous shrine at
 the edge of the earth.

90 Step by step, the Camino had made
 me one of its own: a pilgrim.

Pilgrims stop to kneel along the main
 pilgrimage route from southwest France
 to Santiago de Compostela.

D SYNTHESIZE

Reread lines 57–75.
 How has the author
 been affected by his
 pilgrimage?



Medieval pilgrims visited holy sites throughout Europe and in parts of Asia. These sites continue to serve as important spiritual centers as well as popular tourist attractions.



TEKS 11B

E PROCEDURAL TEXTS

A map represents a portion of the earth's surface and a map scale shows the relationship between distance on a map and the distance on the earth's surface. Use the scale on the map to measure the distances between London and the pilgrimage sites, and notice the geographic features a pilgrim would have to cross to reach these sites. What does this add to your understanding of what it was like to make a pilgrimage in Chaucer's day?



Reliquary At many pilgrimage sites, relics (personal items or body parts of saints) are kept in containers called reliquaries.

Stained Glass In this French cathedral window, Saint Mary of Egypt is shown on a boat full of pilgrims bound for Jerusalem.



Canterbury Cathedral Located 55 miles from London, Canterbury Cathedral became an important pilgrimage site after Archbishop Thomas à Becket was murdered there in 1170.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** According to Barbara Tuchman, what was sea travel like in Chaucer's day?
2. **Recall** During medieval times, how did the lodging offered to the nobility differ from the lodging available to members of other social classes?
3. **Clarify** How does Taras Grescoe feel about the slow pace of travel on a pilgrimage?

Critical Analysis

4. **Analyze Author's Message** Reread lines 83–89 of “In the Footsteps of the Faithful.” What experiences have allowed Grescoe to form the connection he describes? Use details from the selection to support your answer.
5. **Synthesize Information from Graphic Aids** Examine the photographs on page 204. How do these images help you understand the appeal of going on a pilgrimage?



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Read for Information: Draw Conclusions

WRITING PROMPT

According to Chaucer, the other authors, and the map in this section, what is the purpose of a pilgrimage? What are the benefits and difficulties of a making a pilgrimage?

To answer this prompt, you will need to pick your topic and follow these steps:

1. Gather information about your topic from the three selections as well as from “The Prologue” of *The Canterbury Tales*.
2. Consider the main ideas and information you have collected and the summary you created of each work. Ask yourself what conclusion you can draw from them about making a pilgrimage.
3. Present your conclusion in a topic sentence, and support it with ideas and information from the texts.

