

GROUP 1:

- **WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE** of the 3 men who compete for Alisoun's affection? What does each represent and why do we see them all together?
- Consider:
 - The scoler, hende (handsome) Nicholas who is well-versed in secret pleasures, is "sly and ful privee" (93);
 - The lovesick clerk, Absalon, who would pounce on Alisoun like a cat (238-39) and whose obsession with clothing is described at length (211-230);
 - The carpenter, Alisoun's old, "sely jealous" (296) husband.

SO WHAT: What is the **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN** the depiction of these men and our assessment of Alisoun, the unfaithful wife?

- **GROUP 2: WHAT:** What is the role of "low" humour in the story?
- Consider:
 - The Miller's claim that he's too drunk to be responsible for his tale (Prologue, 30-32) and the Narrator's assertion that it's the reader's fault for reading on if we find the tale offensive: "Blameth nought me if that ye chese amis" (Prologue, 73)
 - The Miller's drunkenness and churlishness in his Prologue (12-19);
 - The complicated con in which the carpenter is convinced that there will be a flood that will kill his wife (409-17);
 - The humiliation of Absalon when he kisses Alisoun's behind (619-633) and Nicholas's fart joke and his punishment when he puts his own behind out the window for a kiss (695-705).
- **SO WHAT:** What is the **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN** this farty, bawdy humour and the ideals of chivalry and gentlemanly honour as espoused in the Romances and the Knight's Tale? What is the "butt" [target] of the joke: the "low" classes, the ideal of chivalry, the reader who laughs, something else?

GROUP 3:

- What is the role of violence in the tale?
- Consider:
 - Nicholas's assault on Alisoun in which he catches her by the "quainte" (168) and his response to her subsequent protests (175-82);
 - The description of Alisoun as elegantly soft and sexual (126-36) and simultaneously girded for battle (157-59);
 - The fact that both the carpenter and Nicholas himself are injured in the course of Nicholas's "clever" ruses.
- **SO WHAT:** What is the **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN** violence and the moral or social standing of the characters? Does violence play a didactic (teaching) role?

