

THE CANTERBURY TALES – Chaucer’s Personality Profile

Physiognomy – a person’s physical appearance and the relationship between that physical appearance and a person’s personality and character (judging a person by his/her features).

Examples:

- red-headed = quick-tempered
- buxom = jolly
- broad forehead = intelligence, good breeding
- very thin = stringy, bad-tempered
- neat = proud
- wearing red = aggressive
- wearing black = melancholy
- wearing blue = constant in love
- wearing green = lightness in love, envy
- gapped teeth = bold, aggressive, traveler, amorous
- white neck = sign of licentiousness
(promiscuousness)

Psychological Theory of Chaucer’s Time: Astrology-based. This theory gave the planets in a person’s horoscope at birth and their positions at different times in life.

Body Humors

People in Chaucer’s time believed that four body humors (or moistures) were the source of disease and personality types, much like we think of glands and genes today. The body fluids, or humors, of which man is composed—blood, phlegm, choler (bile), and melancholy (black bile) with their “qualities” of hot, cold, dry, and moist—determined character and behavior.

Sanguine:	“sanguine”	Blood	Hot and moist
Choleric:	“choleric”	Yellow bile	Hot and dry
Melancholy:	“melancholy”	Black bile	Cold and dry
Phlegmatic:	“phlegm”	Phlegm	Cold and moist