Geoffrey Chaucer: The Reeve's Tale (excerpts)

If there are any unglossed words whose meaning you are unable to determine from the context, you can try this online edition of The Canterbury Tales <http://www.librarius.com/cantales.htm>, which has a fairly extensive, though not complete, glossary. Or you can use the advanced search option of the on-line OED.

As you work through the text, you might find it more efficient to simply read or write brief notes in the margins for most of the lines; whenever you come across some lines you can't quite make out, write out a translation for them, so you will give them a little more attention and thought. Instead of working through the entire text in class, we'll simply look at the lines with which people have problems or questions.

4002: Thanne were ther yonge povre scolers two, poor
4003: That dwelten in this halle, of which I seye. headstrong
4004: Testif they were, and lusty for to pleye, give; permission; while
4005: And, oonly for hire myrthe and revelrye, assuredly; wager
4006: Upon the wardeyn bisily they crye rob
4007: To yeve hem leve, but a litel stounde, give; permission; while
4008: To goon to mille and seen hir corn yrounde; assuredly; wager
4009: And hardly they dorste leye hir nekke rob
4010: The millere sholde not stele hem half a pekke assuredly; wager
4011: Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve; rob
4012: And at the laste the wardeyn yaf hem leve. was called
4013: John highte that oon, and Aleyn highte that oother; one
4014: Of o toun were they born, that highte Strother, one
4015: Fer in the north, I kan nat telle where. was called
4016: This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere, one
4017: And on an hors the sak he caste anon. one
4018: Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also John, one
4019: With good swerd and with bokeler by hir syde. small shield
4020: John knew the wey, -- hem nedede no gyde, -- guide
4021: And at the mille the sak adoun he layth. guide
4022: Aleyn spak first, "Al hayl, Symond, y-fayth! in faith
4023: Hou fares thy faire doghter and thy wyf?"
in faith
4024: "Aleyn, welcome," quod Symkyn, "by my lyf! necessity; no
4025: And John also, how now, what do ye heer?" necessity; no
4026: "Symond," quod John, "by God, nede has na peer. necessity; no
4027: Hym boes serve hymself that has na swayn, it is necessary; servant
4028: Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes sayn. expect
4029: Oure manciple, I hope he wil be deed, expect
4030: Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed; so ache the teeth
4031: And forthy is I come, and eek Alayn, therefore; also
4032: To grynde oure corn and carie it ham agayn; home
4033: I pray yow spede us heythen that ye may." hence
4034: "It shall be done," quod Symkyn, "by my fay!"
4035: What wol ye done whil that it is in hande?"
4036: "By God, right by the hopur wil I stande,"
4037: Quod John, "and se howgates the corn gas in.
4038: Yet saugh I nevere, by my fader kyn,
4039: How that the hopur wagges til and fra." to and fro
4040: Aleyn anserwe, "John, and wiltow swa?"
4041: Thanne wil I be bynethe, by my croun,
4042: And se how that the mele falles doun meal
4043: Into the trough; that sal be my disport. shall; entertainment
4044: For John, y-faith, I may been of youre sort; indeed
4045: I is as ille a millere as ar ye." bad
4046: This millere smyled of hir nycete, at; simplicity
4047: And thoughte, "Al this nys done but for a wyle. trick
4048: They wene that no man may hem bigyle, think
4049: But by my thrift, yet shal I blere hir ye, hoodwink them
4050: For al the sleighte in hir philosophye. craftiness
4051: The moore queynte crekes that they make, sly tricks
4052: The moore wol I stele whan I take.
4053: In stide of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren. bran
4054: 'The gretteste clerkes been noght wisest men,' once
4055: As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare. where
4056: Of al hir art ne counte I nogh t a tare." saw
4057: Out at the dore he gooth ful pryvely, stealthily
4058: Whan that he saugh his tyme, softely. saw
4059: He looketh up and doun til he hath founde
4060: The clerkes hors, ther as it stood ybounde
4061: Bihynde the mille, under a levesel; leafy arbor
4062: And to the hors he goth hym faire and wel; where
4063: He strepeth of the brydel right anon. strips off
4064: And whan the hors was laus, he gynneth gon loose; starts to go
4065: Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne, where
4066: And forth with wehee, thurgh thikke and thurgh thenne. thin
4067: This millere gooth agayn, no word he seye, task
4068: But dooth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde, finds
4069: Til that hir corn was faire and well ygrounde. lost; bones
4070: And whan the mele is sakked and ybounde, at once
4071: This John goth out and fynt his hors away, riding horse
4072: And gan to crie "Harrow! and weylaway!"
4073: Oure hors is lorn, alayn, for goddes banes, lost; bones
4074: Step on thy feet! Com of, man, al atanes! at once
4075: Allas, our wardeyn has his palfrey lorn." riding horse
4076: This Aleyn al forgat, bothe mele and corn; thrifty management
4077: Al was out of his mynde his housbondrie. which; gone
4078: "What, whilk way is he gane?" he gan to crie. run
4079: The wyf cam lepynge inward with a ren.
4080: She seyde, "Allas! youre hors goth to the fen
4081: With wilde mares, as faste as he may go.
4082: Unthank come on his hand that boond hym so,
4083: And he that bettre sholde han knyt the reyne!"
4084: "Allas," quod John, "Aleyn, for cristes peyne
4085: Lay doun thy swerd, and I wil myn alswa.
4086: I is ful wight, God waat, as is a raa;
4087: By goddes herte, he sal nat scape us bathe!
4088: Why ne had thou pit the capul in the lathe?
4089: Il hayl! by God, Alayn, thou is a fonne!"
4090: Thise sely clerkes han ful faste yronne
4091: Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek John.
4092: And whan the millere saugh that they were gon,
4093: He half a busschel of hir flour hath take,
4094: And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
4095: He seyde, "I trowe the clerkes were aferd.
4096: Yet kan a millere make a clerkes berd,
4097: For al his art; now lat hem goon hir weye!
4098: Lo, wher he gooth! ye, lat the children pleye.
4099: They gete hym nat so lightily, by my croun."
4100: Thise sely clerkes rennen up and doun
4101: With "Keep! Keep! Stand! Stand! Jossa! Warderere!
4102: Ga whistle thou, and I sal kepe hym heere!"
4103: But shortly, til that it was verray nyght,
4104: They koude nat, though they dide al hir myght,
4105: Hir capul cacche, he ran alwey so faste,
4106: Til in a dych they caughte hym atte laste.
4107: Wery and weet, as beeest is in the reyn,
4108: Comth sely John, and with him comth Aleyn.
4109: "Allas," quod John, "the day that I was born!
4110: Now are we dryven til hethyng and til scorn.
4111: Oure corn is stoln, men wil us fooles calle,
4112: Bathe the wardeyn and oure felawes alle,
4113: And namely the millere, weylaway!"