Name _____ Date _____

"The Pardoner's Tale" *from* The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer

Literary Analysis: Allegory

An **allegory** is a narrative that has both a literal meaning and a deeper, symbolic meaning. On the literal level, it tells a story. On the symbolic level, many or all of its characters, events, settings, and objects symbolize, or represent, abstract ideas and work to teach a moral message. For example, a character who represents faith may use a hammer (representing hard work) to build a homeless shelter (representing good deeds). Later, that character enters a beautiful, peaceful mansion (representing heaven). The moral of the allegory might be: Those who are faithful and work hard to perform good deeds will be rewarded with heaven in the afterlife.

Sometimes, allegories actually name the people, places, and things in a way that indicates what they symbolize. In the allegory summarized above, for example, the allegory might tell of a character named Faith who uses the Hammer of Hard Work to build the Good-Deed Homeless Shelter and later enters the Heavenly Mansion.

"The Pardoner's Tale" is a type of allegory called an **exemplum**, the Latin word for "example." An exemplum is used as part of a sermon to offer an example of the point that the sermon is trying to make.

A. Directions: *Answer these questions about "The Pardoner's Tale."*

1. What vices do the rioters seem to represent? _____
2. What might the old man represent? _____
3. Which character has a name indicating the abstract idea he represents? _____
4. What might the gold florins represent? _____
5. Consider the events near the end of the tale. What might the revelers' actions toward one another represent? _____
6. What is the moral message that the Pardoner's allegory attempts to teach? _____

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B. Directions: *On the lines below or on a separate sheet, write your ideas for a modern allegory illustrating the same message as "The Pardoner's Tale" or another moral message.*

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