

## Spiritual and Devotional Writings

### from *Paradise Lost*

Epic Poem by John Milton

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML12-493



TEKS 3, 7

#### LITERARY ANALYSIS: ALLUSION

An **allusion** is a brief reference to a fictional or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage. In ordinary conversation, we might allude to a literary character or historical figure by calling a miserly person a Scrooge or a treacherous person a Benedict Arnold. In literature, writers often use allusions as a type of shorthand language to add color and vigor to their works. Most of the allusions Milton includes in his great Christian epic come from biblical stories and classical literature, such as Greek and Roman mythology. For example, in line 34, Milton calls Satan “Th’ infernal serpent,” a reference to Satan’s temptation of Eve in the Bible. As you read *Paradise Lost*, refer to the sidenotes to help you interpret the poem’s many allusions.

#### READING STRATEGY: READING DIFFICULT TEXTS

In writing his masterpiece, Milton employed a dramatic writing style, one that most readers find challenging. Here are a few strategies you can use to confront common difficulties in reading *Paradise Lost*:

- Simplify difficult **syntax** (word order) by paraphrasing. For a difficult line, first identify its subject and verb. Then sort out the meaning conveyed in extra phrases and clauses by rearranging them in conventional order.
- Use sidenotes to interpret **archaic expressions**, or words and phrases we no longer use.
- Avoid becoming overwhelmed by small details. Instead, focus on the thoughts, words, and actions of the main character.

As you read, use a chart like the one shown to take notes about the thoughts, words, and actions of Satan, the main character in this portion of the poem.

Satan		
Thoughts	Words	Actions



Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

## What are the dangers of PRIDE?

You’ve probably been encouraged to take pride in your accomplishments or your heritage. Were John Milton alive today, he may not have approved. As a devout and learned Puritan, he knew that the Bible cautions that “pride goeth before destruction,” a warning he illustrates brilliantly in *Paradise Lost*.

**DISCUSS** Does pride have a darker side? With a small group make a list like the one shown of the various ways pride can manifest itself. Discuss the pros and cons of each pride-related item on your list.

### Pride Week at School

**Pros:** Gives us a chance to feel good about our school’s achievements

**Cons:** Some people use it as an excuse to say bad things about rival schools.

# PARADISE LOST

John Milton

**BACKGROUND** In this excerpt—the opening of Book I of *Paradise Lost*—Milton begins his epic like the ancient epics that were his models, with an invocation of, or call upon, a Muse. The speaker asks for inspiration and sets forth the subject and themes of the poem. There follows a summary of how Satan, once among the most powerful of God’s angels, was cast out of Heaven for leading a rebellion against God’s rule. Awakening in Hell alongside Beëlzebub (bē-ēl’zə-bŭb’), another fallen angel, Satan considers what he has lost and reaffirms his defiance of God.

Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
5 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning how the heavens and earth  
10 Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa’s brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
15 Above th’ Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme. **A**  
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples th’ upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know’st; thou from the first  
20 Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dovelike sat’st brooding on the vast abyss,

**4 one greater Man:** Jesus Christ.

**6 Heavenly Muse:** the source of Milton’s inspiration—here identified with the Spirit of God that spoke to Moses.

**7 Oreb . . . Sinai:** Mounts Horeb and Sinai, on which Moses heard the voice of God.

**8 shepherd:** Moses; **the chosen seed:** the Jews.

**10–11 Sion Hill . . . Siloa’s brook:** places in Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews.

**15 Aonian** (ā-ō’nē-ən) **mount:** Mount Helicon in Greece, sacred to Muses.

**A ALLUSION**  
Reread lines 1–16, using the sidenotes to interpret the various allusions. What will be the subject of Milton’s poem?







And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
 Illumine; what is low, raise and support;  
 That to the height of this great argument  
 25 I may assert Eternal Providence,  
 And justify the ways of God to men.  
 Say first (for Heaven hides nothing from thy view,  
 Nor the deep tract of Hell), say first what cause  
 Moved our grand parents, in that happy state,  
 30 Favored of Heaven so highly, to fall off  
 From their Creator, and transgress his will  
 For one restraint, lords of the world besides?  
 Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?  
 Th' infernal serpent; he it was, whose guile,  
 35 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived  
 The mother of mankind, what time his pride  
 Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host  
 Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring  
 To set himself in glory above his peers,  
 40 He trusted to have equaled the Most High,  
 If he opposed; and with ambitious aim  
 Against the throne and monarchy of God  
 Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,  
 With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power  
 45 Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky  
 With hideous ruin and combustion down  
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
 In adamantine chains and penal fire,  
 Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.  
 50 Nine times the space that measures day and night  
 To mortal men, he with his horrid crew  
 Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf  
 Confounded though immortal. But his doom  
 Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought  
 55 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
 Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes,  
 That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,  
 Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.  
 At once, as far as angels ken, he views  
 60 The dismal situation waste and wild:  
 A dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
 As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames  
 No light, but rather darkness visible  
 Served only to discover sights of woe,

**24 argument:** subject.

**25 Providence:** God's plan for the universe.

**26 justify:** show the justice of. Milton states his purpose in this line.

**29 our grand parents:** Adam and Eve.

**31 transgress:** sin against.

**32 for one restraint:** on account of the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge.

**34 th' infernal serpent:** Satan, who in the Bible takes the form of a serpent and tempts Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

**34–44** These lines introduce the figure of Satan.

**36 what time:** when.

**37 host:** army.

**44–49 Him the Almighty Power . . .**

**arms:** God hurls Satan from the ethereal (ĭ-thĭr'ē-əl) sky, or heaven, to hell, a bottomless pit of perdition, or damnation, where he must live in unbreakable chains and punishing fire.

**53–54 his doom . . . wrath:** fate had more punishment in store for him.

**58 obdurate** (öb'döö-rĭt): stubborn.

**59 ken:** can see.

**62–63** Milton conveys the desolation of hell through a horrifying paradox: flames that give no light, only "darkness visible."



65 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all, but torture without end  
 Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed:

70 Such place Eternal Justice had prepared  
 For those rebellious; here their prison ordained  
 In utter darkness and their portion set  
 As far removed from God and light of Heaven  
 As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole.

75 O how unlike the place from whence they fell!  
 There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed  
 With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,  
 He soon discerns; and, weltering by his side,  
 One next himself in power, and next in crime,

80 Long after known in Palestine, and named  
 Beëlzebub. To whom th' arch-enemy,  
 And thence in Heaven called Satan, with bold words  
 Breaking the horrid silence thus began:  
 "If thou beest he—but O how fallen! how changed

85 From him who in the happy realms of light  
 Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine  
 Myriads, though bright! if he whom mutual league, **B**  
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise,

90 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
 In equal ruin; into what pit thou seest  
 From what height fallen, so much the stronger proved  
 He with his thunder: and till then who knew  
 The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,

95 Nor what the potent Victor in his rage  
 Can else inflict, do I repent or change,  
 Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind  
 And high disdain, from sense of injured merit, **C**  
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,

100 And to the fierce contention brought along  
 Innumerable force of spirits armed,  
 That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,  
 His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,

105 And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?  
 All is not lost: the unconquerable will,  
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,

**68 still urges:** always presses; afflicts.

**69 sulphur:** Burning sulphur, called brimstone, is often associated with God's wrath.

**73–74 as far removed . . . utmost pole:** The image is probably drawn from Virgil's *Aeneid*, which situates Tartarus, or hell, as twice as far below the earth's surface as the heavens are above it.

**78 weltering:** writhing; thrashing about.

**80–82 long after known . . . Satan:** The ancient Phoenicians, whose land is here called Palestine (pāl'ī-stīn'), worshipped the god Baal, also known as Beëlzebub in the Bible. The name Satan comes from the Hebrew word meaning "enemy."

#### **B DIFFICULT TEXTS**

**Clarify** the pronoun referents for the words *thou* and *he* in line 84. What character is Satan addressing in this speech? Explain Satan's impression of this character.

#### **C DIFFICULT TEXTS**

Reread lines 94–98. **Paraphrase** this passage to clarify its meaning. What is Satan's attitude toward his defeat?

**107 study:** pursuit.

And courage never to submit or yield:  
 And what is else not to be overcome?  
 110 That glory never shall his wrath or might  
 Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
 Who from the terror of this arm so late  
 Doubted his empire—that were low indeed;  
 115 That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
 This downfall; since, by fate, the strength of gods  
 And this empyreal substance cannot fail;  
 Since, through experience of this great event,  
 In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
 120 We may with more successful hope resolve  
 To wage by force or guile eternal war,  
 Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,  
 Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy  
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.” **D**  
 125 So spake th' apostate angel, though in pain,  
 Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair;  
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:  
 “O prince, O chief of many thronèd powers,  
 That led th' embattled seraphim to war  
 130 Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds  
 Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual King,  
 And put to proof his high supremacy,  
 Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate!  
 Too well I see and rue the dire event  
 135 That with sad overthrow and foul defeat  
 Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host  
 In horrible destruction laid thus low,  
 As far as gods and heavenly essences  
 Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains  
 140 Invincible, and vigor soon returns,  
 Though all our glory extinct, and happy state  
 Here swallowed up in endless misery.  
 But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now  
 Of force believe almighty, since no less  
 145 Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)  
 Have left us this our spirit and strength entire,  
 Strongly to suffer and support our pains,  
 That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,  
 Or do him mightier service as his thralls

**112 with suppliant** (sŭp'lē-ənt) **knee**: pleading in a kneeling position.

**114 doubted**: feared for.

**115 ignominy** (ĭg'nə-mĭn'ē): disgrace.

**117 empyreal** (ĕm-pĭr'ē-əl): heavenly.

#### **D DIFFICULT TEXTS**

Using the sidenotes, interpret the various **archaic expressions** in lines 111–124. Does Satan regret rebelling against God? Support your response with details.

**125 apostate** (ə-pŏs'tāt'): renegade.

**126 vaunting**: boasting.

**127 compeer** (kəm-pĭr'): companion of equal rank.

**143–155** Beëlzebub suggests that God has left the fallen angels their strength so that their suffering will be increased or so that he can use them for his own purposes. Then Beëlzebub asks what use in that case (“What can it then avail”) the fallen angels’ strength and eternal life will be to them.

**144 of force**: necessarily.

**148 suffice** (sə-fis'): satisfy fully.

**149 thralls**: slaves.





*Now Night her Course began..* (1882), Gustave Doré. Plate no. 26, Book VI, line 406, © Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design, London/Bridgeman Art Library.

150 By right of war, whate'er his business be,  
 Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,  
 Or do his errands in the gloomy deep?  
 What can it then avail though yet we feel  
 Strength undiminished, or eternal being  
 155 To undergo eternal punishment?"

Whereto with speedy words th' arch-fiend replied:  
 "Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable,  
 Doing or suffering: but of this be sure,

157 cherub: angel.

To do aught good never will be our task,  
 160 But ever to do ill our sole delight,  
 As being the contrary to his high will  
 Whom we resist. If then his providence  
 Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,  
 Our labor must be to pervert that end,  
 165 And out of good still to find means of evil; **E**  
 Which oftentimes may succeed, so as perhaps  
 Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb  
 His inmost counsels from their destined aim.  
 But see! the angry Victor hath recalled  
 170 His ministers of vengeance and pursuit  
 Back to the gates of Heaven; the sulphurous hail,  
 Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid  
 The fiery surge that from the precipice  
 Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,  
 175 Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
 Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now  
 To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.  
 Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn  
 Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.  
 180 Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,  
 The seat of desolation, void of light,  
 Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
 Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
 From off the tossing of these fiery waves;  
 185 There rest, if any rest can harbor there;  
 And reassembling our afflicted powers,  
 Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
 Our enemy, our own loss how repair,  
 How overcome this dire calamity,  
 190 What reinforcement we may gain from hope,  
 If not, what resolution from despair."  
 Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate  
 With head uplift above the wave, and eyes  
 That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides  
 195 Prone on the flood, extended long and large  
 Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
 As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
 Titanian or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,  
 Briareos or Typhon, whom the den  
 200 By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea beast  
 Leviathan, which God of all his works

159 aught: at all.

### **E DIFFICULT TEXTS**

Rewrite lines 159–165, reordering the **syntax**. What does Satan set out to accomplish?

172 laid: calmed.

175 **impetuous** (ĩm-pěch'ōō-es): violently forceful.

178 **slip th' occasion**: miss the chance.

179 **satiate** (sā'shē-ĩt): satisfied.

186 **afflicted powers**: stricken troops.

190 **reinforcement**: increase of strength.

196 **rood**: a unit of measure, between six and eight yards.

**197–200 as whom . . . Tarsus held:** In Greek mythology, both the huge Titans—of whom Briareos was one—and the earth-born giant Typhon battled unsuccessfully against Jove (Zeus), just as Satan rebelled against God. Zeus defeated Typhon in Asia Minor, near the town of Tarsus.

**201 Leviathan** (lə-vĩ'ə-thən): a huge sea beast mentioned in the Bible—here identified with the whale by Milton.



Created hugest that swim th' ocean-stream.  
Him, haply, slumbering on the Norway foam,  
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,  
205 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind  
Moors by his side under the lee, while night  
Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays: **F**  
So stretched out huge in length the arch-fiend lay,  
210 Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence  
Had risen or heaved his head, but that the will  
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
Left him at large to his own dark designs,  
That with reiterated crimes he might  
215 Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
Evil to others, and enraged might see  
How all his malice served but to bring forth  
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shown  
On man by him seduced, but on himself  
220 Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured. **G**  
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames  
Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and rolled  
In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.  
225 Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,  
That felt unusual weight; till on dry land  
He lights, if it were land that ever burned  
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,  
230 And such appeared in hue; as when the force  
Of subterranean wind transports a hill  
Torn from Pelorus or the shattered side  
Of thundering Etna, whose combustible  
And fuelèd entrails thence conceiving fire,  
235 Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,  
And leave a singèd bottom all involved  
With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole  
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate,  
Both glorying to have 'scaped the Stygian flood  
240 As gods, and by their own recovered strength,  
Not by the sufferance of supernal power.  
"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"  
Said then the lost archangel, "this the seat  
That we must change for Heaven? this mournful gloom

**204 night-foundered:** overtaken by the darkness of night.

**208 invests:** covers.

#### **F ALLUSION**

In lines 192–208, Milton compares Satan to several mythological and biblical figures. What do you learn about Satan from the allusions to Typhon and Leviathan?

#### **G DIFFICULT TEXTS**

Reread the sentence in lines 209–220, identifying its subject and verb. Which details suggest that Satan has limited control over his own future?

**226 incumbent on:** resting upon.

**228 lights:** rests after flight.

**230–233 the force . . . Etna:** an underground wind moves a hill torn from Cape Pelorus (pə-lôr'əs), on the coast of Sicily, or Mount Etna, a nearby volcano. It was formerly thought that earthquakes were caused by underground winds.

**235 sublimed:** vaporized.

**236–237 involved with:** wrapped in.

**239 the Stygian** (stīj'ē-ən) **flood:** the river Styx—in Greek mythology, one of the rivers of the underworld.

**241 sufferance of supernal** (söö-pûr'nəl) **power:** permission of heavenly power.

245 For that celestial light? Be it so, since he  
 Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid  
 What shall be right: farthest from him is best,  
 Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme  
 Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,  
 250 Where joy forever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,  
 Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,  
 Receive thy new possessor, one who brings  
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.  
 The mind is its own place, and in itself  
 255 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.  
 What matter where, if I be still the same,  
 And what I should be, all but less than he  
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least  
 We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built  
 260 Here for his envy, will not drive us hence.  
 Here we may reign secure; and in my choice  
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:  
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.  
 But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
 265 Th' associates and copartners of our loss,  
 Lie thus astonished on th' oblivious pool,  
 And call them not to share with us their part  
 In this unhappy mansion, or once more  
 With rallied arms to try what may be yet  
 270 Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell?"

## Language Coach

**Oral Fluency** The word *sovereign* (line 246) has a silent *g*. What word used three times in lines 261–263 has a similar spelling pattern? How is each word pronounced? How are the words' meanings related?

**257 all but less than:** second only to.

**264 wherefore:** why.

**266 astonished:** stunned; **th' oblivious pool:** the river Lethe—in Greek mythology, a river of the underworld that causes forgetfulness.

**268 mansion:** dwelling place.



## Comprehension

1. **Recall** Where do the fallen angels find themselves after their rebellion?
2. **Recall** Who is their leader?
3. **Summarize** In your own words, describe the connection between the rebellion of the fallen angels and “man’s first disobedience.”



**READING 3** Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods. **7** Analyze how the author’s literary allusions reveal theme, set tone, and create meaning in metaphors, passages, and literary works.

## Literary Analysis

4. **Draw Conclusions About the Speaker** Reread the opening invocation, lines 1–26. Do you view the speaker as humble, ambitious, or some combination of these? Support your answer with specific references.
5. **Understand Imagery** Generations of readers have been captivated by Milton’s description of hell in *Paradise Lost*. Reread lines 59–74, noting Milton’s use of imagery, or words and phrases that appeal to the senses. Which image is the most vivid? Explain your response.
6. **Interpret Difficult Texts** Review the character chart you created as you read the selection. Summarize Satan’s words, thoughts, and behavior in each of the following scenes.
  - his thoughts as he lies in the fiery water (lines 53–58)
  - his first speech to Beëlzebub (lines 106–124)
  - his final speech (lines 242–270)
7. **Compare and Contrast Characters** A **foil** is a character who provides a striking contrast to other characters. In what way does Beëlzebub serve as a foil to Satan? Cite details to support your response.
8. **Analyze Allusions** Review the mythological, biblical, and geographical allusions that Milton uses in lines 192–241. Why do you think Milton draws on so many different sources for his description of Satan?

## Literary Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** In an essay on Milton, the 19th-century historian and literary critic Thomas Babington Macauley observed, “Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so.” Do you agree or disagree with this opinion? Provide evidence to support your view.

### *What are the dangers of* **PRIDE**?

The 14th-century poet Dante defined pride as “love of self perverted to hatred and contempt for one’s neighbor” and ranked it as the very worst of all sins. How does Milton’s portrayal of pride differ from or resemble Dante’s?