Deciet And Trickery In The Canterbury Tales Essay, Research Paper

Deceit and Trickery in the Canterbury Tales In Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, the reader is introduced to the tales of the miller and the reeve, which are both written in the fabliau genre. Both the Miller’s Tale and the Reeve’s Tale demonstrate quick, snappy endings that entertain the audience. Within these two, humorous tales of misguided kisses, an underlying theme of deceit and trickery is made apparent to all readers. The Miller’s Tale is based on a love triangle where the old carpenter, John, is made out to be a fool due to the deceit and trickery of Nicholas, a cunning young clerk, and John’s beautiful, young wife, Alison. When Nicholas first seeks lodging in John’s home, he becomes attracted to Alison. Together, they devise a plan that will get John out of the house for the evening so they can be alone. Nicholas tells John that Noah’s flood is coming and suggests that he sit in a tub on the roof in order to escape the flood’s wrath. John falls victim to the deception of his wife and her “lover” Nicholas. While Nicholas and Alison are alone, another young suitor of Alison, Absolon, comes calling. Alison wishes him to leave, but he refuses to go without a kiss. Since Absolon does not comply, Alison fools him into kissing “hir naked ers ful savourly, er he were war of this” (l. 3734-3735). Absolon does not take this humiliation well, so he leaves. Finding Alison’s previous actions amusing, Nicholas tries “amenden al the jape,” but instead of receiving a kiss on “his ers,” Absolon “brende so his toute” (l. 3799-3811). Nicholas screams out, awakening John, who in a panic, cuts himself loose from the roof and falls to the ground breaking his arm. Justice is served to all involved in the game of deceit and trickery. The town’s people view John as a fool. Alison, who has been unfaithful, remains married to her husband. Absolon, who sought revenge for the deception played on him, found that revenge and also left Nicholas with an appropriate marking.

The Miller’s Tale angers the reeve, who may have been a carpenter at one time, and he vows to get even by telling a tale depicting the miller as a fool. Within the Reeve’s Tale, the miller is portrayed as a cheat who gains great pleasure out of deceiving others. When Alan and John, two students who have delivered grain to be milled, ask to stay the night, the miller protests at first, but then allows the two young men to stay. Being protective of his daughter and his wife, the miller sets up three beds in his bedroom: the first bed is for Alan and John; the second is for his daughter, and the third bed with a baby’s cradle at the foot is for his wife and him. During the night, Alan joins the miller’s daughter in her bed. Feeling sorry for himself, John decides to pull a “wikked jape” on Alan, so he moves the cradle from the foot of the miller’s bed to the foot of his bed (l. 4201). After going to the bathroom, the miller’s wife accidentally ends up in bed with John. Later, Alan wishes to return to his bed with John, but due to the trick that John has played, Alan gets into bed with the miller. Before realizing his mistake, Alan announces to the miller that he made love to his daughter during the night. The miller begins to scream, and his wife starts to hit him because she thinks that he is either Alan or John. None of this would have happened if it weren’t for John deciding to play a trick.These tales of misguided kisses (or in the case of the Reeve’s Tale misguided beds) brilliantly demonstrate Chaucer’s underlying theme of deceit and trickery. Both the Miller’s Tale and the Reeve’s Tale teach a moral lessons that deception and trickery will come back to haunt you–you will get what you deserve. The reader is able to conclude that these tales have served the purpose of Harry Bailey’s intention when he announced the competition to tell “tales of the best sentence and moost solaas” (l. 798).