

# Canon

Originated from the Greek term “kanon,” canon means “a yard stick,” or “a measuring rod.”

Generally, the term canon is used in three different meanings.

First, it is defined as a traditional collection of writings, against which other writings are evaluated. In other words, it means “a long list of works taken as authentic.” For example, the Bible – both written in Hebrew, and even translated versions. This sense of the term makes canon opposite to “apocrypha,” which means “written works having anonymous authors.” The Bible was considered a yardstick to evaluate other literary pieces, according to a certain criterion.

Secondly, students of literature use it to refer to the writings included in anthologies, or textbooks under certain genres, and thus are evaluated according to the genre under which they are placed. This meaning covers the entire literature generally

thought as suitable for aesthetic admiration and academic use.

The third definition of the term indicates the literary writings of a particular author, which are considered by scholars and critics in general to be the genuine creations of that particular author. This is based on some already deduced rules intended to be applied on the future pieces in the same genre. The term “canon” is also confused with a homonym “cannon,” which means “a military weapon.”

### Example:-

The Plowman's Tales (By Geoffrey Chaucer)

“In a summer season when soft was the sun,  
I clothed myself in a cloak as I shepherd were,  
Habit like a hermit's unholy in works,  
And went wide in the world wonders to hear.  
But on a May morning on Malvern hills,  
A marvel befell me of fairy, me thought.”

Taken from The Plowman's Tale, these lines exemplify the third definition of canon. Chaucer's

canon includes “The Canterbury Tales”, for instance, but it does not include the apocryphal work, “The Plowman’s Tale,” which has been mistakenly attributed to him in the past. The canon is the use of archaic language that Chaucer used in his works but not used in this part.