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John Milton Biography

John Milton was a renowned English poet and intellectual who lived from 1608 to 1674. He is celebrated for his significant contributions to English literature, especially for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, which narrates the biblical story of the Fall of Man. Milton's life spanned a period of intense political and religious upheaval in England, including the English Civil War. Besides poetry, he was an active political writer advocating for freedom of speech and individual liberty. Milton began writing poetry at the age of ten and was highly educated, fluent in Latin, Greek, Italian, and English. Despite becoming blind at the age of forty-five due to intense scholarly work, he continued to compose major works through dictation.

Key Elements

- **Major Work:** *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*
- **Historical Context:** 17th-century England, civil war, debates on monarchy and democracy
- **Contributions:** Poetry, political writings on liberty and freedom of speech
- **Personal Challenges:** Blindness due to eyestrain

Textual Evidence

Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* explores themes of good and evil, free will, and obedience, using rich language and powerful imagery.

Practice Set

- **Level 1:** When was John Milton born and when did he die?
- **Level 2:** What are the main themes explored in *Paradise Lost*?
- **Level 3:** Discuss how Milton's political beliefs influenced his literary works.

Answer Key

- **Level 1:** John Milton was born in 1608 and died in 1674.
- **Level 2:** The main themes in *Paradise Lost* include the battle between good and evil, free will, obedience, and the consequences of sin.
- **Level 3:** Milton's political beliefs in freedom of speech and liberty are reflected in his writings, where he often advocated for individual rights and challenged authority.

Quick Reference

- John Milton: English poet (1608-1674)
- Famous work: *Paradise Lost*
- Known for: Epic poetry, political writings, advocacy for liberty

Glossary

- **Epic Poem:** A long narrative poem about heroic deeds or events significant to a culture or nation.
- **Liberty:** The state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions.
- **Obedience:** Compliance with an order, request, or law.

On Time Poem Analysis

On Time is a poem by John Milton that reflects on the nature of time and eternity. The poem personifies Time as envious and slow, describing it as being outpaced by eternity. Milton contrasts the temporary, false, and vain things of the world with the eternal joy and truth that await beyond mortal life. The poem ends with a hopeful vision of the soul triumphing over death, chance, and time itself, seated forever in divine glory.

Key Elements

- **Theme:** The contrast between temporal (earthly) life and eternal life
- **Literary Devices:** Personification of Time, imagery of eternity, metaphor of the "lazy leaden-stepping hours" and "heavy Plummets pace"
- **Important Quotes:** "Fly envious Time, till thou run out thy race"; "Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time"

Textual Evidence

Milton writes, "Fly envious Time, till thou run out thy race," personifying Time as envious and slow. He also uses the metaphor of "lazy leaden-stepping hours" to describe the slow passage of time.

Solved Examples

- Q: Why does Milton describe Time as "envious" and slow?
A: Milton personifies Time as envious because it consumes all things but ultimately cannot affect eternal joy. The slow pace emphasizes the contrast between fleeting earthly life and everlasting eternity.
- Q: What is the significance of "long Eternity shall greet our bliss with an individual kiss"?
A: This line signifies the soul's eternal happiness and personal reward after transcending mortal life and time.

Practice Set

- **Level 1:** What does Milton mean by "lazy leaden-stepping hours"?
- **Level 2:** Explain the contrast between temporal and eternal things in the poem.
- **Level 3:** Analyze how Milton uses personification to convey his message about time.

Answer Key

- **Level 1:** "Lazy leaden-stepping hours" refers to the slow and heavy movement of time, like a lead weight moving slowly.
- **Level 2:** Temporal things are false, vain, and mortal, while eternal things are sincere, good, divine, and associated with truth, peace, and love.
- **Level 3:** Milton personifies Time as envious and slow to highlight its limitations and to emphasize the superiority of eternal life over temporal existence.

Quick Reference

- Theme: Time vs Eternity
- Personification: Time as envious and slow
- Imagery: Heavy plummets, stars, divine throne

Glossary

- **Personification:** Giving human qualities to non-human things.
- **Plummets:** Lead weights used in clocks to regulate movement.
- **Eternity:** Infinite or unending time.

On Shakespeare Poem Analysis

On Shakespeare is a poem written by John Milton in 1630 that praises the enduring legacy of William Shakespeare. Milton argues that Shakespeare does not need a physical monument or tomb because his works themselves serve as a living monument. The poem highlights Shakespeare's ability to inspire generations through his poetry, which deeply impresses the hearts of readers. Milton describes Shakespeare as the "great heir of Fame" whose words have built a lasting monument beyond stone and marble.

Key Elements

- **Theme:** Immortality through literary legacy
- **Literary Devices:** Metaphor of the "live-long Monument," imagery of stone and marble tombs, apostrophe addressing Shakespeare
- **Important Quotes:** "What needs my Shakespear for his honour'd Bones,"; "Thou in our wonder and astonishment hast built thy self a live-long Monument."

Textual Evidence

Milton writes, "Thou in our wonder and astonishment hast built thy self a live-long Monument," emphasizing that Shakespeare's works are his eternal monument.

Solved Examples

- Q: Why does Milton say Shakespeare does not need a stone monument?
A: Because Shakespeare's literary works themselves serve as a lasting and living monument that preserves his fame.
- Q: What does "weak witness of thy name" mean?
A: It refers to physical monuments or stones that are weak and unnecessary compared to Shakespeare's enduring literary legacy.
- Q: How does Milton describe Shakespeare's influence on future poets?
A: Milton says Shakespeare inspires wonder and astonishment, and his poetry deeply impresses readers, influencing generations.
- Q: What is the best tribute posterity has given Shakespeare?
A: The continued reading and admiration of his works, which keep his memory alive.

Practice Set

- **Level 1:** What is the main idea of Milton's poem "On Shakespeare"?
- **Level 2:** Explain the metaphor of the "live-long Monument" in the poem.
- **Level 3:** Analyze how Milton uses imagery to praise Shakespeare's legacy.

Answer Key

- **Level 1:** The poem praises Shakespeare's lasting fame through his literary works rather than physical monuments.
- **Level 2:** The "live-long Monument" metaphor means Shakespeare's poetry itself is an eternal monument that outlasts stone tombs.
- **Level 3:** Milton uses imagery of stone, marble, and pyramids to contrast physical monuments with the living monument of Shakespeare's poetry, highlighting its enduring power.

Quick Reference

- Theme: Literary immortality
- Metaphor: Live-long Monument
- Imagery: Stone, marble, pyramids

Glossary

- **Monument:** A structure built to commemorate a person or event.
- **Apostrophe:** A figure of speech where the speaker addresses someone absent or dead as if present.
- **Reliques:** Relics or remains of a deceased person.

Language Study and Etymology

Etymology is the study of the origin and history of words. It explains how words have changed over time and where they come from. For example, the word "entomb'd" used in Milton's poem comes from late Middle English and has French origins, dating back to around 1578. Understanding etymology helps in appreciating the richness and history of the English language. About 30% of English words are of French origin, especially after the Norman Conquest of 1066.

Key Elements

- **Definition:** Study of word origins and history
- **Example:** "entomb'd" from Middle English and French
- **Historical Influence:** Norman Conquest impact on English vocabulary

Practice Set

- **Level 1:** What is etymology?
- **Level 2:** From which language does the word "entomb'd" originate?
- **Level 3:** Explain the impact of the Norman Conquest on English vocabulary.

Answer Key

- **Level 1:** Etymology is the study of the origin and history of words.
- **Level 2:** The word "entomb'd" originates from French, used in late Middle English.
- **Level 3:** The Norman Conquest introduced many French words into English, significantly enriching its vocabulary between 1250 and 1400.

Quick Reference

- Etymology: Study of word origins
- Norman Conquest: Historical event influencing English language
- Entomb'd: Word of French origin used in English poetry

Glossary

- **Etymology:** The study of the history and origin of words.
- **Norman Conquest:** The 1066 invasion of England by the Normans, which influenced the English language.
- **Middle English:** The form of English spoken from about 1150 to 1500.

