



The Decameron: An Introduction

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Source: *Wikipedia*

The Title

- Greek for “ten-day event”

Source: Wikipedia

The “Frame”

- The novel hadn't been “invented” yet
- Authors could set up a situation (a “frame”) through which a number of separate stories could be told. Examples:
 - *1001 Arabian Nights*
 - Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Source: *Wikipedia*

The “Frame”

- a group of seven young women and three young men flee from plague-ridden Florence to a deserted villa in the countryside of Fiesole for two weeks.
- in ten nights of storytelling over the course of two weeks, they tell **100 stories**.

Source: *Wikipedia*

The “Frame”

- Each of the ten characters is chosen as King or Queen of the company for one of the ten days
- They then select a theme of the stories for that day, and all but two days have **topics assigned**:

Source: *Wikipedia*

The Topics

- the power of fortune;
- the power of human will;
- love tales that end tragically;
- love tales that end happily;

Source: *Wikipedia*

The Topics

- clever replies that save the speaker;
- tricks that women play on men;
- tricks that people play on each other in general;
- examples of virtue.

Source: *Wikipedia*

Historical Context

- the commercial and urban values of quick wit, sophistication, and intelligence are treasured
- the vices of stupidity and dullness are cured, or punished.

Source: Wikipedia

Historical Context

- these traits and values may seem obvious to the modern reader, BUT..
- they were an emerging feature in Europe
 - the rise of urban centers
 - new economic system (traditional **rural**, **feudal**, and **monastery** systems placed greater value on piety and loyalty)