

Q. Chaucer's art of characterisations in the portrayal of the Wife of Bath.

Chaucer is the first great painter of character because he is the first great observer of it among English writers. In fact, next to Shakespeare, Chaucer is the greatest delineator of character in English literature. In *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer tried to paint faithfully the body and soul of the fourteenth century life.

The Wife of Bath is one of the pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales* who shares her prologue and tale with the others on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Beckett. She is one of two women characters in the work. She discusses marriage, women's autonomy, and the power imbalance in Medieval marriages.

The Wife of Bath comes from the town of Bath, which is on the Avon River. She is a seamstress by trade but a professional wife by occupation. She has been married five times and presents herself as the world's expert in matters of marriage and the relations between men and women. Chaucer describes her as large, gap-toothed, and dressed in red clothing, which is traditionally the color of lust. The Wife of Bath is a force of nature, a larger-than-life character who is not afraid to push her way to the front and state her opinions.

To sum up, The Wife of Bath is one of the best known and most remarkable of Chaucer's characters in the *Canterbury Tales*. What makes her so distinct and different from all others is not the story she retells to the audience but her awareness of her own body, as clearly manifested in the Prologue of her tale.