Canterbury Tales And The Wife Of Bath’s Tale Comparison

The Canterbury Tales, written by Geoffrey Chaucer, is a satirical piece written for the purpose of the betterment of the people. Chaucer saw much corruption around him, specifically in the church. He took all these people and wrote stories about them without using their real names and wrote about all that they had done wrong. Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales to try to point out to the people what they needed to fix. Both tales of “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” and “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” uses satire to expose their true characters and the characters’ qualities within them. These stories both have an underlying theme hinting at the idea that women are temptresses and that they were oppressed in the church during that time. Chaucer used satire to hint at this theme throughout both of these tales.

“The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” unlike “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” is more of a fable. It does have a moral in the story. The satire in this story was used to point out the oppression of women in the church. In the story, Chanticleer and Pertelote are the main characters. During the story they argue over the meaning of dreams Chanticleer thinks they are real and trusts that whatever happens in the dream will come true. Pertelote thinks they do not mean anything, they are just simply dreams. Chanticleer decides to trust Pertelote (Nun’s Priest’s, Lines 162-177). Later in the story a clever fox, Russel, comes into the yard one night. In the morning Chanticleer sees that the fox is watching him. When he goes to run the fox starts to flatter him. The fox told him, “There never was a singer I would rather have heard at dawn than your respected father” (Nun’s Priest’s, Lines 212-213). Chanticleer was distracted and the fox grabbed his throat. Ultimately in the end Chanticleer got away. He learned that he should not trust anyone that tries to flatter him (Nun’s Priest’s, Lines 313-345). This all goes back to when he trusted Pertelote on the opinion that dreams mean nothing. Because he trusted Pertelote and almost got killed, this hints at the fact that people at that time did not trust women and thought they knew nothing. This story hints at that underlying theme by using satire.

In “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” Chaucer uses satire to protest or challenge the oppression of women in the church. This is shown in the story by the wife of bath being able to speak freely about matters. She even qualifies herself as an expert in matters of love. In the story when the discovery of the knight’s crime becomes evident, King Arthur instead of just doing what he wants he takes his wife’s advice. The tale says, “He left him to the queen to do her will” (Wife of Bath, Line 897). In the days of Chaucer, they did not trust women. They saw women as temptresses. They did not see women as equal in a marriage. In fact, at the end of the story it says, “And she obeyed in each and every way, whatever was his pleasure or his play” (Wife of Bath, Lines 1255-1256).This statement implies that the men were happy when their wives submit to them and do whatever they want their wives to do. While it is true that men should be the leaders and women need to submit to their husbands, women should still have a say in matters. This story shows the underlying theme that women are smart and their opinions should be taken into consideration when deciding things.

In conclusion, both of these tales use satirical elements in them to push their points. Chaucer used simple things to point out much bigger issues. He used stories such as fables that were easily understood, but put in those fables a much bigger meaning behind them. Chaucer used satire to point out what the people were truly like and many of the problems in the church. Both

of these tales included satirical elements to put on display their characters and the qualities within the characters.