

# ***Pedagogical sequence and sample lesson plan***

**Title: Mobilising Short Forms for  
the study of Iconic Literature**

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**UNIVERSITY OF ANGERS, FRANCE**

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## Pedagogical sequence and sample lesson plan

### Title: Mobilising Short Forms for the study of Iconic Literature

This sequence of lessons is developed as an extension of the reading model developed by our partners at KU Leuven. The Leuven model was created in order to foster literary awareness and teach deep-reading skills in language courses at the secondary-school level through a 5 step process. This model is proposed in a more developed format on the Short Forms Beyond Borders website.

Our programme at Angers now offers two courses that work together to achieve aspects of the Leuven Model. Both courses are composed of twelve 50-minute sessions over 12 weeks across six different groups of students, and shared among a team of teachers, and demand distilling the essential aspects of the literature and contexts studied.

One course, called *Reading Literary Texts*, proposes in-depth reading and analysis of short fiction in English. This course is intended to achieve steps 1-3 of the Leuven model by reading complete short stories and studying their generic specificities. Questions are used to guide a deep reading of each story. It also integrates creative-writing exercises (such as rewriting the end of stories or imitating the author's style) as a productive assignment intended to encourage the comprehension and assimilation of texts.

The other course, presented here, *Authorial Icons*, is a survey of iconic British authorial figures and literary texts, which we taught for the first time in 2022-2023 at the University of Angers. Icons can refer to authors or literary works, but our course also mobilizes the term to invoke the following meanings: Icons suggest larger cultural significance and a degree of recognition, fandom, or "worship". They also travel and circulate across time and place in short forms and can be transformed through parody, reiteration, re-contextualization. The concept of iconic authors and literature can also raise questions about the literary canon and canonization.

Working within the compressed course format, we use the concept of the Icon in this survey course to foster awareness of questions pertaining to the literary canon, such as why certain works of literature have been iconic, why they continue to be iconic today, and how their iconicity remobilizes them repeatedly while putting their relevance to the test.

The sample lesson plan below was developed in the context of the course on Iconic British literature to students of English in their first year at the University of Angers, France. It is part of a sequence of 12 courses that is structured as follows:

Week 1 Introduction

Week 2 Geoffrey Chaucer, Prologue to "The Wife of Bath's Tale," *The Canterbury Tales*

Week 3 William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 18"

Week 4 William Blake, "The Tyger" and William Wordsworth, "I wandered lonely as a cloud"

Week 5 Excerpt from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Week 6 Excerpt from Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Week 7 Excerpt from Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*

Week 8 W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" and/or "Sailing to Byzantium"

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Week 9 Excerpt from Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*  
Week 10 Excerpt from Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*  
Week 11 Excerpt from Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*  
Week 12 In-Class Exam

## PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FORM

### Sample Lesson Plan for Mobilising Short Forms Pedagogical Sequence

The following lesson plan proposes to use short forms to study an extract from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, "Prologue to 'The Wife of Bath's Tale'"

**Title of Pedagogical Tool:** Mobilising Short Forms to Teach Iconic Literature

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**Target Audience** (level, age, group size, formation type): First Year Undergraduate University English Language Students, 18-20 years old, groups of 45-50 students, 3 year University English Language Programme (*Licence LLCER Anglais*)

**Duration of Exercise:** 50 minutes

**Primary corpus:** Geoffrey Chaucer, Prologue to "The Wife of Bath's Tale," *The Canterbury Tales*

**Supporting documents:** worksheet and excerpt (see below)

**Technological apparatus used:** online resources and computer tools

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#### **Type of short form:**

Object of study (short form): excerpt from famous work of serialized short forms.

Short Forms used as tools: memes, videos, movie clips, woodcut print, recorded readings of the text in its original form, short form parodies of the text and other short form resources found online during student research

Reason of choice of a short form: The text was chosen as it is a foundational short work of British literature. It attests to a turning point in the use of the English language for literary texts, and paves the way for future forms of literature (short stories and novels).

Online tools (memes etc) are used to foster student engagement and help them develop their curiosity about famous works of literature and feel connected to an international network of students reading Chaucer across the world.

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## Aims, pedagogical goals:

1. Feature short literary and media forms to motivate students to read, research, and write about literature each week;
2. Engage students' collective intelligence through weekly group discussions;
3. Mobilise the process of research, individual and group reflection, and iterative writing over seeking the right answer, the right format, or the perfect final product;
4. Activate critical perspectives about canon construction and the ethics of reading literature;
5. Develop personal appropriation of texts and foster enjoyment of literature through emotional engagement and long-term memory connections;
6. Encourage a sense of international connection with students and readers in other countries through researching short forms that travel online.

**Target skills developed:** Reading Comprehension, Research Skills, Critical Reading and Thinking, Writing Skills, Personal Reflection, Group collaboration, Oral Expression, Debating Skills

**Methodological Approach:** Flipped Classroom approach to studying texts: Students work on the worksheets before coming to class, and these are used as a basis for discussion during the class session. Discussions can take the form of large group and/or small group discussions, debates, exchange of ideas using Padlet or other digital tools, sharing of resources in small groups, short oral presentations in front of the class (2 minute presentations). The worksheets can be used in a variety of manners in the classroom depending on the results of the students' research.

**Theoretical Background:** Jacques Rancière's *Le Maître Ignorant* (2004) and Octobre, Sylvie. « La lecture à l'ère numérique. Au commencement était le livre. Et à la fin le texte », *Études*, vol. 418, no. 5, 2013, pp. 607-618.

### Lesson plan (detailed outline):

- Organization of class time is flexible. Teachers can choose which part of the worksheet to focus on for classroom activities. A lesson plan follows the general structure:
- Introduction to text
- Student participation activities and discussion
- Short Conclusion

**Student contributions** (homework assignments, follow up activities, how trainees can actively interiorise knowledge gained in lesson)

see following worksheet

**Learning outcomes:** Students complete a worksheet for each course. The worksheet for this course on Chaucer will be compiled along with other worksheets completed throughout the course. These can be made into a reference booklet that students can personalize and keep for future studies.

**Evaluation:** In addition to the worksheets, the course is evaluated by another assignment of equal value: a traditional exam of 40 minutes. The exam is designed with the objective of drawing

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connections across the authors and works studied in class, and to bring everything together. Students are also allowed to draw on their worksheets, to reinforce the idea that they have been building knowledge through this guided process of research, discussion and completing the worksheets.

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**Test location and date** (if applicable):

**Institutions, partners involved:** Leuven and University of Angers

**Conclusions, good practices:** The course is developed through team teaching. We collaboratively designed the course and assignments (worksheets) and left each other the liberty to pursue our own lesson plans.

Students are encouraged to work and think independently and appropriate the works of the different authors in a personal manner. Group collaboration and discussion are encouraged.

**Further uses:** Can be adapted for any university literature survey course or secondary level literature courses.

Leads teachers to dialogue with students about the ethics of studying certain works of literature in class and fosters reflection about the political contexts in which literary works are written and read.

The notion of “Icon” fosters a meta-critical approach to studying literary works. The use of this concept encourages debate and allows for the consideration of less “canonic” authors.

Recommended bibliography, additional links:

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**Key terms:** short forms, iconicity, literary canon, memes, digital humanities, collaborative learning, flipped classroom, British literature, multimedia teaching practices

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## Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*



Woodcut 1484

### Personal research and reading (prepare before class)

Use the attached biography and do some research on the internet to answer the following general questions about Chaucer.

What was his family background and his professions? How do you think this contributed to the writing of the *Canterbury Tales*?

When were the *Canterbury Tales* written?

What is the storytelling situation in the *Canterbury Tales*? What language were the tales written in? Why is this significant? What is the title of the initial text that sets up the storytelling situation?

Who is Thomas à Becket? How many pilgrims are present in the frame story? How many tales did Chaucer originally intend to write? How many tales were ultimately written?

*The Canterbury Tales* is an early example of a “frame” story that includes many “framed” stories. Can you think of any other examples in literature or film of a similar structure?

Each of the *Tales* was told using a different literary form. What are some of these forms? How do you think the use of different forms contributed to the overall effect of the tales?

What were some of the *Tales* titles? Who are some of the characters who told the other tales? Why didn't Chaucer use proper names for his characters?

Just for fun: Find a *Canterbury Tale* meme on the internet that you find particularly entertaining and copy it here.

See if you find any other resources on the internet or social media that propose original presentations of the tales (youtube, social media etc).

Can you find any interesting adaptation of the *Tales*, or of the “Wife of Bath’s Tale”?

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## “Wife of Bath’s Tale” Excerpt: Questions

(read the text and prepare answers to these questions before class)

How does the title reflect the main character’s position in society?

What form is used to tell the original version of the tale.

How many “husbands” has the Wife of Bath had? How does she describe them?

What is her attitude towards love and faithfulness?

Some people might say the Lady of Bath is characterized as seeking power. Can you find at least three examples in the text that support this idea?

What does she say about lying? What advice does she give to other women who might have been unfaithful to their husbands?

How does she break the idea of the “model wife”? What image of women is portrayed through the wife of Bath? Do you find this image liberating/feminist or do you find it to be sexist?

### General questions for discussion in class:

Please note down your group’s references and main discussion points. Please write some answers to questions 1- 3 after your discussions to complete the worksheet.

Share your favorite memes and videos with the members of your group.

1. Why do you think this collection of tales has become such an iconic work of literature?
2. The focus in these tales is on storytelling and simulated oral storytelling. What types of collective storytelling situations exist today? What types of stories are told? How are these similar and different from the Chaucer’s tales? How do the best stories get rewarded?
3. Imagine a frame tale and the names of ten characters for a modern-day version of the *Canterbury Tales*. Imagine 1.) The meeting point of the frame tale; 2.) The reason all of these characters are meeting; and 3.) The names of the different characters and how many tales they will tell, and what they will win if they tell the best tale.

(Consider, for example, the anthology of short stories published by Comma Press in 2016: *Refugee Tales*. Stories include the following: The Migrant’s Tale, the Chaplain’s Tale, The Unaccompanied Minor’s Tale, The Lorry Driver’s Tale, The Arriver’s Tale, The Visitor’s Tale, The Detainee’s Tale...)

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**Some online resources:**

See if you can add any interesting websites or resources to this list. British Library Pages dedicated to *The Canterbury Tales*: <https://www.bl.uk/works/the-canterbury-tales>