

"The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" from The Canterbury Tales are very closely related. They both deal with the relationship between a jealous man, his wife, and a young scholar(s), and they both are immoral stories that contain sex and violence. This proves that the Miller and the Reeve are two very corrupt individuals. However, these tales also share some differences. For instance, the main character in "The Reeve's Tale" is a Miller, while the main character in "The Miller's Tale" is a carpenter (which was the Reeve's profession), and both tales are different in the way the Miller and the Reeve are portrayed. Again the differences reflect the dishonesty of the tale's author.

The two tales share the relationship between a jealous man, his wife, and a young scholar. In "The Miller's Tale" the scholar Nicholas is a "close and shy" (89) person who has a talent for "making love in secret" (89). His talent is illustrated when he turns his eye to the Carpenter's wife and makes love with her. The situation is very similar to "The Reeve's Tale." In that tale the Miller lets John and Alan, two scholars, who lost their horse from the Miller's own doing, stay at his house. However, since the two boys are "Headstrong...and eager for a joke" (110), Alan proceeds to rape the Miller's daughter, while John sleeps with the Miller's wife. It is apparent that these situations are very similar, in that the scholars are having adulterous sexual intercourse with both the Carpenter's and the Miller's wives. This similarity shows how the Miller and the Reeve are preoccupied with sex and adultery which is a sign of their dishonesty.

The two tales also share common traits in the fields of immorality and sexuality. For instance, "The Miller's Tale" contains several different occasions of lying and cheating, including the scene where the Miller cheats Alan and John out of a fair amount of grain, and the scene where John moves The Miller's wife's baby to confuse the her into sleeping with him. In comparison, "The Reeve's Tale" has a similar amount of dishonesty. For instance, in an elaborate attempt to sleep with the Carpenter's wife, Nicholas tells the Carpenter, "Rain is to is to fall in torrents, such a scud / It will be twice as bad as Noah's Flood" (97). Nicholas, goes on to tell the Carpenter to build a boat that will carry him and his wife when the rain comes. However, this narrative is completely fabricated, so he could visit the Carpenter's wife while the Carpenter is asleep in the boat. This is a good example of how the two tales share similarities in conjunction to sexuality and immorality. This similarity also reflects upon the tales author, by offering sexuality and immorality as another corrupt characteristic.

Although, "The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" appear to have similarities, they do share some differences which reveal a lot about the tale's teller. As an example, both tales contain a wife, a scholar(s), and either a Carpenter or a Miller. However, when closely examined, the non-coincidental revelation is that the tale which contains the Miller is told by the Reeve (who is also a Carpenter) , and the tale that contains the Carpenter is told by the Miller. Both tales are designed so that they specifically target the other person as being the butt of a joke. Looking deeper into the motives behind the tales leads to the conclusion that neither the Miller nor the Reeve have any respect for each other or their honor. The narrator agrees, offering his opinion:

The Miller was churl, I've told you this,
So was the Reeve, and others some as well,
And harlotry was all they had to tell.

Consider then and hold me free of blame. (88)

He finds the Miller, a man with an ugly wart on his face, the Reeve a person accused of fixing his masters books, and the tales they tell, so debase that he refuses to be held responsible for them. This clearly shows that the differences in the tales reveal a great deal about the characters they represent.

Another difference in the two tales are the way in which the Miller and the Carpenter are portrayed. Although both tales dealt with adultery, the way they present the concept in relation to the Miller and the Carpenter are different. For instance, In "The Miller's Tale" the Carpenter is illustrated to look like a fool: the purity of his wife is compromised, he trusts someone who deceives him, and he

builds a boat for water that never comes. However, he got revenge in the end by sticking Nicholas with a hot poker, and getting the whole town to ridicule him. In "The Reeve's Tale," the Miller trusts two people that deceive him and sleep with his wife and daughter. In addition, he never obtains revenge, and is instead left with nothing. Certainly, the Miller receives the shorter end of the stick. However, the Reeve justifies his increased harshness.

This drunken Miller we've had so much drool of,
Told how a carpenter was made a fool of,
Maybe to score off me, for I am one,
By y'r leave, I'll pay him back before I've done
In his own filthy words, you may expect'.
I hope to God he breaks his bloody neck. (108)

From this it is evident that the Reeve feels a sense of retribution against the Miller. Clearly, he feels the need to exact revenge on him, compromising his honor and decency in the interim. This again illustrates the Reeve's low moral standards by his need to insult another human being.

In conclusion, "The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" although they have some differences and some similarities, their premise and the conclusions drawn from them are basically the same. They are two different pieces of literature that serve the same purpose: to insult the other person. These tales perform this to such a degree of vulgarity that they provide an adequate amount of information to reveal many character traits of the tale's teller, and to prove that both characters are devoid of moral standards. However, despite their lack of moralistic virtues, these tales can still relate to modern society. A prime example is gossip. Often people will make up scandalous stories when their only intention is to put another individual down. The intentions will remain the same only the way the story is told, and the language will change.