

1380

CANTERBURY TALES

**THE SAILOR'S PROLOGUE**

Geoffrey Chaucer

**Chaucer, Geoffrey** (1343-1400) - English poet, known as the most important writer of Middle English. His *Canterbury Tales* (~1380) are told by traveling pilgrims who meet at a tavern and have a storytelling contest to pass the time. Each tale is preceded by an introductory prologue. *The Sailor's Prologue* - Introduces the Sailor, a captain who is a good smuggler.

## THE SAILORS PROLOGUE

Our host upon his stirrups stood, anon,  
And said: "Good men, now hearken, every one;  
This was useful story, for the nonce!  
Sir parish priest," quoth he, "for God His bones.  
Tell us a tale, as you agreed before.  
I see well that you learned men of lore  
Have learned much good, by God's great dignity!"  
The parson answered: "Benedicite!  
What ails the man, so sinfully to swear?"  
Our host replied: "Ho, Jenkin, are you there?  
I smell a Lollard in the wind," quoth he.  
"Ho, good men!" said our host, "now hearken me;  
Wait but a bit, for God's high passion do,  
For we shall have a sermon ere we're through;  
This Lollard here will preach to us somewhat."  
"Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he not!"  
Replied the sailor; "Here he shall not preach,  
Nor comment on the gospels here, nor teach.  
We all believe in the great God," said he,

“But he would sow among us difficulty,  
Or sprinkle cockles in our good clean corn;  
And therefore, host, beforehand now, I warn  
My jolly body shall a story tell  
And I will clink for you so merry a bell  
That it shall waken all this company;  
But it shall not be of philosophy,  
Nor yet of physics, nor quaint terms of law;  
There is but little latin in my maw.”

**HERE ENDS THE SAILOR’S PROLOGUE**