

US, MAC: 04, Chap: 01
Chaucer: Anonethi
Geoffrey Chaucer: The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale F(2)

⑥ Summary:

The wife of Bath's Tale is one of the stories in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, written in the late 14th century during the Middle English period. It follows the prologue of the wife of Bath, where she openly speaks about her five marriages and strongly argues for female authority and experience over male authority and bookish learning.

This story is set in the time of King Arthur. A young knight commits a serious crime against a woman that he is sentenced to death. Meanwhile the Queen and her ladies put a condition before the knight if he would like to save his life he would have to answer: "What women most desire?" within a year. After trying to find the answer for sometimes in vain, he meets an old woman who promises him to help him to find the answer only if he agrees to accept whatever she wills later. The knight agrees to her condition also. After finding the correct answer from the old lady, he gives the answer at the court before the Queen: "Women desire sovereignty on mastery over their husbands and lovers. Thus, the knight is saved. On the other hand the old woman demands her marriage with him. Though unwilling, the knight agrees. On the wedding night, she offers him a choice: whether she can remain old and faithful or can be young and beautiful but possibly unfaithful. The knight allows her to go according to her own choice as he decides to give her sovereignty. She transforms into a young, beautiful, and faithful wife, just because of the given sovereignty to herself.

⑥ Lesson

mutual respect and granting women authority in marriage lead to true happiness.