Canterbury Tales Historical Significance Of The Pardoners Tale Essay, Research Paper

The Pardoners tale sheds much light on the conduct and thought of people in the dark ages, especially the menaces of society. This story reveals much about the morals, laws, and conventions in place during the dark ages. Even though the focus is on three drunken criminals, their encounters and conduct give clues as to what their society was up to.

The story told is historically significant; it is based on the dark ages, and it is made to seem as true as possible. The events said to have happened were most likely there to make the reader believe that it has actually occurred. This tells us that what they were saying was most likely true or commonly believed. The beginning of the story shows us that there are a great number of deaths in the town, and each time a death occurred it was indicated by a hand-bell clink from the church. This shows that something was killing off the citizens, and since most deaths back then occurred because of the Black Death, that was what it probably was. Later on in the story the rioters speak of being hung if they took the large sum of money home, because People would call us robbers a strong gang . This shows how easily it was to get killed back then, one false accusation or claim that was believed by some would lead to death.

Also represented in the tale are the moral codes of conduct that were followed during the time. Since the main characters were drunken rioters, we would presume that almost all the moves they made were evil in a sense. They were constantly drinking and cursing at each other, disrespecting their elders, being extremely greedy, and then eventually murdering each other in cold blood. The old man they had met, however, was a symbol of what was right, of the good in society. He was wise and had abandoned his money, because he knew that he did not have the power to control it, and it would have took control of him instead. After running into the three rioters and being insulted repeatedly for no apparent reason, the old man finally answers their question as to where death is, and points them to the gold he had left under a tree. Of course, not too soon after the three drunks caught site of the gold coins, they were controlled by it and had already begun plotting the death of their friends for their own benefit. Eventually they all died due to the evil in their hearts, and the greed for all the money they had found.

Much light is shed on medieval thought and conduct, and there is also a great moral to this story, since it was intended to be a sermon. This tale teaches us that we should always respect our elders, and even the strong at heart are usually not strong enough to control the greed for money that leads to a better life. It may be quick to strike, or it may be a long gradual process; but eventually it will get to us, and in the end it will only lead to the destruction of ourselves, and those whom we love.