

# Divine intervention or deadly disease? Chaucer's Troilus and the medieval tradition of love

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**Abstract:** Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, written in the fourteenth century, is a tale of two lovers and their doomed romance. This essay aims to discuss their relationship, the influences on the character of Troilus, and how Chaucer came to write his own version of the tale, a story that has been told in numerous versions in the past, one that has ranged from entirely allegorical to realistic, from metaphorical to literal. An analysis of the various texts that preceded Chaucer's poem will be attempted, and an effort to explain how the characters vary by virtue of their station will also be explored. A discussion of the allegorical French writings and the literal Italian writings that contributed strongly to Chaucer's tale are included, and a breakdown of the various texts he knew and borrowed from are used. Chaucer was a prolific writer, a strongly educated man who translated various texts from their original language into Middle English. Such an effort aided in increasing his knowledge of these works, and the result is a series of similarities between his writing and these stories. He alters the traditional story from Benoit and Boccaccio by including a lover, Troilus, who both succumbs to the god of Love and suffers the disease of love. I will show how he took the well-known tale of the doomed Troilus and made it his own, through the contributions of Guillaume de Lorris, Benoit de Saint Maure, and Giovanni Boccaccio. I will demonstrate the changes Chaucer made to the story and how he made the tale his own. Through the imagery of love as a disease, as well as the inclusion of the literal character of Cupid, Chaucer puts his own spin on the age-old tale, giving Troilus and his relationships both more depth and more content than previous versions have. My thesis focuses on the act of Troilus falling in love, contrasting it with Criseyde's love. Troilus's love is more old-fashioned, while Criseyde's love is more natural and more easily appreciated. Chaucer's Troilus, more dependent on courtly love conventions, is different from the earlier versions of the character because of the influence of Cupid; his love affair with Criseyde is both more romanticized and more realistic, because her side of the love is unaffected by outside forces, while his involves supernatural influence, and together they create a relationship, and a story, unlike any previously told in late medieval England. This contrast allows us to appreciate the decision Chaucer made in following both the oldfashioned and romanticized ideals and a more modernized and realistic form of love.

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