

**Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice**  
**Topic 3 Content: "The Pardoner's Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales***  
**by Geoffrey Chaucer**

**Prologue to "The Pardoner's Tale"**

1 Masters, quoth he, in churches, when I preach,  
2 I am at pains that all shall hear my speech,  
3 And ring it out as roundly as a bell,  
4 For I know all by heart the thing I tell.  
5 My theme is always one, and ever was:  
6 'Radix malorum est cupiditas.'  
7 First I announce the place whence I have come,  
8 And then I show my pardons, all and some.  
9 Our liege-lord's seal on my patent perfect,  
10 I show that first, my safety to protect,  
11 And then no man's so bold, no priest nor clerk,  
12 As to disturb me in Christ's holy work;  
13 And after that my tales I marshal all.  
14 Indulgences of pope and cardinal,  
15 Of patriarch and bishop, these I do  
16 Show, and in Latin speak some words, a few,  
17 To spice therewith a bit my sermoning  
18 And stir men to devotion, marvelling.  
19 Then show I forth my hollow crystal-stones,  
20 Which are crammed full of rags, aye, and of bones;  
21 Relics are these, as they think, every one.  
22 Then I've in latten box a shoulder bone  
23 Which came out of a holy Hebrew's sheep.  
24 'Good men,' say I, 'my words in memory keep;  
25 If this bone shall be washed in any well,  
26 Then if a cow, calf, sheep, or ox should swell  
27 That's eaten snake, or been by serpent stung,  
28 Take water of that well and wash its tongue,  
29 And 'twill be well anon; and furthermore,  
30 Of pox and scab and every other sore  
31 Shall every sheep be healed that of this well  
32 Drinks but one draught; take heed of what I tell.  
33 And if the man that owns the beasts, I trow,  
34 Shall every week, and that before cock-crow,  
35 And before breakfast, drink thereof a draught,  
36 As that Jew taught of yore in his priestcraft,  
37 His beasts and all his store shall multiply.  
38 And, good sirs, it's a cure for jealousy;  
39 For though a man be fallen in jealous rage,  
40 Let one make of this water his pottage

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41 And nevermore shall he his wife mistrust,  
42 Though he may know the truth of all her lust,  
43 Even though she'd taken two priests, aye, or three.  
44 'Here is a mitten, too, that you may see.  
45 Who puts his hand therein, I say again,  
46 He shall have increased harvest of his grain,  
47 After he's sown, be it of wheat or oats,  
48 Just so he offers pence or offers groats.  
49 'Good men and women, one thing I warn you.  
50 If any man be here in church right now  
51 That's done a sin so horrible that he  
52 Dare not, for shame, of that sin shriven be,  
53 Or any woman, be she young or old,  
54 That's made her husband into a cuckold,  
55 Such folk shall have no power and no grace  
56 To offer to my relics in this place.  
57 But whoso finds himself without such blame,  
58 He will come up and offer, in God's name,  
59 And I'll absolve him by authority  
60 That has, by bull, been granted unto me.'  
61 By this fraud have I won me, year by year,  
62 A hundred marks, since I've been pardoner.  
63 I stand up like a scholar in pulpit,  
64 And when the ignorant people all do sit,  
65 I preach, as you have heard me say before,  
66 And tell a hundred false japes, less or more.  
67 I am at pains, then, to stretch forth my neck,  
68 And east and west upon the folk I beck,  
69 As does a dove that's sitting on a barn.  
70 With hands and swift tongue, then, do I so yarn  
71 That it's a joy to see my busyness.  
72 Of avarice and of all such wickedness  
73 Is all my preaching, thus to make them free  
74 With offered pence, the which pence come to me.  
75 For my intent is only pence to win,  
76 And not at all for punishment of sin.  
77 When they are dead, for all I think thereon  
78 Their souls may well black-berrying have gone!  
79 For, certainly, there's many a sermon grows  
80 Ofttimes from evil purpose, as one knows;  
81 Some for folks' pleasure and for flattery,  
82 To be advanced by all hypocrisy,

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83 And some for vainglory, and some for hate.  
84 For, when I dare not otherwise debate,  
85 Then do I sharpen well my tongue and sting  
86 The man in sermons, and upon him fling  
87 My lying defamations, if but he  
88 Has wronged my brethren or—much worse—wronged me.  
89 For though I mention not his proper name,  
90 Men know whom I refer to, all the same,  
91 By signs I make and other circumstances.  
92 Thus I pay those who do us displeasances.  
93 Thus spit I out my venom under hue  
94 Of holiness, to seem both good and true.  
95 But briefly my intention I'll express;  
96 I preach no sermon, save for covetousness.  
97 For at my theme is yet, and ever was,  
98 'Radix malorum est cupiditas.'  
99 Thus can I preach against that self-same vice  
100 Which I indulge, and that is avarice.  
101 But though myself be guilty of that sin,  
102 Yet can I cause these other folk to win  
103 From avarice and really to repent.  
104 But that is not my principal intent.  
105 I preach no sermon, save for covetousness;  
106 This should suffice of that, though, as I guess.  
107 Then do I cite examples, many a one,  
108 Out of old stories and of time long gone,  
109 For vulgar people all love stories old;  
110 Such things they can re-tell well and can hold.  
111 What? Think you that because I'm good at preaching  
112 And win me gold and silver by my teaching  
113 I'll live of my free will in poverty?  
114 No, no, that's never been my policy!  
115 For I will preach and beg in sundry lands;  
116 I will not work and labour with my hands,  
117 Nor baskets weave and try to live thereby,  
118 Because I will not beg in vain, say I.  
119 I will none of the apostles counterfeit;  
120 I will have money, wool, and cheese, and wheat,  
121 Though it be given by the poorest page,  
122 Or by the poorest widow in village,  
123 And though her children perish of famine.  
124 Nay! I will drink good liquor of the vine

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125 And have a pretty wench in every town.  
126 But hearken, masters, to conclusion shown:  
127 Your wish is that I tell you all a tale.  
128 Now that I've drunk a draught of musty ale,  
129 By God, I hope that I can tell something  
130 That shall, in reason, be to your liking.  
131 For though I am myself a vicious man,  
132 Yet I would tell a moral tale, and can,  
133 The which I'm wont to preach more gold to win.  
134 Now hold your peace! my tale I will begin.

**"The Pardoner's Tale"**

1 In Flanders, once, there was a company  
2 Of young companions given to folly,  
3 Riot and gambling, brothels and taverns;  
4 And, to the music of harps, lutes, gitterns,  
5 They danced and played at dice both day and night.  
6 And ate also and drank beyond their might,  
7 Whereby they made the devil's sacrifice  
8 Within that devil's temple, wicked wise,  
9 By superfluity both vile and vain.  
10 So damnable their oaths and so profane  
11 That it was terrible to hear them swear;  
12 Our Blessed Saviour's Body did they tear;  
13 They thought the Jews had rent Him not enough;  
14 And each of them at others' sins would laugh.  
15 Then entered dancing-girls of ill repute,  
16 Graceful and slim, and girls who peddled fruit,  
17 Harpers and bawds and women selling cake,  
18 Who do their office for the Devil's sake,  
19 To kindle and blow the fire of lechery,  
20 Which is so closely joined with gluttony;  
21 I call on holy writ, now, to witness  
22 That lust is in all wine and drunkenness.  
23 Lo, how the drunken Lot unnaturally  
24 Lay with his daughters two, unwittingly;  
25 So drunk he was he knew not what he wrought.  
26 Herod, as in his story's clearly taught,  
27 When full of wine and merry at a feast,  
28 Sitting at table idly gave behest  
29 To slay John Baptist, who was all guiltless.

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30 Seneca says a good word too, doubtless;  
31 He says there is no difference he can find  
32 Between a man that's quite out of his mind  
33 And one that's drunken, save perhaps in this  
34 That when a wretch in madness fallen is,  
35 The state lasts longer than does drunkenness.  
36 O gluttony; full of all wickedness,  
37 O first cause of confusion to us all,  
38 Beginning of damnation and our fall,  
39 Till Christ redeemed us with His blood again!  
40 Behold how dearly, to be brief and plain,  
41 Was purchased this accursed villainy;  
42 Corrupt was all this world with gluttony!  
43 Adam our father, and his wife also,  
44 From Paradise to labour and to woe  
45 Were driven for that vice, no doubt; indeed  
46 The while that Adam fasted, as I read,  
47 He was in Paradise; but then when he  
48 Ate of the fruit forbidden of the tree,  
49 Anon he was cast out to woe and pain.  
50 O gluttony, of you we may complain!  
51 Oh, knew a man how many maladies  
52 Follow on excess and on gluttonies,  
53 Surely he would be then more moderate  
54 In diet, and at table more sedate.  
55 Alas! The throat so short, the tender mouth,  
56 Causing that east and west and north and south,  
57 In earth, in air, in water men shall swink  
58 To get a glutton dainty meat and drink!  
59 Of this same matter Paul does wisely treat:  
60 Meat for the belly and belly for the meat:  
61 And both shall God destroy, as Paul does say.  
62 Alas! A foul thing is it, by my fay,  
63 To speak this word, and fouler is the deed,  
64 When man so guzzles of the white and red  
65 That of his own throat makes he his privy,  
66 Because of this cursed superfluity.  
67 The apostle, weeping, says most piteously:  
68 For many walk, of whom I've told you, aye,  
69 Weeping I tell you once again they're dross,  
70 For they are foes of Christ and of the Cross,  
71 Whose end is death, whose belly is their god.

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72 O gut! O belly! O you stinking cod,  
73 Filled full of dung, with all corruption found!  
74 At either end of you foul is the sound.  
75 With how great cost and labour do they find  
76 Your food! These cooks, they pound and strain and grind;  
77 Substance to accident they turn with fire,  
78 All to fulfill your gluttonous desire!  
79 Out of the hard and riven bones knock they  
80 The marrow, for they throw nothing away  
81 That may go through the gullet soft and sweet;  
82 With spicery, with leaf, bark, root, replete  
83 Shall be the sauces made for your delight,  
84 To furnish you a sharper appetite.  
85 But truly, he that such delights entice  
86 Is dead while yet he wallows in this vice.  
87 A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness  
88 Is full of striving and of wretchedness.  
89 O drunken man, disfigured is your face,  
90 Sour is your breath, foul are you to embrace,  
91 And through your drunken nose there comes a sound  
92 As if you snored out Samson, Samson round;  
93 And yet God knows that Samson drank no wine.  
94 You fall down just as if you were stuck swine;  
95 Your tongue is loose, your honest care obscure;  
96 For drunkenness is very sepulture  
97 Of any mind a man may chance to own.  
98 In whom strong drink has domination shown  
99 He can no counsel keep for any dread.  
100 Now keep you from the white and from the red,  
101 And specially from the white wine grown at Lepe  
102 That is for sale in Fish Street or in Cheap.  
103 This wine of Spain, it mixes craftily  
104 With other wines that chance to be near by,  
105 From which there rise such fumes, as well may be,  
106 That when a man has drunk two draughts, or three,  
107 And thinks himself to be at home in Cheap,  
108 He finds that he's in Spain, and right at Lepe,-  
109 Not at Rochelle nor yet at Bordeaux town,  
110 And then will he snore out Samson, Samson.  
111 But hearken, masters, one word more I pray:  
112 The greatest deeds of all, I'm bold to say,  
113 Of victories in the old testament,

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114 Through the True God, Who is omnipotent,  
115 Were gained by abstinence and after prayer:  
116 Look in the Bible, you may learn this there.  
117 Lo, Attila, the mighty conqueror,  
118 Died in his sleep, in shame and dishonour,  
119 And bleeding at the nose for drunkenness;  
120 A great captain should live in soberness.  
121 Above all this, advise yourself right well  
122 What was commanded unto Lemuel-  
123 Not Samuel, but Lemuel, say I-  
124 The Bible's words you cannot well deny:  
125 Drinking by magistrates is called a vice.  
126 No more of this, for it may well suffice.  
127 And now that I have told of gluttony,  
128 I'll take up gambling, showing you thereby  
129 The curse of chance, and all its evils treat;  
130 From it proceeds false swearing and deceit,  
131 Blaspheming, murder, and—what's more—the waste  
132 Of time and money; add to which, debased  
133 And shamed and lost to honour quite is he,  
134 Who once a common gambler's known to be.  
135 And ever the higher one is of estate,  
136 The more he's held disgraced and desolate.  
137 And if a prince plays similar hazardry  
138 In all his government and policy,  
139 He loses in the estimate of men  
140 His good repute, and finds it not again.  
141 Chilon, who was a wise ambassador,  
142 Was sent to Corinth, all in great honour,  
143 From Lacedaemon, to make alliance.  
144 And when he came, he noticed there, by chance,  
145 All of the greatest people of the land  
146 Playing at hazard there on every hand.  
147 Wherefore, and all as soon as it might be,  
148 He stole off home again to his country,  
149 And said: I will not thus debase my name;  
150 Nor will I take upon me so great shame  
151 You to ally with common hazarders.  
152 Send, if you will, other ambassadors;  
153 For, my truth, I say I'd rather die  
154 Than you with gamblers like to them ally.  
155 For you that are so glorious in honours

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156 Shall never ally yourselves with hazarders  
157 By my consent, or treaty I have made.  
158 This wise philosopher, 'twas thus he said.  
159 Let us look, then, at King Demetrius.  
160 The king of Parthia, as the book tells us,  
161 Sent him a pair of golden dice, in scorn,  
162 Because the name of gambler he had borne;  
163 Wherefore he marked his reputation down  
164 As valueless despite his wide renown.  
165 Great lords may find sufficient other play  
166 Seemly enough to while the time away.  
167 Now will I speak of oaths both false and great  
168 A word or two, whereof the old books treat.  
169 Great swearing is a thing abominable,  
170 And vain oaths yet more reprehensible.  
171 The High God did forbid swearing at all,  
172 As witness Matthew; but in especial  
173 Of swearing says the holy Jeremiah,  
174 Thou shalt not swear in vain, to be a liar,  
175 But swear in judgment and in righteousness;  
176 But idle swearing is a wickedness.  
177 Behold, in the first table of the Law,  
178 That should be honoured as High God's, sans flaw,  
179 This second one of His commandments plain:  
180 Thou shalt not take the Lord God's name in vain.  
181 Nay, sooner He forbids us such swearing  
182 Than homicide or many a wicked thing;  
183 I say that, as to order, thus it stands;  
184 'Tis known by him who His will understands  
185 That the great second law of God is that.  
186 Moreover, I will tell you full and flat,  
187 That retribution will not quit his house  
188 Who in his swearing is too outrageous.  
189 By God's own precious heart, and by His nails,  
190 And by the blood of Christ that's now at Hales,  
191 Seven is my chance, and yours is five and trey!  
192 By God's good arms, if you do falsely play,  
193 This dagger through your heart I'll stick for you!  
194 Such is the whelping of the bitched bones two:  
195 Perjury, anger, cheating, homicide.  
196 Now for the love of Christ, Who for us died,  
197 Forgo this swearing oaths, both great and small;



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198 But, sirs, now will I tell to you my tale.  
199 Now these three roisterers, whereof I tell,  
200 Long before prime was rung by any bell,  
201 Were sitting in a tavern for to drink;  
202 And as they sat they heard a small bell clink  
203 Before a corpse being carried to his grave;  
204 Whereat one of them called unto his knave:  
205 Go run, said he, and ask them civilly  
206 What corpse it is that's just now passing by,  
207 And see that you report the man's name well.  
208 Sir, said the boy, it needs not that they tell.  
209 I learned it, ere you came here, full two hours;  
210 He was, by gad, an old comrade of yours;  
211 And he was slain, all suddenly, last night,  
212 When drunk, as he sat on his bench upright;  
213 An unseen thief, called Death, came stalking by,  
214 Who hereabouts makes all the people die,  
215 And with his spear he clove his heart in two  
216 And went his way and made no more ado.  
217 He's slain a thousand with this pestilence;  
218 And, master, ere you come in his presence,  
219 It seems to me to be right necessary  
220 To be forewarned of such an adversary:  
221 Be ready to meet him for evermore.  
222 My mother taught me this, I say no more.  
223 By holy Mary, said the innkeeper,  
224 The boy speaks truth, for Death has slain, this year,  
225 A mile or more hence, in a large village,  
226 Both man and woman, child and hind and page.  
227 I think his habitation must be there;  
228 To be advised of him great wisdom 'twere,  
229 Before he did a man some dishonour.  
230 Yea, by God's arms! exclaimed this roisterer,  
231 Is it such peril, then, this Death to meet?  
232 I'll seek him in the road and in the street,  
233 As I now vow to God's own noble bones!  
234 Hear, comrades, we're of one mind, as each owns;  
235 Let each of us hold up his hand to other  
236 And each of us become the other's brother,  
237 And we three will go slay this traitor Death;  
238 He shall be slain who's stopped so many a breath,  
239 By God's great dignity, ere it be night.

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240 Together did these three their pledges plight  
241 To live and die, each of them for the other,  
242 As if he were his very own blood brother.  
243 And up they started, drunken, in this rage,  
244 And forth they went, and towards that village  
245 Whereof the innkeeper had told before.  
246 And so, with many a grisly oath, they swore  
247 And Jesus' blessed body once more rent-  
248 Death shall be dead if we find where he went.  
249 When they had gone not fully half a mile,  
250 Just as they would have trodden over a stile,  
251 An old man, and a poor, with them did meet.  
252 This ancient man full meekly them did greet,  
253 And said thus: Now, lords, God keep you and see!  
254 The one that was most insolent of these three  
255 Replied to him: What? Churl of evil grace,  
256 Why are you all wrapped up, except your face?  
257 Why do you live so long in so great age?  
258 This ancient man looked upon his visage  
259 And thus replied: Because I cannot find  
260 A man, nay, though I walked from here to Ind,  
261 Either in town or country who'll engage  
262 To give his youth in barter for my age;  
263 And therefore must I keep my old age still,  
264 As long a time as it shall be God's will.  
265 Not even Death, alas! my life will take;  
266 Thus restless I my wretched way must make,  
267 And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,  
268 I knock with my staff early, aye, and late,  
269 And cry: 'O my dear mother, let me in!  
270 Lo, how I'm wasted, flesh and blood and skin!  
271 Alas! When shall my bones come to their rest?  
272 Mother, with you fain would I change my chest,  
273 That in my chamber so long time has been,  
274 Aye! For a haircloth rag to wrap me in!"  
275 But yet to me she will not show that grace,  
276 And thus all pale and withered is my face.  
277 But, sirs, in you it is no courtesy  
278 To speak to an old man despitefully,  
279 Unless in word he trespass or in deed.  
280 In holy writ you may, yourselves, well read  
281 'Before an old man, hoar upon the head,

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282 You should arise.' Which I advise you read,  
283 Nor to an old man any injury do  
284 More than you would that men should do to you  
285 In age, if you so long time shall abide;  
286 And God be with you, whether you walk or ride.  
287 I must pass on now where I have to go.  
288 Nay, ancient churl, by God it sha'n't be so,  
289 Cried out this other hazarder, anon;  
290 You sha'n't depart so easily, by Saint John!  
291 You spoke just now of that same traitor Death,  
292 Who in this country stops our good friends' breath.  
293 Hear my true word, since you are his own spy,  
294 Tell where he is or you shall rue it, aye  
295 By God and by the holy Sacrament!  
296 Indeed you must be, with this Death, intent  
297 To slay all us young people, you false thief.  
298 Now, sirs, said he, if you're so keen, in brief,  
299 To find out Death, turn up this crooked way,  
300 For in that grove I left him, by my fay,  
301 Under a tree, and there he will abide;  
302 Nor for your boasts will he a moment hide.  
303 See you that oak? Right there you shall him find.  
304 God save you, Who redeemed all humankind,  
305 And mend your ways!—thus said this ancient man.  
306 And every one of these three roisterers ran  
307 Till he came to that tree; and there they found,  
308 Of florins of fine gold, new-minted, round,  
309 Well-nigh eight bushels full, or so they thought.  
310 No longer, then, after this Death they sought,  
311 But each of them so glad was of that sight,  
312 Because the florins were so fair and bright,  
313 That down they all sat by this precious hoard.  
314 The worst of them was first to speak a word.  
315 Brothers, said he, take heed to what I say;  
316 My wits are keen, although I mock and play.  
317 This treasure here Fortune to us has given  
318 That mirth and jollity our lives may liven,  
319 And easily as it's come, so will we spend.  
320 Eh! By God's precious dignity! Who'd pretend,  
321 Today, that we should have so fair a grace?  
322 But might this gold be carried from this place  
323 Home to my house, or if you will, to yours-

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324 For well we know that all this gold is ours-  
325 Then were we all in high felicity.  
326 But certainly by day this may not be;  
327 For men would say that we were robbers strong,  
328 And we'd, for our own treasure, hang ere long.  
329 This treasure must be carried home by night  
330 All prudently and slyly, out of sight.  
331 So I propose that cuts among us all  
332 Be drawn, and let's see where the cut will fall;  
333 And he that gets the short cut, blithe of heart  
334 Shall run to town at once, and to the mart,  
335 And fetch us bread and wine here, privately.  
336 And two of us shall guard, right cunningly,  
337 This treasure well; and if he does not tarry,  
338 When it is night we'll all the treasure carry  
339 Where, by agreement, we may think it best.  
340 That one of them the cuts brought in his fist  
341 And bade them draw to see where it might fall;  
342 And it fell on the youngest of them all;  
343 And so, forth toward the town he went anon.  
344 And just as soon as he had turned and gone,  
345 That one of them spoke thus unto the other:  
346 You know well that you are my own sworn brother,  
347 So to your profit I will speak anon.  
348 You know well how our comrade is just gone;  
349 And here is gold, and that in great plenty,  
350 That's to be parted here among us three.  
351 Nevertheless, if I can shape it so  
352 That it be parted only by us two,  
353 Shall I not do a turn that is friendly?  
354 The other said: Well, now, how can that be?  
355 He knows well that the gold is with us two.  
356 What shall we say to him? What shall we do?  
357 Shall it be secret? asked the first rogue, then,  
358 And I will tell you in eight words, or ten,  
359 What we must do, and how bring it about.  
360 Agreed, replied the other, Never doubt,  
361 That, on my word, I nothing will betray.  
362 Now, said the first, we're two, and I dare say  
363 The two of us are stronger than is one.  
364 Watch when he sits, and soon as that is done  
365 Arise and make as if with him to play;

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366 And I will thrust him through the two sides, yea,  
367 The while you romp with him as in a game,  
368 And with your dagger see you do the same;  
369 And then shall all this gold divided be,  
370 My right dear friend, just between you and me;  
371 Then may we both our every wish fulfill  
372 And play at dice all at our own sweet will.  
373 And thus agreed were these two rogues, that day,  
374 To slay the third, as you have heard me say.  
375 This youngest rogue who'd gone into the town,  
376 Often in fancy rolled he up and down  
377 The beauty of those florins new and bright.  
378 O Lord, thought he, if so be that I might  
379 Have all this treasure to myself alone,  
380 There is no man who lives beneath the throne  
381 Of God that should be then so merry as I.  
382 And at the last the Fiend, our enemy,  
383 Put in his thought that he should poison buy  
384 With which he might kill both his fellows; aye,  
385 The Devil found him in such wicked state,  
386 He had full leave his grief to consummate;  
387 For it was utterly the man's intent  
388 To kill them both and never to repent.  
389 And on he strode, no longer would he tarry,  
390 Into the town, to an apothecary,  
391 And prayed of him that he'd prepare and sell  
392 Some poison for his rats, and some as well  
393 For a polecat that in his yard had lain,  
394 The which, he said, his capons there had slain,  
395 And fain he was to rid him, if he might,  
396 Of vermin that thus damaged him by night.  
397 The apothecary said: And you shall have  
398 A thing of which, so God my spirit save,  
399 In all this world there is no live creature  
400 That's eaten or has drunk of this mixture  
401 As much as equals but a grain of wheat,  
402 That shall not sudden death thereafter meet;  
403 Yea, die he shall, and in a shorter while  
404 Than you require to walk but one short mile;  
405 This poison is so violent and strong.  
406 This wicked man the poison took along  
407 With him boxed up, and then he straightway ran

**Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice**  
**Topic 3 Content: "The Pardoner's Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales***  
**by Geoffrey Chaucer**

408 Into the street adjoining, to a man,  
409 And of him borrowed generous bottles three;  
410 And into two his poison then poured he;  
411 The third one he kept clean for his own drink.  
412 For all that night he was resolved to swink  
413 In carrying the florins from that place.  
414 And when this roisterer, with evil grace,  
415 Had filled with wine his mighty bottles three,  
416 Then to his comrades forth again went he.  
417 What is the need to tell about it more?  
418 For just as they had planned his death before,  
419 Just so they murdered him, and that anon.  
420 And when the thing was done, then spoke the one:  
421 Now let us sit and drink and so be merry,  
422 And afterward we will his body bury.  
423 And as he spoke, one bottle of the three  
424 He took wherein the poison chanced to be  
425 And drank and gave his comrade drink also,  
426 For which, and that anon, lay dead these two.  
427 I feel quite sure that Doctor Avicena  
428 Within the sections of his Canon never  
429 Set down more certain signs of poisoning  
430 Than showed these wretches two at their ending.  
431 Thus ended these two homicides in woe;  
432 Died thus the treacherous poisoner also.  
433 O cursed sin, full of abominableness!  
434 O treacherous homicide! O wickedness!  
435 O gluttony, lechery, and hazardry!  
436 O blasphemmer of Christ with villainy,  
437 And with great oaths, habitual for pride!  
438 Alas! Mankind, how may this thing betide  
439 That to thy dear Creator, Who thee wrought,  
440 And with His precious blood salvation bought,  
441 Thou art so false and so unkind, alas!  
442 Now, good men, God forgive you each trespass,  
443 And keep you from the sin of avarice.  
444 My holy pardon cures and will suffice,  
445 So that it brings me gold, or silver brings,  
446 Or else, I care not—brooches, spoons or rings.  
447 Bow down your heads before this holy bull!  
448 Come up, you wives, and offer of your wool!  
449 Your names I'll enter on my roll, anon,

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450 And into Heaven's bliss you'll go, each one.  
451 For I'll absolve you, by my special power,  
452 You that make offering, as clean this hour  
453 As you were born. And lo, sirs, thus I preach.  
454 And Jesus Christ, who is our souls' great leech,  
455 So grant you each his pardon to receive;  
456 For that is best; I will not you deceive.  
457 But, sirs, one word forgot I in my tale;  
458 I've relics in my pouch that cannot fail,  
459 As good as England ever saw, I hope,  
460 The which I got by kindness of the pope.  
461 If gifts your change of heart and mind reveal,  
462 You'll get my absolution while you kneel.  
463 Come forth, and kneel down here before, anon,  
464 And humbly you'll receive my full pardon;  
465 Or else receive a pardon as you wend,  
466 All new and fresh as every mile shall end,  
467 So that you offer me each time, anew,  
468 More gold and silver, all good coins and true.  
469 It is an honour to each one that's here  
470 That you may have a competent pardoner  
471 To give you absolution as you ride,  
472 For all adventures that may still betide.  
473 Perchance from horse may fall down one or two,  
474 Breaking his neck, and it might well be you.  
475 See what insurance, then, it is for all  
476 That I within your fellowship did fall,  
477 Who may absolve you, both the great and less,  
478 When soul from body passes, as I guess.  
479 I think our host might just as well begin,  
480 For he is most-enveloped in all sin.  
481 Come forth, sir host, and offer first anon,  
482 And you shall kiss the relics, every one,  
483 Aye, for a groat! Unbuckle now your purse.  
484 Nay, nay, said he, then may I have Christ's curse!  
485 It sha'n't be, said he, as I've hope for riches,  
486 Why, you would have me kissing your old breeches,  
487 And swear they were the relics of a saint,  
488 Though with your excrement 'twere dabbed like paint.  
489 By cross Saint Helen found in Holy Land,  
490 I would I had your ballocks in my hand  
491 Instead of relics in a reliquary;

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492 Let's cut them off, and them I'll help you carry;  
493 They shall be shrined within a hog's fat turd.  
494 This pardoner, he answered not a word;  
495 So wrathy was he no word would he say.  
496 Now, said our host, I will no longer play  
497 With you, nor any other angry man.  
498 But at this point the worthy knight began,  
499 When that he saw how all the folk did laugh:  
500 No more of this, for it's gone far enough;  
501 Sir pardoner, be glad and merry here;  
502 And you, sir host, who are to me so dear,  
503 I pray you that you kiss the pardoner.  
504 And, pardoner, I pray you to draw near,  
505 And as we did before, let's laugh and play.  
506 And then they kissed and rode forth on their way.