

Dr. Stapleton
Some study questions for *Paradise Lost*

Implicit behind every question—why does it matter? Why is it important to the poem? How in each instance in Milton justifying God’s ways to man? Very little of this is directly Scriptural, or reflects Biblical literalism. Why does this matter (or not) for readers of the poem?

line Book 1

1-26 Milton’s opening invocation. What does he say his purpose is, especially at lines 25-26?
26-82 What is the first thing we see? Why?
84-125 Who is the first being to speak? Why? What does he say? What does Milton mean to tell us about him?
128 Who is the other being? What does he say?
157-91 What is the response to this?
209-20 One of the most controversial passages in the poem. Why do you suppose this is?
331-75 Who or what does Milton describe in this passage? What’s the significance of line 365, “Got them new names”?

line Book 2

1-10 How does this passage “say it all” about Satan?
11 What is the purpose of this speech?
51 What does Moloch say?
119 Belial? What’s his deal?
229 Mammon is supposed to be a happy medium—why does what he says appeal to the other damned spirits?
310 How does Beëlzebub work as Satan’s setup man?
430 Satan seems Hitlerian at this point. Why?
629-885 One of the most disgusting passages in English literature, without question. Surely Milton knew this would be the effect he created. Why make things like this?

line Book 3

1 Why begin with light?
60-65 Father and Son—why does the Son sit at the Father’s right hand? Why is the Son not named any further?
80-134 What are the Father’s tone and attitude? What does he say?
144-- How does the Son answer him? What is his tone?
167-- How does the Father reply to this?
235 What does the Son offer to do? Compare Satan, 2.465-66
523-25 Where is Satan at this point? What is he experiencing?

590-742 What happens here? Who’s Uriel? What is the importance of lines 681-89?

line Book 4

13-30 How does Milton depict Satan’s psychology? Why does Milton do it this way?
32-113 One of the great soliloquies in English literature. What does Satan say to himself?
180 How does Satan enter Eden?
285-340 Our first look at Adam and Eve—through the eyes of Satan. Why?
How does Milton portray the sexes?
358 What is Satan’s reaction to what he sees?
411-92 Adam and Eve’s first conversation. What do they say to each other?
493-523 How does Satan react to this?
635-37 What do you think of Eve’s comment to Adam about their relationship?
736-75 Here is Milton’s editorial on marital sexual relations. Why does he say these things?
796-- What animal does Satan turn into? What does he do? Who catches him? What confrontation occurs? What is its nature?

line Book 5

4 Why is Eve’s first reaction to her dream physiological?
12-13 How could you use these lines to interpret Adam and Eve’s relationship?
28-94 What specific elements in Eve’s dream bespeak Satan’s manipulative attempts at mind-control? Why are they so upsetting to her, psychologically speaking? What does psychology (admittedly anachronistic for Milton) say about dreams and dreaming?
115-20 What do you make of this part of Adam’s response?
Why does God send Raphael (pronounced **ray-pee-el**) to warn Adam about the evil that awaits them? What is this angel’s nature?
Note: the *in medias res* convention is fully in operation here in this angel’s speeches to Adam—through flashbacks, this narration fills in the beginning of the story in the middle of the epic
772-907 What does Raphael account to Adam at this point? Who is Abdiel and why is his behavior important?

line Book 6

722-912 What does Raphael recount here to Adam?

line Book 7

277-519 What does Raphael recount here?

line Book 8

249 Adam recounts his creation to Raphael. What does Milton depict as typically human about him?
295, 315 What else, apparently, do human beings need?
357 The beginning of Adam's colloquy with God. What does Adam want?
369 What is God's response?
398 Why is the Almighty "not displeased"?
412 How does Adam follow up his argument?
438 God explains why he questioned and challenged Adam. What does Milton seem to think about God's opinion of humankind?
452-559 One of the most beautiful passages in English literature. What is it, exactly, that Adam is trying to describe to Raphael, an angel, especially at line 528?
561 Raphael responds with "contracted brow." Why? What paradox or complication does Milton create here?
595 Adam responds. How are we supposed to react to his self-defense to an angel who has no mortal desires?

line Book 9 The central book, a little epic, even tragedy, in itself. Note these passages:

1-47 Milton's fourth invocation.
48— Satan's metamorphosis.
99— Satan's soliloquy.
204— Who speaks first, for the first time, and why?
226— What is the reaction by the other person, and why?
273— Some would consider this behavior dishonest, some would not.
350-58 Some would say that this is the central passage of the epic, its delta, and would compare it with 2.550-51, 3.99-106, 5.235, 6.42, 10.9, and 12.84-90.
378-410 Eve's departure.
531— The temptation begins. What is Satan's technique? In order to accomplish his objective, what must he appeal to in Eve? What reactions does he expect? How does he plan to combat them?
679-732 Satan's baker's dozen of arguments, difficult enough for a fallen person to withstand.
780— See how Milton depicts Adam and Eve as they fall.

line Book 10

1-228 The Father sends the Son to judge Adam and Eve
443-570 The metamorphosis of Satan and the rebel angels.
740-845 Adam's soliloquy, which defines him, broadly, as the hero.

865-935 Does Milton approve of Adam's words to Eve? Does he approve of Eve's words to Adam?
1029-55 Adam's conclusions.

line Book 11

162-80 Does Milton approve of what Eve says?

line Book 12

540-649 On what note does Milton conclude? Who are the two speakers? Who gets the last word?