

**“The Wife of Bath’s Tale” from The Canterbury Tales** by Geoffrey Chaucer

**Literary Analysis: Frame**

A **frame** is a story in which one or more other stories unfolds. The frame usually introduces a set of characters in a particular situation that prompts one or more of these characters to tell a **story-within-the-story**. For example, in the *Decameron*, a famous story collection by Giovanni Boccaccio (boh KAH chee oh), the frame tells of ten characters who go to the country to escape a plague sweeping Florence, Italy. To pass the time during their temporary exile, the characters entertain one another by telling stories. The stories-within-the-story are the stories that these characters tell. The premise in the frame allows Boccaccio to tie together a group of otherwise unrelated stories that he drew from a wide variety of sources. Completed in about 1350, the *Decameron* helped inspire Chaucer to write *The Canterbury Tales*.

**A. DIRECTIONS:** *On the lines provided, answer these questions about the frame of The Canterbury Tales and its relationship to “The Wife of Bath’s Tale.”*

1. What is the main frame for the stories in *The Canterbury Tale*?

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2. What premise does Chaucer supply in the frame to explain his story collection?

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3. How does Chaucer’s premise make reading the different stories more interesting?

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4. In addition to the main story about the knight, what other story does the Wife of Bath tell in part in “The Wife of Bath’s Tale”?

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5. Consider the characterization of the Wife of Bath in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. How does the story she tells suit her personality and background?

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**B. DIRECTIONS:** *What premise would you use in a frame that would bring together a group of contemporary storytellers? Jot down your ideas for a modern frame on the lines below.*

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