



Part 2 - Detailed Study: Poetry

Paradise Lost

John Milton

Who was John Milton?

- He was a Puritan (sort of)
- He was a Regicide (sort of)
- He was a Republican (in the correct sense)
- He developed total blindness
- He was a literary genius (600+ words in OED)
- He wrote the the greatest elegy in English (“Lycidas”)
- ...and the greatest epic poem (*PL*)
- ...and the greatest masque (*Comus*)
- ...and the greatest treatise on Republican government (*Eikonoklastes*)
- ...and the greatest essay on freedom of speech (*Areopagitica*)
- He wrote sonnets, lyric poems, odes, histories, speeches, and even a major work of theology (*On Christian Doctrine*).
- He was a guy who lived through the plague, the Civil War, the Restoration, the Great Fire...

*Your breath first
kindled the dead
coals of war*

Is Milton
better than
Shakespeare?

Nigel Smith



John Milton's Life & Times

- 1608 Milton is born in Bread Street, Cheapside on December 9
- 1611 The Authorized Version of the Bible published by King James I
- 1621 John Donne appointed Dean of St Paul's (where Milton attends grammar school)
- 1623 Shakespeare's *First Folio* is published
- 1625 Milton admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge;
Charles I becomes king
- 1626 William Laud appointed Bishop of London
- 1629 Milton earns BA; Charles I dissolves Parliament
- 1632 Galileo, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*
- 1633 Donne's *Poems* published;
Laud appointed Archbishop of Canterbury
- 1634 *Comus, a Maske*
- 1638 "Lycidas"; Milton begins Continental tour (meets Galileo)
- 1640 Long Parliament convened; Laud impeached
- 1641 *Of Reformation*
- 1642 *The Reason of Church Government*; Civil War begins;
Mary Powell marries and leaves Milton; theaters closed
- 1644 *Areopagitica*; Royalists defeated at the Battle of Marston Moor
- 1655 *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; Laud Executed



John Milton's Life & Times (continued)

- 1648 Pride's Purge and the establishment of the Rump Parliament
- 1649 *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; Charles I executed; *Eikon Basilike*; Milton appointed Secretary for Foreign Tongues; *Eikonoklastes*
- 1652 Milton totally blind
- 1653 Cromwell dissolves Rump Parliament, named Lord Protector
- 1654 *Second Defense of the English People*
- 1658 Cromwell dies; Milton's 2nd wife & second daughter die
- 1659 Richard Cromwell deposed by the army; Rump recalled, deposed, restored
- 1660 Long Parliament restored; Charles II comes to the throne; Milton goes into hiding, his books burned, arrested, imprisoned, released
- 1661 Regicides imprisoned; 10 executed
- 1665 Plague kills 70,000 in London
- 1666 Great Fire of London
- 1667 *Paradise Lost*
- 1671 *Paradise Regained & Samson Agonistes*
- 1674 Milton dies and is buried at St. Giles, Cripplegate



Paradise Lost

- Dramatization of the Fall of Man (Genesis 1-3)
- Education, Theology, Science, Politics, War, Love & Marriage
- Classical Epic with Christian theme: “to justify the wayes of God to men” (1.26)
- “That with no middle flight intends to soar / Above th’ *Aonian* Mount, while it pursues / things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime” (1.16)





Outline

- Book 1: Satan has fallen from Heaven; he builds Pandemonium in Hell & plots revenge
- Book 2: Satan decides to ruin mankind; encounters Sin & Death; traverses Chaos
- Book 3: The Father & Son discuss the situation; Satan lands on sun & asks directions
- Book 4: Satan invades Paradise; he disturbs Eve's dreams; Angels chase him away
- Book 5: Raphael instructs Adam of Satan's envy of the Son & Abdiel's fidelity
- Book 6: Raphael describes the war in Heaven & Satan's fall; warns Adam
- Book 7: Raphael recounts the six days of creation
- Book 8: Adam asks Raphael about astronomy & if angels have sex; Raphael departs
- Book 9: Satan, disguised as a serpent, tempts Eve; catastrophe results
- Book 10: The Son visits Adam & Eve; Sin & Death build a bridge across Chaos; Satan high-tails it back to Hell; Adam & Eve are sad
- Book 11: Michael arrives to tell Adam & Eve what will happen in the future
- Book 12: Michael explains the big picture; he escorts the repentant Adam & Eve from Paradise



Chronology

- Day 1: The anointing of the Son is the earliest event in the poem
- Day 2-4: Satan rebels; it's a three-day war
- Day 4-13: The rebel angels throw themselves from Heaven and fall for 9 days
- Day 13-22: The rebel angels are chained to a lake of fire in Hell for 9 more days; during this time, God creates the world in 7 days
- Day 22: The events of Books 1 & 2 occur in Hell
- Day 23: Satan crosses Chaos in a journey of uncertain duration; it is one day from when he alights on the universe at midnight (Book 3) to evening in Eden (Book 4)
- Day 24: Eve's dream; Satan chased from Eden; Raphael's visit (Books 4-8)
- Day 24-31: Satan encircles the Earth
- Day 32: Satan returns at midnight; the fall occurs at noon & the judgment in the early evening (Books 9-10)
- Day 33: Michael arrives at sunrise; the expulsion is at noon, 24 hours after the fall

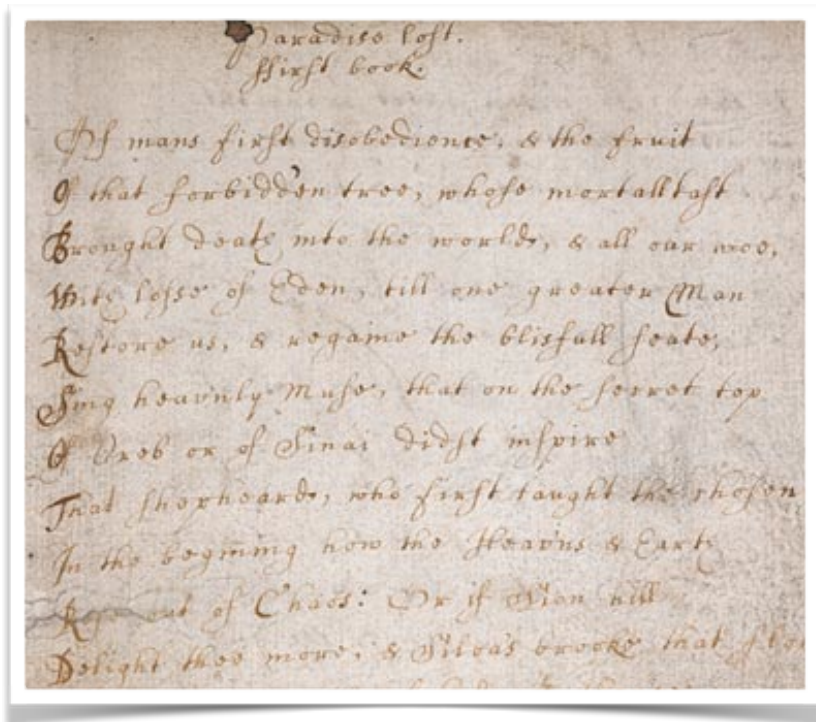
Paradise Lost

CAUTION:

Individual Oral Commentary ahead

Milton's Poetic Style

- blank verse with light punctuation
- ten-syllable lines; iambic w/ 3-8 stresses
- odd grammatical constructions
- allusions to classical myths; biblical, historical, literary names; places, etc.
- parallelism
- contrasts
- repeated uses of the same prefix (“un-”)
- epic similes
- layers of etymological meaning



“Milton produced rushing, enjambed, blank verse lines that propel us along with few pauses for line endings or full stops, marked by elevated diction and complex syntax and by sonorities and sound patterns that make a magnificent music. He was clearly at pains to create an epic language suited to his exalted subject, a sublime high style of remarkable range whose energy and power will engulf us from beginning.”

(Lewalski)

Extracts for the IOC

Ugh. I'm having an
epic anxiety attack.



I.	1-26	The Epic Invocation
I.	27-75	The Lake of Fire
I.	242-70	Satan Claims Dominion over Hell
II.	1-42	Pandemonium
II.	648-703	The Gates of Hell
III.	1-55	The 2nd Invocation
III.	80-134	God Foresees the Fall of Man
V.	809-48	Abdiel
VI.	867-912	Raphael Describes Satan's Fall
VII.	1-39	The 3rd Invocation
VIII.	167-97	Adam's Curiosity
XII.	610-49	Leaving Paradise

Important Note: The extracts are taken from the original 1674 text. This is not a modernized edition. From our link in the Attic: select the appropriate range of lines, copy and paste ("Paste Special"—"Styled Text") them into a word document, print a copy, and bring it to class to take notes.



Book 1

Extracts: 1-26; 27-75; 242-270

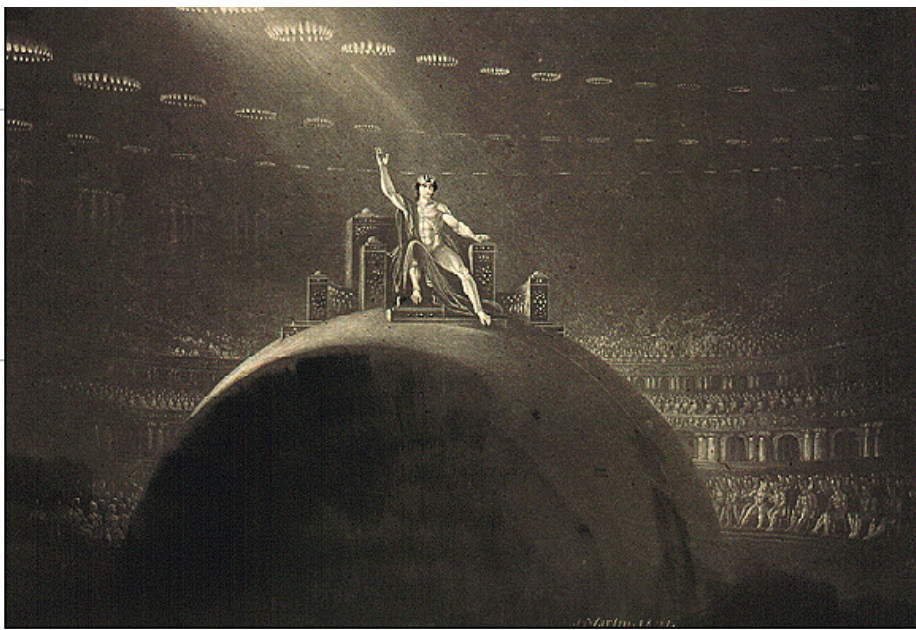
1. Examine the narrator's invocation (lines 1-25) and his epic question and answer (lines 26-49).
2. What purposes do the lines (50-83) serve that immediately follow the invocation and question and answer?
3. Summarize the speech that Satan makes to his arch-lieutenant, Beëlzebub, and his response (84-124, 128-55, 157-91).
4. From lines 195-210, we are treated to Milton's first major extended simile. In what way are these lines relevant, even vital, to the task of Milton and his narrator in describing heavenly things that really are not describable from a fallen human perspective?
5. Examine Satan's primal poetic elegy--lines 242-70. What purpose/s does it serve?
6. Yet another extended series of similes occurs from lines 283-313. Again, how do these similes dramatize the situation in which Milton and his narrator find themselves?
7. In general, what purpose do lines 337-522 serve?
8. Read Satan's speech to his whole army from lines 622-62. What's the problem here?
9. What human impulse does lines 670-738 describe?
10. Observe the end of Book One, the assembling of the council (752-98). Concentrate especially upon lines 777-98. In what way is Milton having some fun at the angels' expense here? What is he saying about the degree of "reality" that one can attribute to them?



Book 2

Extracts: 1-42; 648-703

1. The great consult begins. Observe the opinions and rhetorical shifts of the following "debaters":
 - A. Satan (11-42)
 - B. Moloch (43-108)
 - C. Belial (108-225) and the narrator's lines, (226-28)
 - D. Mammon (229-83) and similes about angels' applause, (284-91).
 - E. Beëlzebub (310-416)
 - F. Satan again (416-67)
2. From lines 522-628, a very interesting dispersion of devils occurs. What do the devils do?
3. Now to Satan's encounter with Death and to the allegory of the birth of Sin and Death (629-726, 727-814). What does it tell you about Satan's understanding of the consequences of his behavior?
4. At line 917, Satan beholds the abyss into which he must plunge. Observe his plunge and progress from lines 927-961. What would you say is the narrator's attitude toward Satan's enterprise?
5. Examine lines 1034-55, the end of Book Two. What dramatic purpose does this birdseye view serve?

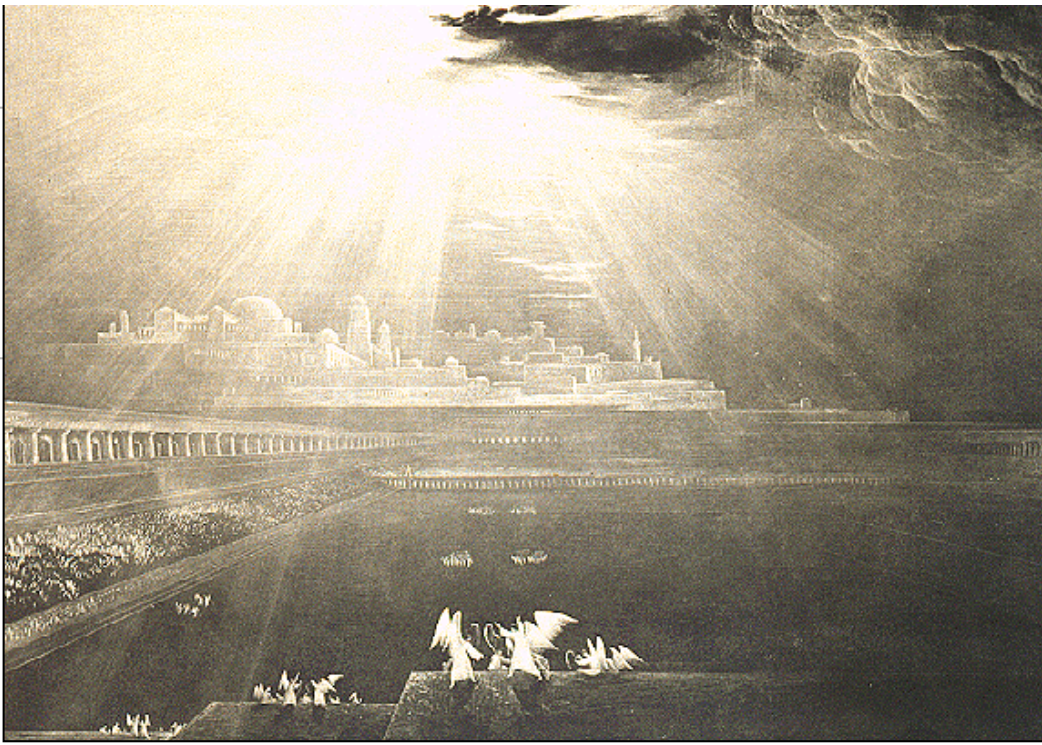


Book 3

Extracts: 1-55; 80-134

1. Read the invocation (1-55) carefully--observe the narrator's tone and the basic rhetorical structure of the passage: "Hail. . .but thou. . .but not. . .So much the rather. . . ." What would you say Milton is trying to achieve by making the narrator speak these lines?
2. Examine lines 80-134. Characterize God's "personality," his manner of speaking. Also, describe the theological argument that God makes in this speech. Moreover, what prediction does he make about the future?
3. Follow the dialogue between Christ and God from lines 144-216 as well as the narrator's characterization of the pause for a reply to God's question, lines 217-26. Find some clue or clues in these lines as to why we are hearing this dialogue. (Lines 167-72 and 217-26 are especially helpful.)
4. "Meanwhile upon the firm opacous globe. . ./ Satan alighted walks" (418,422). Here, we pan back to Satan, almost cinema-style. Observe lines 418-501--why do you think that Milton's narrator is made to describe this "location" so carefully? What effect does it have on our perspective of Satan's enterprise?

Book 4



1. Examine the narrator's "portraits" of Adam and Eve (lines 288-324).
2. Read the fine account that Eve gives of her first day of life, lines 449-91. What is the significance of her first act, that of seeing her reflection in a pool? What warning, however mild, does this scene give us about Eve?
3. Read lines 634-58 and 659-88. Who has the higher "IQ"--Adam or Eve? Seriously, what is the difference between them with respect to their way of treating language?
4. Examine lines 720-36. What does this brief passage tell us about Adam and Eve's basic purpose on earth? Also, why is it important that Adam and Eve speak this evening prayer in unison and without rehearsal?
5. Examine lines 1006-15, the end of Book Four. What effect does the ending have on your reaction to the long quarrel that has just taken place between Gabriel and the unmasked Satan?



Book 5

Extract: 809-48

1. Examine Eve's bad dream (lines 31-93).
2. From lines 211-19, Adam and Eve set out to do their daily gardening. Clearly, tending the flowers and trees is an important activity in paradise. What does the need to perform this activity tell us about the "place" that Adam and Eve hold in the universe and about their responsibilities to God? (Think of the plants they tend as figures for the tenders themselves.)
3. From line 350 onwards, Raphael holds a genial conversation with Adam and Eve, though it comes with a warning. What is it?
4. By line 544, Adam has become very curious, and Raphael, gentle angel that he is, assents at line 562 to continue the story.
 - A. Why does Raphael pause, even if only for a moment? Explain the reasons for his hesitation.
 - B. Yet, Raphael does assent to speak of Chaos, of the War in Heaven, and--eventually--of the very act of creation. Contrast the narration that Adam hears with the kind of narratives that Satan has spun about some of the same events. In what way is Raphael's knowledge of things different from that of Satan?



Book 6

Extract: 867-912

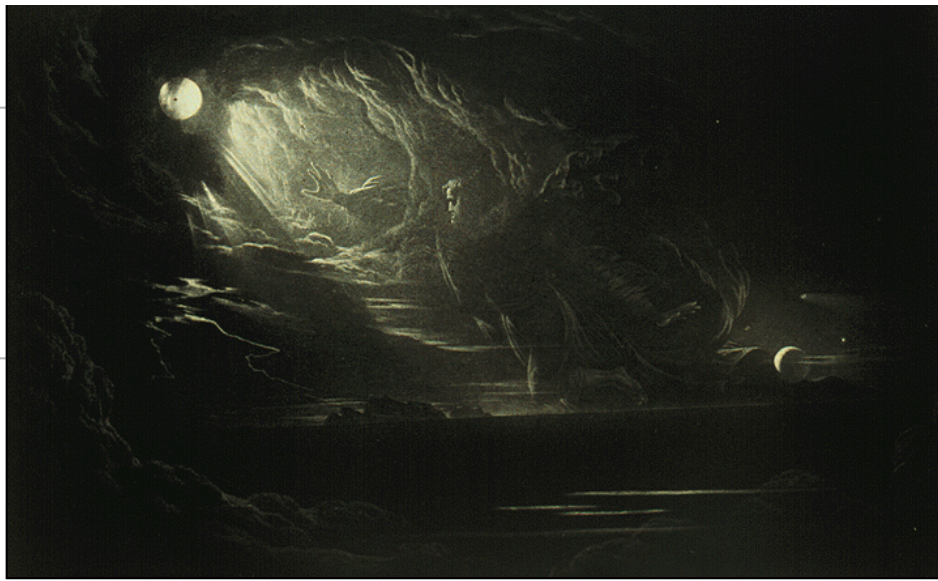
1. What purpose does the War in Heaven serve? (667-79, 699-709)
2. From lines 749-74, the Chariot of Christ is described. What is the nature of this chariot?
3. Find as many scenes, contrasts, etc. in Book Six as you can that relate to the War in Heaven. How many of them seem to have been intended humorously?



Book 7

Extract: 1-39

1. The narrator makes his third invocation from lines 1-39. In what respect does this invocation to "Urania" mark a significant turning point in the poem? Also, how does the figure of Bellerophon reflect upon what Milton's narrator has been describing in the first half of PL?
2. By lines 87-89, Adam has become so curious that he asks Raphael, "How first began this heav'n which we behold / Distant so high." Observe Raphael's response from lines 110-130. Explain the warning that these lines convey to Adam and Eve.
3. The Son goes to work from line 216 onwards.
 - A. Contrast the figure of the Son in Books Six and Seven.
 - B. Note that several passages describing the creation are taken almost verbatim from Genesis. What do you make of such extensive borrowing?
 - C. What effect do the length and specificity of the narrator's description of the creation have upon Adam and Eve?



Book 8

Extract: 167-97

1. Examine lines 15-75, 167-78. What does Adam want to know? What is Raphael's response, and why does he so respond? Why does Eve go off at this point to do some gardening?
2. From lines 250-559, Adam recounts his own story, telling Raphael of his "birth" and of his dialogue with God and subsequent reception of Eve.
 - A. Examine lines 250-318. Contrast Adam's reaction to his own creation with the attitude that Satan bears towards his "Father."
 - B. Examine lines 338-55. Why is it important that unfallen Adam has such capacity for aptly naming God's creatures?
 - C. On to Adam's dialogue with God, lines 370-451. What is God up to here? What is he "teasing" Adam into realizing about himself and his limitations, about his place in the created order?
 - D. Read lines 452-90. Register the intensity of Adam's yearning for Eve. In what way is this both good, and yet worrisome?
 - E. Eve's flattery of Adam (see 4.635-56) once seemed appropriate, but why is Adam's high praise of Eve from lines 546-59 in Book Eight inappropriate?



Book 9

1. From lines 205-384, Eve and Adam debate whether or not to separate.
 - A. What arguments does Eve make for parting?
 - B. What arguments does Adam make for remaining together?
 - C. What is the attitude of each to the other at parting?
2. From lines 532-732, Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempts Eve. Follow Satan's rhetoric to its conclusion. What arguments does Satan use? What is his best argument or appeal? (You might want to refer to your handouts on classical rhetoric.)
3. Compare the rhetoric that Eve uses after her fall to Satan's well-worn themes. Find the parallels, that is, between the motives and speech patterns of Eve and Satan.



Book 10

1. Lines 354-409 mark a dysfunctional-family reunion of sorts for Satan and his daughter and son / grandchild. (Sin and Death have been busy building a great bridge from hell to earth, and Satan pauses to admire their work.) What is different this time about Satan's behavior towards these two?
2. From lines 410-577, Satan returns to Pandemonium. He is in for a big surprise. Try to work out the multiple ironies within this passage.
3. From lines 720-862, Adam laments his fallen condition; then, he catches sight of Eve and hurls misogynistic abuse at her. How does Eve respond to these angry words? (see lines 914-36) In what sense does Eve's plea to Adam mark a turning point, an upward swing from the lowest point of the fall?
4. Follow out the rest of the conversation between Adam and Eve. Mark Adam's correction from lines 1012-96 of Eve's suicidal advice. Again, how does this conversation mark a positive turning point with respect to Adam and Eve's relationship with God?



Books 11 & 12

Book Eleven

The main event in this book is the prophetic vision that the archangel Michael gives to Adam. What does Adam see? Why should he need to see all this?

Book Twelve

Extract: 610-49

Again, follow Michael's instructive prophecy.

- A. a) What shift takes place with regard to the story Michael is telling?
- B. b) What is Michael's ultimate command to Adam and Eve?
- C. c) How does Michael's advice speak to politically disillusioned John Milton, supporter of true commonwealth?