

John Milton as a Poet

John Milton was a renowned English poet, historian, civil servant for the Commonwealth and pamphleteer. After William Shakespeare, he is considered to be one of the great writers in England. He was a prominent author during a time of political upheaval and religious flux. John Milton was born on 9th December 1608 in Bread Street, London, in England.

Milton graduated from the Christ College Cambridge in 1629 and secured 4th position his graduating year at university. He completed his master's degree from the Cambridge University in 1632. Upon receiving his degree, he went to Horton, Berkshire.

He had good relations with Edward King and he wrote his popular poem "Lycidas" for him. From 1635 onwards, Milton did self-directed studies for six years; he read philosophy, politics, history, literature, science and theology in order to make him ready for a poetic career. Due to this intensive study, Milton is considered as one of the most learned English poets. On his return to England from France, the Bishops' Wars and armed conflict further intensified and Milton started writing against episcopacy to serve the parliamentary cause and Puritans.

In 1642, Milton got married to a 16 year-old girl, Mary Powell. However, she left him due to financial issues. During his mid-thirties, Milton's eyesight gradually deteriorated and he became blind in 1652. A widower and blind Milton got married again to Katherine Woodcock in 1656, but she passed away soon. Then, he married a third time to Elizabeth Mynshull in 1662. Milton died in November, 1674 and was buried at St. Giles, Cripplegate Church.

Milton composed his great piece of work "Paradise Lost" (a magnum opus and an epic poem) as a blind poet during the period 1658-1664. Several critics are of the view that this poem reflects the personal despair of Milton due to the failure of Revolution.

In 1671, Milton published, "Paradise Regained" a sequel to "Paradise Lost". In addition, he published a tragedy "Samson Agonistes" alongside that sequel in 1671. In 1673, Milton republished his 1645 poem collection accompanied by Latin prologues and collections of his letters from his Cambridge days.

In his prose works, he advocated for the abolition of the Church of England and the execution of King Charles I. After the restoration of King Charles-II in 1660, he supported in his works a political philosophy, which opposed tyranny and religion that is state-sanctioned. He derived his philosophy from the English civil wars.

Since Milton was famous for his unique style of blank verse and sonnets, he won the praise of the romantic poets for his skills. However, they did not accept his religious views. William Wordsworth opens his popular sonnet with "Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour." John Keats was also a great admirer of Miltonic verse and advocated that, "Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humor". Keats also felt that his epic poem "Hyperion" was filled with several Miltonic inversions. During that time, poetic blank verse was thought to be a unique form of poetry rather than in drama verse.