Discussion Questions on Chaucer:
Set 1: “The General Prologue” of *The Canterbury Tales* 238-263
Set 2: “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” pages 282-301
Set 3: “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” pages 301-310

1. What are some life experiences that may have influenced Chaucer as a writer?

2. What is an estates satire, and how does Chaucer’s differ from earlier conventional ones. Provide two instances from “The General Prologue” that exemplify Chaucer’s satiric approach.

3. Briefly describe the Knight and the Squire. How do they differ?

4. Briefly describe the following characters: the Monk, the Friar, the Parson, and the Pardoner. What seems suggested about the church through these characters?

5. Briefly describe the Nun and the Wife of Bath. What is one interesting thing we learn about each of these characters through the narrator’s descriptions?
1. What does the Wife of Bath suggest about the balance of power between men and women? Show how her account of her relationship with one of her first four husbands supports her view.

2. Wife of Bath continually acknowledges her opposition through the repeated phrase “Thou saist.” She knows the criticisms against women that have been said. What are a few of these criticisms, and what are a few counterpoints she fires back for her audience to contemplate?

3. The Wife of Bath tells us three of her husbands were good and two were bad. The fifth husband, Janekin, is the one we learn about in the greatest detail. What was he like? Why did she like him? Look at her account of their relation up to, but not including, the fight over the book. Also, what do we learn about the Wife of Bath as she shares her thoughts about Janekin?

4. Describe the fight over the book. What’s the book about? What’s included in it? What is the outcome of the fight, and what does it suggest about the balance of power between Janekin and the Wife of Bath?
1. How does “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” start off like the beginning of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*? Identify a few interesting similarities.

2. As the knight seeks others’ counsel in hopes of solving the question put to him, what are a few of the answers he is offered? What attitude toward women do they suggest?

3. Who provides the knight with the answer he needs? What is the answer? What deal is struck, and why does the knight abide by it?

4. Why does the knight look down upon his bride? What is *gentilesse*, and what does the woman teach the knight about that concept? What examples does she cite while teaching him?

5. What options does the woman offer the knight at the end, and what is his choice? What does his choice suggest? What are a couple interesting similarities and/or differences between the end of “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” and the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*?