

# 5 POEM

One of the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales* tells *The Nun's Priest's Tale*. The tale is set in the small farmyard of a poor widow and her two daughters. Chanticleer is a cockerel and he is the head of the henhouse. After a night in which he

had several nightmares, his wife Pertelote persuades him to take a stroll in the farmyard. This fragment is retold in modern English.

## 5 Get a first idea

Read the first column of the fragment from *The Nun's Priest Tale* on page 187 of your *Textbook* and answer the following questions in English.

- 1 The first few lines until 'The fox was quick to say' are about Chanticleer. Which three things does he do?

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 You would expect Chanticleer to run away immediately. Why does he not do that?

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## 6 Language

Now read the entire fragment on page 187 of your *Textbook* and look more carefully at the language Chaucer uses.

- 1 Analyse the character of Sir Russel Fox. Think of two characteristics and quote from the text.

characteristic	quote from the text

- 2 Sir Russel Fox talks extensively about Chanticleer's parents. What does he mean when he says 'My Lord Your Father [...] Your mother too [...] have honoured my poor house'?

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- 3 The lines in which the fox is talking to Chanticleer are a clear example of **irony**. Explain this passage in your own words.

➔ **Reference** Literary terms, *irony*, page 293 of your *Textbook*.

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- 4 Why does the fox go into such detail about Chanticleer's father's singing? Indicate whether the statements are true or false.

statement	true	false
1 By stressing the fact that he knew Chanticleer's father, the fox hopes to gain the cockerel's trust.		
2 By praising the father, the fox hopes to tempt the cockerel into crowing.		
3 The fox knows that cockerels are usually jealous of other males, especially when they are related.		

## 7 Form

*The Canterbury Tales* is a frame-story narrative: the overall narrative is told by the Host, and he invites pilgrims from all walks of life to each tell their own favourite story during their pilgrimage to Canterbury. This tale, for example, is told by a pilgrim called the Nun's Priest.

- 1 Copy the first and last three words of the lines that most clearly indicate the narrative voice of the Nun's Priest.

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- 2 What literary effects could Chaucer achieve by adopting a frame-story narrative for *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole?

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## 8 Theme

Now reread the fragment. This story is a **fable**: the main characters, for example, are animals with human traits and they talk like human beings. The aim of a fable is to teach the audience or the reader a **moral** lesson, sometimes in the form of a proverb.

➔ **Reference** Literary terms, *fable*, *moral*, page 292-293 of your *Textbook*.

- 1 Decide which **moral** lesson applies to Chanticleer.

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- 2 How do you think the story will end? Write your own ending for Chanticleer. Use 100-120 words.

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