



COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. RL 10 Read and comprehend literature, including stories. SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.

Federigo's Falcon: Fifth Day, Ninth Story from The Decameron

Tale by Giovanni Boccaccio

Meet the Author

Giovanni Boccaccio 1313–1375

Writing at the end of the medieval period, Giovanni Boccaccio helped set a new direction for literature, focusing on the human condition rather than on spiritual matters. His masterpiece, *The Decameron*, a strikingly modern work, established the contemporary language of his day as a legitimate mode of literary expression. The work signaled a sharp break from medieval literary traditions and helped define the literary sensibilities that held sway throughout the Renaissance.

Some scholars speculate that Boccaccio's *Decameron* influenced Geoffrey Chaucer in his writing of *The Canterbury Tales*. Although no direct evidence exists to support this view, there are notable similarities between the two collections. Both feature a frame story construction, a treasury of tales, and various sharply drawn characters. Moreover, both works contain adaptations of age-old narratives and literary forms that strongly appealed to their educated audiences. Most significantly, few literary texts celebrate humanity as freely and completely as *The Decameron* and *The Canterbury Tales*.

An Overbearing Father Giovanni Boccaccio grew up in Florence, Italy, and he began to write poetry when he was a child.

His father frowned upon his son's literary leanings, demanding that he forget about writing and learn business. While still a teenager, Boccaccio was sent to Naples, where he was apprenticed to a banker. When he failed at banking, his father arranged for him to study religious law. Boccaccio was unsuccessful at law, too, and after about 12 years in Naples, he returned home to seek other employment.

Fame Without Funds Because his father "strove to bend" his talent, Boccaccio complained that he was never able to reach his potential as a poet. Yet upon publication of *The Decameron*, he became something of a celebrity. In later years, he applied himself to more scholarly pursuits, producing a number of biographical and moralistic works. His literary and scholarly efforts never brought in much money, and he was nearly always in perilous financial straits. Eventually, he was reduced to earning a meager living by working as a scribe, painstakingly copying his own works and those of others. He died in 1375, temporarily out of favor in both Florence and Naples. It was not long, however, before his works gained renewed appreciation. His reputation has endured over many centuries, influencing later writers such as Shakespeare, Dryden, Keats, Longfellow, and Tennyson.

DID YOU KNOW?

Giovanni Boccaccio . . .

- survived the Black Death when it struck Florence, Italy, in 1348.
- fell in love with a woman whom he called "Fiammetta," or "little flame," who inspired his early writing.



Author Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML12-206

● TEXT ANALYSIS: PLOT ELEMENTS

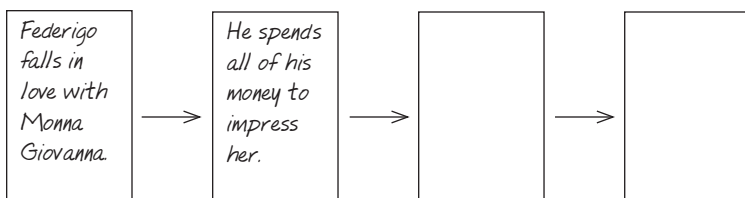
Many stories in *The Decameron* are adaptations of medieval folk tales, fables, and anecdotes, from which Boccaccio borrows a basic **plot**, or series of related events. He then transforms it by adding plot devices such as **complications**—problems that create moral dilemmas that motivate his characters’ behavior. In “Federigo’s Falcon,” for example, Boccaccio introduces his main character, Federigo, in the following way:

As often happens to most men of gentle breeding, he fell in love, with a noble lady named Monna Giovanna. . . . [Yet] he lost his wealth and was reduced to poverty, . . .

Boccaccio presents Federigo as a traditional romantic hero who seeks the love of Monna Giovanna, a well-born woman. However, he quickly adds a complication to this situation—Federigo’s loss of wealth. How can he win her love if he has no money? As you read the selection, notice how Boccaccio builds toward a surprising and powerful **climax**, or turning point, through complications in the story’s plot.

● READING SKILL: ANALYZE CAUSE AND EFFECT

In a well-crafted story, events are often related by cause and effect. The **cause** is an event that directly results in another event, which is the **effect**. Analyzing cause-and-effect relationships can help you better comprehend the complications of the story’s plot and how they affect characters’ actions. As you read “Federigo’s Falcon,” keep track of examples of cause and effect by making a diagram like the one shown.



▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

These boldfaced vocabulary words are key to understanding Boccaccio’s tale about love and its sacrifices. Restate each phrase, substituting a different word for the boldfaced term.

1. act with tact and **discretion**
2. **deign** to help a lowly peasant
3. behave with **presumption**
4. **compel** me to do my duty
5. offer **consolation** for your loss

What would you SACRIFICE for love?

Love is a powerful emotion—one for which some people are prepared to make a great sacrifice. “Federigo’s Falcon” is a tale of a nobleman’s idealized love for a woman and the lengths to which he goes to win her affection.

DISCUSS With a partner, list examples of sacrifices for love that you have heard of, read about, or seen in television shows or movies. Discuss the results of these sacrifices. Which examples do you find reasonable? Which examples seem extreme? Compare your conclusions with those of other students.

Examples of Sacrifices for Love

1. Romeo gives up his family, his honor, and finally his life because of his love for Juliet.
- 2.
- 3.





Federigo's Falcon

Fifth Day, Ninth Story

Giovanni Boccaccio

BACKGROUND Like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *The Decameron* is a collection of stories within a story. The frame, or outer story, involves ten characters who flee to the country to escape a plague that is ravaging Florence, Italy. For ten days they amuse themselves by telling stories, each day selecting a "king" or "queen" who presides over the storytelling. Their 100 tales make up the bulk of *The Decameron*. As this selection begins, the queen of the day decides that it is time to tell her own story.

Filomena had already finished speaking, and when the Queen saw there was no one left to speak except for Dioneo,¹ who was exempted because of his special privilege, she herself with a cheerful face said:

It is now my turn to tell a story and, dearest ladies, I shall do so most willingly with a tale similar in some respects to the preceding one, its purpose being not only to show you how much power your beauty has over the gentle heart, but also so that you yourselves may learn, whenever it is fitting, to be the donors of your favors instead of always leaving this act to the whim of Fortune,² who, as it happens, on most occasions bestows such favors with more abundance than

10 **discretion.**

You should know, then, that Coppo di Borghese Domenichi,³ who once lived in our city and perhaps still does, a man of great and respected authority in our times, one most illustrious and worthy of eternal fame both for his way of life and his ability much more than for the nobility of his blood, often took delight, when he was an old man, in discussing things from the past with his neighbors and with others. He knew how to do this well, for he was more logical and had a better memory and a more eloquent style of speaking than any other man. Among the many beautiful tales he told, there was one he would often tell about a young man who once lived in Florence named Federigo, the son of Messer Filippo Alberighi,⁴ renowned above all

20 other men in Tuscany for his prowess in arms and for his courtliness. **A**

Analyze Visuals ►

What details in this painting suggest that the woman is wealthy?

discretion (dī-skrēsh'ən)
n. wise restraint;
 carefulness in one's
 actions and words

A PLOT

The **exposition** of a story introduces the characters and setting. What do you learn about these elements in lines 17–20?

1. **Dioneo** (dē'ō-nā'ō).

2. **Fortune:** a personification of the power that supposedly distributes good and bad luck to people.

3. **Coppo di Borghese Domenichi** (kôp'pô dē bôr-gā'zē dô-mě'nē-kē).

4. **Messer Filippo Alberighi** (mās'sēr fê-lêp'pô âl'bê-rê-gê).



As often happens to most men of gentle breeding, he fell in love, with a noble lady named Monna Giovanna, in her day considered to be one of the most beautiful and most charming ladies that ever there was in Florence; and in order to win her love, he participated in jousts and tournaments,⁵ organized and gave banquets, spending his money without restraint; but she, no less virtuous than beautiful, cared little for these things he did on her behalf, nor did she care for the one who did them. Now, as Federigo was spending far beyond his means and getting nowhere, as can easily happen, he lost his wealth and was reduced to poverty, and was left with nothing to his name but his little farm (from whose
30 revenues he lived very meagerly) and one falcon, which was among the finest of its kind in the world. **B**

More in love than ever, but knowing that he would never be able to live the way he wished to in the city, he went to live at Campi, where his farm was. There he passed his time hawking⁶ whenever he could, imposing on no one, and enduring his poverty patiently. Now one day, during the time that Federigo was reduced to these extremes, it happened that the husband of Monna Giovanna fell ill, and realizing death was near, he made his last will: he was very rich, and he left everything to his son, who was just growing up, and since he had also loved Monna Giovanna very much, he made her his heir should his son die without any
40 legitimate children; and then he died. **C**

Monna Giovanna was now a widow, and every summer, as our women usually do, she would go to the country with her son to one of their estates very close by to Federigo's farm. Now this young boy of hers happened to become more and more friendly with Federigo and he began to enjoy birds and dogs; and after seeing Federigo's falcon fly many times, it made him so happy that he very much wished it were his own, but he did not dare to ask for it, for he could see how precious it was to Federigo. During this time, it happened that the young boy took ill, and his mother was much grieved, for he was her only child and she loved
50 him dearly; she would spend the entire day by his side, never ceasing to comfort him, asking him time and again if there was anything he wished, begging him to tell her what it might be, for if it was possible to obtain it, she would certainly do everything in her power to get it. After the young boy had heard her make this offer many times, he said:

“Mother, if you can arrange for me to have Federigo's falcon, I think I would get well quickly.”

When the lady heard this, she was taken aback for a moment, and then she began thinking what she could do about it. She knew that Federigo had been in love with her for some time now, but she had never **deigned** to give him a second look; so, she said to herself:

B PLOT

Reread lines 21–31.

What is the main **conflict**, or struggle, between Federigo and Monna Giovanna?

C CAUSE AND EFFECT

What effects does Federigo's love for Monna Giovanna cause? Cite specific details in your response.

deign (dān) v. to consider worthy of one's dignity; to condescend

5. **jousts and tournaments:** competitions in which knights displayed their skill in combat.

6. **he went . . . hawking:** He went to live in a town called Campi (kām'pē) in Tuscany, where he passed his time hunting with falcons, birds of prey trained to capture and retrieve small animals.

60 “How can I go to him, or even send someone, and ask for this falcon of his, which is, as I have heard tell, the finest that ever flew, and furthermore, his only means of support? And how can I be so insensitive as to wish to take away from this nobleman the only pleasure which is left to him?”

And involved in these thoughts, knowing that she was certain to have the bird if she asked for it, but not knowing what to say to her son, she stood there without answering him. Finally the love she bore her son persuaded her that she should make him happy, and no matter what the consequences might be, she would not send for the bird, but rather go herself to fetch it and bring it back to him; so she answered her son:

70 “My son, cheer up and think only of getting well, for I promise you that first thing tomorrow morning I shall go and fetch it for you.” **D**

The child was so happy that he showed some improvement that very day. The following morning, the lady, accompanied by another woman, as if they were out for a stroll, went to Federigo’s modest little house and asked for him. Since the weather for the past few days had not been right for hawking, Federigo happened to be in his orchard attending to certain tasks, and when he heard that Monna Giovanna was asking for him at the door, he was so surprised and happy that he rushed there; as she saw him coming, she rose to greet him with womanly grace, and once Federigo had welcomed her most courteously, she said:

80 “How do you do, Federigo?” Then she continued, “I have come to make amends for the harm you have suffered on my account by loving me more than you should have, and in token of this, I intend to have a simple meal with you and this companion of mine this very day.”

To this Federigo humbly replied: “Madonna,⁷ I have no recollection of ever suffering any harm because of you; on the contrary: so much good have I received from you that if ever I was worth anything, it was because of your worth and the love I bore for you; and your generous visit is certainly so very dear to me that I would spend all over again all that I spent in the past, but you have come to a poor host.”

And having said this, he humbly led her through the house and into his garden, 90 and because he had no one there to keep her company, he said:

“My lady, since there is no one else, this good woman, who is the wife of the farmer here, will keep you company while I see to the table.”

Though he was very poor, Federigo until now had never realized to what extent he had wasted his wealth; but this morning, the fact that he had nothing in the house with which he could honor the lady for the love of whom he had in the past entertained countless people, gave him cause to reflect: in great anguish, he cursed himself and his fortune, and like someone out of his senses he started running here and there throughout the house, but unable to find either money or anything he might be able to pawn, and since it was getting late and he was still very much 100 set on serving this noble lady some sort of meal, but unwilling to turn for help to

D PLOT

What important **complication** is introduced into the plot in lines 47–71? Explain the moral dilemma this complication in the **plot** creates. How does it affect Monna’s behavior?

Language Coach

Fixed Expressions Some verbs have a special meaning when followed by a certain preposition. Reread lines 91–92. Here, *see to* means “attend to” or “take charge of.” What does Federigo mean when he says he will “see to the table”?

7. **Madonna:** Italian for “my lady,” a polite form of address used in speaking to a married woman. “Monna” is a contraction of this term.

even his own farmer (not to mention anyone else), he set his eyes upon his good falcon, which was sitting on its perch in a small room, and since he had nowhere else to turn, he took the bird, and finding it plump, he decided that it would be a worthy food for such a lady. So, without giving the matter a second thought, he wrung its neck and quickly gave it to his servant girl to pluck, prepare, and place on a spit to be roasted with care; and when he had set the table with the whitest of tablecloths (a few of which he still had left), he returned, with a cheerful face, to the lady in his garden and announced that the meal, such as he was able to prepare, was ready. **E**

110 The lady and her companion rose and went to the table together with Federigo, who waited upon them with the greatest devotion, and they ate the good falcon without knowing what it was they were eating. Then, having left the table and spent some time in pleasant conversation, the lady thought it time now to say what she had come to say, and so she spoke these kind words to Federigo:

“Federigo, if you recall your former way of life and my virtue, which you perhaps mistook for harshness and cruelty, I have no doubt at all that you will be amazed by my **presumption** when you hear what my main reason for coming here is; but if you had children, through whom you might have experienced the power of parental love, I feel certain that you would, at least in part, forgive
120 me. But, just as you have no child, I do have one, and I cannot escape the laws common to all mothers; the force of such laws **compels** me to follow them, against my own will and against good manners and duty, and to ask of you a gift which I know is most precious to you; and it is naturally so, since your extreme condition has left you no other delight, no other pleasure, no other **consolation**; and this gift is your falcon, which my son is so taken by that if I do not bring it to him, I fear his sickness will grow so much worse that I may lose him. And therefore I beg you, not because of the love that you bear for me, which does not oblige you in the least, but because of your own nobleness, which you have shown to be greater than that of all others in practicing courtliness, that you be pleased
130 to give it to me, so that I may say that I have saved the life of my son by means of this gift, and because of it I have placed him in your debt forever.”

When he heard what the lady requested and knew that he could not oblige her because he had given her the falcon to eat, Federigo began to weep in her presence, for he could not utter a word in reply. The lady at first thought his tears were caused more by the sorrow of having to part with the good falcon than by anything else, and she was on the verge of telling him she no longer wished it, but she held back and waited for Federigo’s reply once he stopped weeping. And he said:

“My lady, ever since it pleased God for me to place my love in you, I have felt that Fortune has been hostile to me in many ways, and I have complained of
140 her, but all this is nothing compared to what she has just done to me, and I shall never be at peace with her again, when I think how you have come here to my poor home, where, when it was rich, you never deigned to come, and how you requested but a small gift, and Fortune worked to make it impossible for me to give it to you; and why this is so I shall tell you in a few words. When I heard that

E CAUSE AND EFFECT

Reread lines 93–109. What specific circumstances cause Federigo to kill his beloved falcon?

presumption

(prĭ-zŭmp’shən) *n.* bold or outrageous behavior

compel (kəm-pĕl’) *v.* to force or be forced to act in a certain way

consolation

(kŏn’sə-lā’shən) *n.* something that makes someone feel less sad or disappointed; comfort

you, out of your kindness, wished to dine with me, I considered it only fitting and proper, taking into account your excellence and your worthiness, that I should honor you, according to my possibilities, with a more precious food than that which I usually serve to other people. So I thought of the falcon for which you have just asked me and of its value and I judged it a food worthy of you, and this
 150 very day I had it roasted and served to you as best I could. But seeing now that you desired it another way, my sorrow in not being able to serve you is so great that never shall I be able to console myself again.” **F**

And after he had said this, he laid the feathers, the feet, and the beak of the bird before her as proof. When the lady heard and saw this, she first reproached him for having killed a falcon such as this to serve as a meal to a woman. But then to herself she commended the greatness of his spirit, which no poverty was able, or would be able, to diminish; then, having lost all hope of getting the falcon and thus, perhaps, of improving the health of her son, she thanked Federigo both for the honor paid to her and for his good intentions, and then left in grief to return
 160 to her son. To his mother’s extreme sorrow, whether in disappointment in not having the falcon or because his illness inevitably led to it, the boy passed from this life only a few days later. **G**


After the period of her mourning and her bitterness had passed, the lady was repeatedly urged by her brothers to remarry, since she was very rich and still young; and although she did not wish to do so, they became so insistent that remembering the worthiness of Federigo and his last act of generosity—that is, to have killed such a falcon to do her honor—she said to her brothers:

“I would prefer to remain a widow, if only that would be pleasing to you, but since you wish me to take a husband, you may be sure that I shall take no man
 170 other than Federigo degli⁸ Alberighi.” **H**

In answer to this, her brothers, making fun of her, replied:

“You foolish woman, what are you saying? How can you want him? He hasn’t a penny to his name.”

To this she replied: “My brothers, I am well aware of what you say, but I would much rather have a man who lacks money than money that lacks a man.”

Her brothers, seeing that she was determined and knowing Federigo to be of noble birth, no matter how poor he was, accepted her wishes and gave her with all her riches in marriage to him; when he found himself the husband of such a great lady, whom he had loved so much and who was so wealthy besides, he managed
 180 his financial affairs with more prudence than in the past and lived with her happily the rest of his days. 

Translated by Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella

F PLOT

The **climax**, or turning point, is the moment of greatest intensity in a story. What shocking discovery does Federigo make in lines 115–152?

G PLOT

The **resolution** reveals the final outcome of events and ties up any loose ends of the story. How is the plot **complication** involving Monna’s son resolved?

H CAUSE AND EFFECT

Why, exactly, does Monna Giovanna decide to marry Federigo? Explain the connection between her decision and Federigo’s earlier behavior toward her.

8. **degli** (dèl’yê): Italian for “of the”; used in names as a sign of noble birth.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** How does Federigo lose his fortune?
2. **Clarify** Why does Monna Giovanna want Federigo's falcon?
3. **Summarize** Describe the events that take place during Monna Giovanna's visit to Federigo.

COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. **RL 10** Read and comprehend literature, including stories.

Text Analysis

4. **Analyze Cause and Effect** Review the cause-and-effect diagram you created as you read the selection. What does the story's sequence of events suggest about the relationship between Federigo and Monna Giovanna? Cite details from the text to support your answer.
5. **Understand Plot Elements** What specific **moral dilemmas** arise from love in Boccaccio's tale and complicate its plot?
6. **Draw Conclusions About Character** When Monna visits Federigo's house, is her behavior virtuous or manipulative? Explain why you think so.
7. **Analyze Situational Irony** In literature, **situational irony** occurs when a reader or character expects one thing to happen but something entirely different occurs. Explain the situational irony in lines 153–162.
8. **Compare Texts** Money plays an important role in both "Federigo's Falcon" and Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale" (page 169). Compare Federigo's attitude toward money with that of the "three rioters" in Chaucer's tale. What do the characters' reactions reveal about their personalities?

Text Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** Author Walter Raleigh says of Boccaccio's tales, "The scene in which they are laid is as wide and well-ventilated as the world. The spirit which inspires them is an absolute humanity, unashamed and unafraid." How does this opinion apply to "Federigo's Falcon"? Cite evidence from the text to support your response.

*What would you **SACRIFICE** for love?*

Federigo eventually marries Monna after making great sacrifices for her love. What if you make a great sacrifice for love, but it does not produce the happy ending you expect? Would it still be worth having made this sacrifice? Why or why not?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Identify the antonym of the boldfaced vocabulary word.

1. **compel**: (a) instigate, (b) fascinate, (c) prevent
2. **consolation**: (a) irritation, (b) derivation, (c) comfort
3. **deign**: (a) esteem, (b) intrude, (c) condescend
4. **discretion**: (a) tactfulness, (b) recklessness, (c) strength
5. **presumption**: (a) assumption, (b) impudence, (c) timidity

WORD LIST

compel
consolation
deign
discretion
presumption

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• concept • culture • parallel • section • structure

Were Federigo's sacrifices for love reasonable? Using Academic Vocabulary words, discuss with a classmate Federigo's **concept** of love as sacrifice.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: NUANCED MEANINGS IN A THESAURUS

The word **thesaurus** comes from the Greek word for *treasure*. If you are having trouble finding just the right word to express an idea, a thesaurus will provide a treasury of synonyms. Printed and online thesauri are arranged either alphabetically or by subject with an alphabetical index. The example below is based on the best-known thesaurus, *Roget's*. If you looked up *compel*, you would find a short entry with a cross-reference to a longer entry that shows the nuanced meanings of synonyms. For example, *compel's* synonym *force* has two shades of meaning, marked by the boldfaced numbers.

compel *v.* coerce, constrain, make, obligate, oblige, pressure. *See* FORCE.

force *v.* **1.** To compel by pressure or threats: blackjack, coerce, dragoon. *Informal:* hijack, strong-arm. *See* PERSUASION. **2.** To cause to act in spite of resistance: coerce, compel, make, obligate, pressure. *See* ATTACK.

PRACTICE The boldfaced word in each sentence below is slightly wrong for the context of the sentence. Look up its synonym (in parentheses) in a thesaurus to find another word with the correct nuance, or shade of meaning. Then use each boldfaced word correctly in a new sentence.

1. He hated being **compelled** but couldn't ignore the villain's threats. (*forced*)
2. The citizens of the peaceful region enjoyed a life of **consolation**. (*comfort*)
3. Each campaign had **deigned** to a new low in negative advertising. (*stooped*)
4. Juan removed the bandage with **discretion**. (*caution*)
5. The counselor tried to instill a sense of **presumption** in her students. (*pride*)

COMMON CORE

L 4c Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., thesauruses). **L 5b** Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

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KEYWORD: HML12-215