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GRAMMAR | Presentation

The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the poem.

READING NOTES

1. **John Milton** (1608-1674) – For more information, read the biography given in the *Poetry Book II* anthology.
2. **Heavenly Muse** (l. 6ff.) – Urania, the muse of sacred poetry in Greek mythology. In these lines Milton connects Urania with the Holy Spirit, who in the Old Testament inspired “that shepherd” Moses to receive and interpret God’s word.
3. **Oreb and Sinai** (l. 7) – Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai, the locations where God delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses. The location of Mt. Horeb is unknown; Mt. Sinai is located on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.
4. **Chaos** (l. 10) – the ruler of the realm of confusion on the edge of hell
5. **Aonian Mount** (l. 15) – a mountainous region in Greece, specifically Mt. Helicon, the home of the Muses
6. **perdition** (l. 47) – eternal punishment; damnation
7. **adamantine** (l. 48) – unbreakable
8. **ken** (l. 59) – range of knowledge; perception
9. **durst** (l. 102) – past tense of the word *dare*
10. **Seraphim** (l. 129) – angels with three wings; members of the highest order of angels
11. **rood** (l. 196) – an archaic measure of land, about a quarter of an acre
12. **Pelorus** (l. 232) – a specific promontory; a high area of rock in Sicily
13. **Etna** (l. 233) – an active volcano on the east coast of Sicily, Italy
14. **epic poetry** – a long narrative poem in elevated or dignified language that tells the story of a hero and reflects the values of a culture
15. **enjambment** – In poetry, the continuation of a sentence without pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza. Milton uses this technique frequently in *Paradise Lost*; thus, **be sure to pay more attention to punctuation than to line breaks as you read the poem.**
16. **in medias res** – Latin: “In the middle of things.” For example, all of Shakespeare’s plays begin in the middle of action that has already begun before the opening of the first act.

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank

a very steep drop	cunning; slyness	lacking consciousness
bitterly regret	defeated; conquered	refusing to change course of action; unyielding
blasphemous; heretical	disgrace; degradation	relating to punishment
brighten	doubtful; uncertain	to break or go against
celestial; heavenly	heavenly; divine	wild; turbulent

1. **Illumine**, what is low raise and support, *v.* (l. 23)
brighten
2. From their Creator, and **transgress** his will, *v.* (l. 31)
to break or go against
3. Th' infernal Serpent; he it was whose **guile**, *n.* (l. 34)
cunning; slyness
4. Raised **impious** war in Heaven and battle proud, *adj.* (l. 43)
blasphemous; heretical
5. Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' **ethereal** sky, *adj.* (l. 45)
celestial; heavenly
6. In adamant chains and **penal** fire, *adj.* (l. 48)
relating to punishment
7. Lay **vanquished**, rolling in the fiery gulf, *v.* (l. 52)
defeated; conquered
8. Mixed with **obdurate** pride and steadfast hate. *adj.* (l. 58)
refusing to change course of action; unyielding
9. With floods and whirlwinds of **tempestuous** fire, *adj.* (l. 77)
wild; turbulent
10. In **dubious** battle on the plains of Heaven, *adj.* (l. 104)
doubtful; uncertain
11. That were an **ignominy** and shame beneath, *n.* (l. 115)
disgrace; degradation

12. Too well I see and **rue** the dire event, *v.* (l. 134)

bitterly regret

13. The fiery surge, that from the **precipice**, *n.* (l. 173)

a very steep drop

14. Not by the sufferance of **supernal** Power. *adj.* (l. 241)

heavenly; divine

15. Lie thus astonished on th' **oblivious** pool, *adj.* (l. 266)

lacking consciousness



Read Paradise Lost: Book I, marking the poem in key places.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What **poetic form** is the poem *Paradise Lost*? What is its **meter** and **rhyme scheme**?

epic; iambic pentameter; blank verse

2. What epic convention does Milton employ in lines 6ff. that announces his epic intentions?

He invokes the Heavenly Muse, a very common epic convention; in Milton's case, the

Heavenly Muse is the Holy Spirit, who inspired Moses.

3. *Fast by the oracle of God, I thence*

Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,

That with no middle flight intends to soar

Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues

Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme. (ll. 12-16)

Whom does Milton invoke, and what highly significant aim does he announce?

As mentioned in the previous question, Milton invokes the Heavenly Muse, the Holy Spirit.

With the phrase "oracle of God," it could be said simply that he invokes God. His aim is to

have his adventurous poem soar into the heavens (presumably in both subject matter and

poetic greatness) and write a grand epic that has yet to be attempted in prose or rhyme.

4. Who first seduced them (our "grandparents") to that foul revolt? Why did he do it? Quote a line or two from the poem for your answer.

"Th' infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile

Stirred up with envy and revenge ..." (ll. 34-35)

5. Give a brief description of the place where Satan was thrown. Include a line or two from the poem for your answer.

Answers will vary. There are many lines of description: “adamantine chains and penal fire” (l. 48); “A dungeon horrible, on all sides round, / As one great furnace flamed” (ll. 61-62); etc.

6. What important resolution does Satan make at lines 94ff.?

Despite God’s power, or anything else God can inflict, he will not repent or change.

7. *And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?*

All is not lost; the unconquerable will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield:

And what is else not to be overcome? (ll. 105-109)

How does the use of **anaphora** add force to Satan’s growing resolution?

It adds momentum and excitement—it’s as if Satan is getting increasingly excited as he thinks of things, in quick succession, that he has gained through this loss. Though he’s lost the field (e.g., a battle), he does not feel he has lost the war.

8. “*Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable ...*” (l. 157)

What does Satan, along with his followers, resolve to do in the following lines?

To do anything good will never be their task; but always to do evil will be their sole delight; to labor to pervert any good out of evil, and out of good always to find a means of evil.

9. What **simile** is used to describe Satan in the stanza beginning at line 192? To whom is he compared?

“... *in bulk as huge / As whom the fables name of monstrous size*” (ll. 196-197); He is compared to figures in classical mythology who fought with Zeus—Titanian, Earth-born, Briareos, and Typhon. The Titans (early gods) were led by Briareos; the Giants (Earth-born), were led by Typhon, a serpent monster. He is also compared to the biblical sea-monster Leviathan.

10. Who leaves Satan “at large to his own dark designs”?

God—“*but that the will / And high permission of all-ruling Heaven / Left him at large to his own dark designs*” (ll. 211-213)

LOGIC | Dialectic

The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the poem; sorts, arranges, compares, and connects ideas—and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea. Discussion of the Socratic Questions may include note-taking in the Literature Notebook, or they may be answered in written form in the Literature Notebook.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

1. ... what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men. (ll. 22-26)
Summarize these lines. What is involved in what Milton asks? What is his aim?
2. How does Milton's pitting of God and Satan in opposition remind us of epics that involve famous battles?
3. According to Milton, why did God leave Satan "at large to his own dark designs" (l. 213)?
4. *The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.* (ll. 254-255)
Do you agree with Satan's words here?

RHETORIC | Expression

The student expresses in his or her own words the Central One Idea with supporting details. The ability to organize and express their thoughts in the Literature Notebook is an important skill in the presentation of their Central One Idea.

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION (abbreviated):

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

1. In 2-3 sentences, briefly **summarize** the poem.
 2. Write the **Central One Idea** of the poem in a precise, eloquent sentence.
- ◆ Choose a line or two from anywhere in the poem that you think best embodies the Central One Idea. With good penmanship, write it in the Central Quote section at the beginning of this section.
- ❶ **CENTRAL ONE IDEA (as expressed by the teacher)**

Satan and his followers have been cast into the dungeon of fire; proud and unrepentant,
Satan plans a grand battle against God to sow as much evil in the world as possible.

JOHN MILTON • from *Paradise Lost: Book I* 105

LOGIC | Dialectic

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Answers will vary. What is significant here is that Milton is asking God for spiritual purification and illumination in order for him to write such elevated and holy material properly. He is asking for divine providence to help him in this undertaking, so he may accomplish his task fruitfully and rightly. His aim is to "justify the ways of God to men"—an undertaking of such (self-assigned) prophetic magnitude, it is most understandable that he should utter such a pleading prayer at the outset.
2. Answers will vary. Classic epic fare often features heroes fighting in grand battles.
3. With repeated crimes Satan will heap damnation upon himself; and while he seeks evil to others, he will be enraged to see how all his malice served only to bring forth infinite goodness, grace, and mercy on man.
4. Answers will vary. Yes, it seems to be the case. The mind has great power over the will and soul. The mind truly is its own place. In many ways, our thoughts determine our lives, as Marcus Aurelius so rightly said. We can make hellish circumstances heavenly; and heavenly circumstances hellish—simply by the character and content of our thoughts.

RHETORIC | Expression

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION (abbreviated)

1. This beginning section of *Paradise Lost* begins *in medias res*, explaining Satan's earlier rebellion against God and the resulting consequence: the archangel Satan and his followers have been cast into a dungeon of fire. From the cavernous lake of fire, Satan remains proud and unrepentant, discussing and scheming with his fellow demons about how to bring as much evil to the world as possible.
2. Answers will vary.