

Lesson Title – The Monkey King as a Quest Story

Class and Grade level(s) – College Prep English/Seniors

Goals and Objectives

- To gain an understanding of the quest story motif
- Compare/contrast characters and themes in the Monkey King with the characters and themes in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Time required/class periods needed

Three class days over the period of one week.

Day One: Review the characters, theme and plot in The Monkey King and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

View segments from the 2004 re-release of the Wan Brothers' production of the 1964 film *Havoc in Heaven*,

View the United Streaming 53 second video segment from: *History through Literature: Chivalry and Commerce: The Late Middle Ages*

Day Two: Provide cooperative grouping and evaluate the stories then compare and contrast with a Venn Diagram.

Day Three: After reading several *Monkey* stories, the students will break into four groups. Each group will be assigned one of the characters from Monkey (Tripitaka, Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy), and answer the questions below about their characters. Each group will present their findings to the whole class.

Questions to be answered for group:

- Which character in Canterbury Tales is our character most like? Provide examples.
- What qualities does our character bring to the group, making the quest possible?
- What is the quest in the Canterbury Tales? What is the final quest in Monkey?

Primary source bibliography

American Born Chinese by Gene Yang – Monkey King story embedded in a terrific graphic novel that tells the story of generational angst.

<http://geneyang.com/american-born-chinese>

Anthony Yu's abridged translation:

<http://www.amazon.com/Monkey-Monk-Abridgment-Journey-West/dp/0226971562>

Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer

Available in its entirety by tale here: <http://www.librarius.com/cantales.htm>

Can be viewed in Modern/Middle English side-by-side columns; Middle English glossary included

Other resources used:

Summary and Character Breakdown – Journey to the West

<http://www.vbtutor.net/xiyouji/journeytothewest.htm>

Havoc in Heaven video: <http://www.chinasprout.com/shop/VCM002>

You tube video History through Literature: Chivalry and Commerce: The Late Middle Ages:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6gdp9ToAqQ>

Vocabulary

Wu

Chaucer

Canterbury Tales

Quest Story

Procedure

Introduction: Explain the components of a Quest Story:

A quest is an adventurous journey. In a quest story, this quest is undergone by the main character or protagonist of a story. The protagonist usually meets with and overcomes a series of obstacles, returning in the end with the benefits of knowledge and experience. The journey is not necessarily geographical; it can also be emotional or psychological – the main thing is to return wiser than when you began. Myths and legends telling of journeys and quests are among the world's oldest stories. Two of the world's most famous quest stories are Monkey King: The Journey to the West (China, 1584) and Canterbury Tales (England, 1380).

In quests, several obstacles must be overcome, both concrete and symbolic. Obstacles in these stories include:

- External obstacles (mountains, rivers, etc.)
- Demons (represent an unsteady mind: steady the mind and the demons disappear)
- Carelessness (complacent characters)
- Group unity that is repeatedly upset and must be re-established.

Description and Symbolism of Main characters in the Monkey King story:

- Tripitaka – Human, fearful, concerned with his own survival and safety, can't make up his mind, easily deceived and does not see through the demons' disguises.
- Monkey – Symbolizes "mind", wit, intellect, courage, perseverance, strength and impulsiveness. Monkey's spirit/mind must be brought under control.
- Pigsy – Appetite unbound, greed for physical pleasures such as sleep and food, White Bone Demon gets him into trouble by appearing as a beautiful village girl enticing him away from his friends.
- Sandy – patient, extremely strong, able to breathe underwater, Sandy retains some magical abilities he had when he worked in Heaven. For example, he is able to transform a small

gourd into a gigantic one that can be used to cross rivers. He is also a skilled alchemist.

- Jade Emperor in Heaven. - Though the Jade Emperor is ruler of Heaven and Earth, he is not so much a supreme God as a supreme administrator. In fact, he is outranked by the three top divine beings in the Chinese pantheon, Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Confucius—who were themselves once human and are answerable to higher universal forces. The Chinese Heaven is modeled closely on the government of the Chinese emperors – a bureaucracy, crammed with innumerable officials with pompous titles.
- Lao Tzu - Taoist master who, it is said, achieved physical immortality. The “Pills of Immortality” were made from made from the Elixir of Life and refined by Lao Tzu.
- Buddha – Buddha is the title given to Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism, now revered as a divine being. The title means “Enlightened One” or “Awakened One.”
- Kwan Yin (Kuan Yin, or Guan Yin). - The Bodhisattva Kwan Yin, commonly called the Goddess of Mercy, is China’s favorite divine being. Her name means “heeding the cry.” She hears and helps all those who cry out to her in need.

Description and Symbolism of Main Characters in Canterbury Tales:

- The Knight – A courtly medieval fighting man who has served king and religion all over the known world. Modest in dress and speech, though highest in rank of all the Canterbury pilgrims. He rides with only his son and a yeoman in attendance.
- The Squire, the Knight's son – A young man of twenty, he has fought in several battles. Like his father, he is full of knightly courtesy, but he also enjoys a good time.
- The Prioress – A woman of conscience and sympathy, head of a convent, traveling with another nun and three priests as her attendants to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury
- The Monk – A fat hedonist who prefers to be out of his monastery. No lover of books and learning, he prefers to hunt and eat.
- The Friar— A merry chap who prefers tending to barmaids to tending to the sick.
- The Franklin – A rich landlord who loves to eat and keeps a number of dainty treats at hand.
- The Parson – A poor but loyal churchman who teaches his parishioners by his good example.
- The Miller – A jolly, drunken reveler who leads the company, playing on his bagpipes.

Key Questions

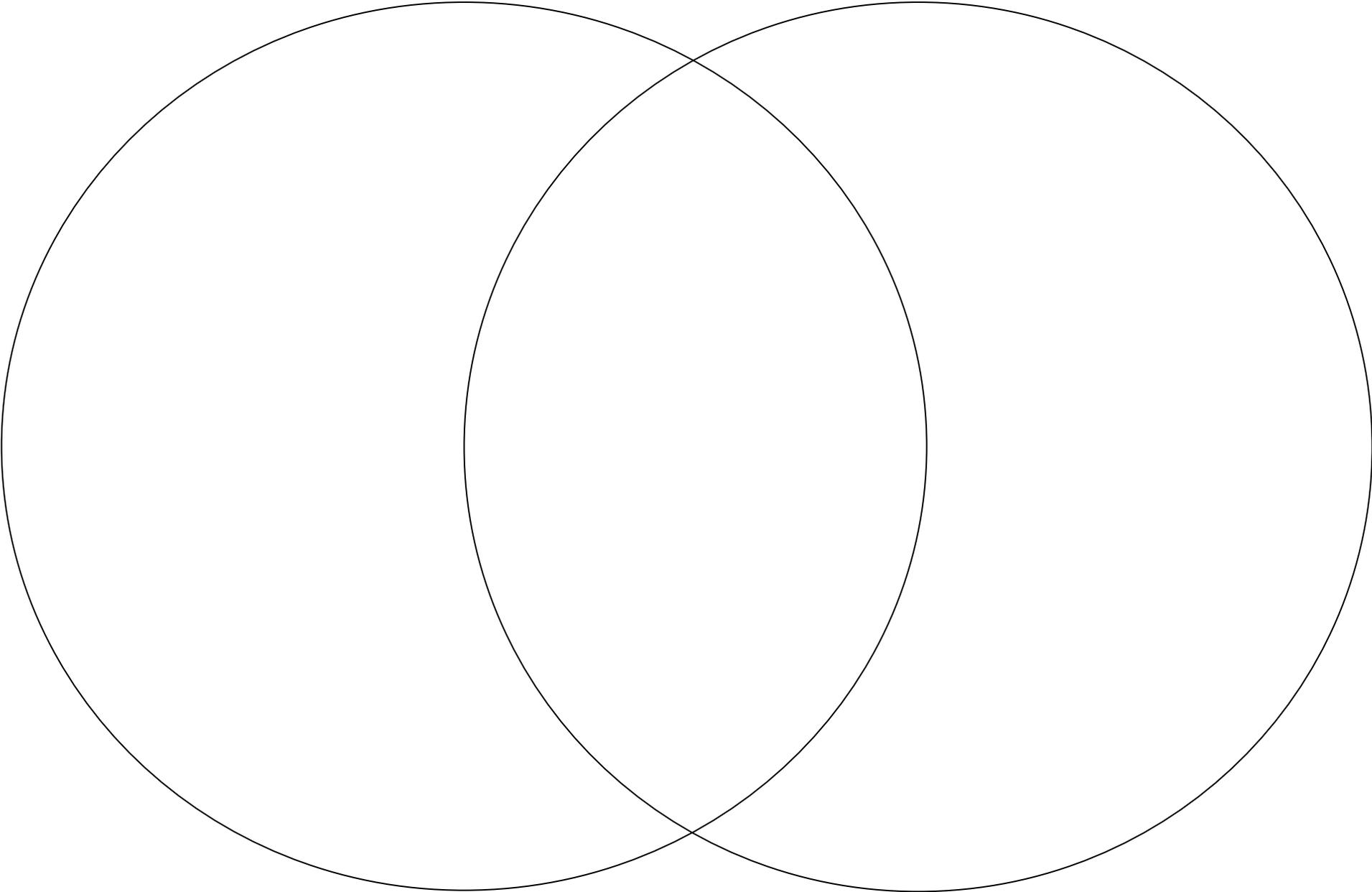
- Why could these main characters be referred to as Pilgrims? What is a Pilgrim?
- When you think of Tripitaka, what trait(s) come immediately to mind? Monkey? Pigsy? Give examples of how each pilgrim exhibits the traits you have identified.
- How do the characters work together? Could Tripitaka have made the trip alone?
- What is Monkey's role during the journey? How does he support the group?
- What is Pigsy's role during the journey? How does he support the group?
- What parallels can you draw between the pilgrims on their way to Canterbury and those on the journey to the west? What is the ultimate goal of their quests? Is it the same or different?

Assessment

- Participation with cooperative groups – complete the Venn Diagram below
- Complete character chart for Monkey King and Canterbury Tales characters below.
- Articulate the components of a Quest story through an in class essay that compares/contrasts characters from Canterbury Tales and The Monkey King, draws parallels and discusses divergences between the two stories.

Monkey King

Canterbury Tales



Group Participants _____

Hour and Date _____

Your Name: _____

Character Chart for Canterbury Tales or Monkey King

Character Name: _____

Physical description (pg#)

Behaviors: (pg#)

Thoughts: (pg#)

Quotes: (pg#)

Other's statements about him:
(pg#)

Others behaviors toward him:
(pg#)