

# Paradise Lost

Study Guide by Course Hero

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## Book Basics

**AUTHOR**
John Milton

**YEAR PUBLISHED**
1667

**GENRE**
Allegory

**PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR**
*Paradise Lost* is told by a third-person omniscient narrator. Readers learn that the narrator is the author, John Milton, when he inserts references to himself, as he does in discussing his blindness in Book 3: "these eyes, that roll in vain/To find thy piercing ray."

**TENSE**
*Paradise Lost* is told in the present tense.

**ABOUT THE TITLE**
*Paradise Lost* refers to the expulsion of the first humans, Adam and Eve, from the Garden of Eden after they commit sin by eating from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge.

## In Context

### Religion and Politics

John Milton considered himself a radical Protestant Christian. He was deeply opposed to England's ruling Anglican church. Disdainful of the monarchy in general, he supported Oliver Cromwell, the English soldier who led parliamentary forces in the English Civil Wars and who overthrew Charles I to become England's Lord Protector. After the monarchy became restored, Milton fled and went into hiding to avoid being jailed or executed.

Milton wrote many political pamphlets during his life, and he believed strongly in an individual's right to freedom. He distrusted the institution of marriage and thought that power led to corruption—for Milton, God was the only true king, and any human monarch was automatically a tyrant. He found many of England's leaders unworthy, and his political pamphlets reflected these arguments.

Readers have long been interested in Milton's views on religion, given the religious subject of *Paradise Lost.* Milton considered himself a Presbyterian, an offshoot of the Anglican Church. He rejected Catholicism and the use of bishops and priests, whom he found to be corrupt. He believed that the separation of the Anglican Church into other Protestant groups was a good thing, and he encouraged his fellow Presbyterians to "be their

own church." These views were too radical to be accepted by his contemporary churchgoers, so Milton abandoned Presbyterianism and did not belong to any church. His ideas continued to evolve until he felt all organized religions blocked people's access to spirituality.

## Women

Contemporary readers tend to find Milton's view of women and their role problematic. His interpretation of the Bible on this subject is quite literal: women are inferior to men and must submit to them. However, this was the dominant view during Milton's time, and his stance would not have been considered unusual or insulting. However, Milton's Eve is not simply a temptress whose sexuality causes the downfall of humankind, which was the common interpretation of the biblical fall of man during this time. Instead, she is a complex being with the strong desire to acquire knowledge and be taken seriously.

Milton was somewhat progressive on this issue in an unlikely way: he was an advocate for divorce in an era in which it was uncommon. Milton believed that if either party in a marriage found it unsatisfactory, they should be able to ask for a divorce. He also didn't believe the prevailing notion at the time that marriage was solely for the purpose of procreation. Rather, he believed that companionship should be the goal of marriage.

## Epic Poetry

Milton was introduced to classical Greek epics at a young age, and he made it his goal to write a great English epic. Though initially he wanted to write his epic on an English subject, the legend of King Arthur, he landed on something as large in scope as he could possibly get: the story of the fall of man.

There are many parallels in *Paradise Lost* to the ancient Greek epics, such as Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Elements of Greek epics, such as tales of warfare, heroes, villains, and love, are echoed in Milton's story but on a much grander scale. Other epic elements in *Paradise Lost* include invoking a muse to aid the writer in telling the story, beginning the story in medias res (in the middle) rather than in chronological order, and using similes and metaphors to show epic comparisons, such as comparing Satan's spear to the long mast of a ship. Milton spent over 10 years dictating the poem to his daughters after he became blind, and he eventually wrote its sequel, *Paradise Regained* (1671), in which Satan tries and fails to tempt Jesus Christ.

Milton writes *Paradise Lost* in unrhymed blank verse of iambic pentameter. *Iambic* means the use of lines with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. When this combination is used five times in a line, then the scheme is called *iambic pentameter*. Milton uses run-on lines without punctuation to avoid limits set by rhymed verse. He piles on epic similes one after the other in imitation of classical epic poems. In Milton's time readers expected poems to rhyme and were shocked by his use of iambic pentameter, which was previously used only in dramas. Although many critics argue that Satan may be the most interesting character in *Paradise Lost*, Milton probably intends the Son to be the hero of the poem because the Son voluntarily humbles himself to become human and sacrifices himself for the sins of humankind to "justify the ways of God to man."

# Author Biography

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, to a middle-class, religiously Protestant family in London. He attended St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. As a young student he began writing poetry and started training to become an Anglican priest. Even though his interest in religion prevailed throughout his life, he gave up his pursuit of the priesthood and instead devoted his time to writing poetry and to studying ancient and modern languages, literature, science, politics, and philosophy.

Milton's interest in politics also led him to write a series of political pamphlets during the English Civil Wars (1642–51), in which he advocated for the right to divorce and to have freedom of the press and argued that the monarchy should be abolished. After King Charles I was executed, Milton served as a secretary of foreign language in the new republican government until the monarchy was restored; at this point Milton was considered a dangerous revolutionary. Meanwhile, he began losing his eyesight, and by 1651 he had gone completely blind. *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667 in 10 books and later republished in a 12-book version (1674). Comprising nearly 11,000 lines written in blank verse, the poem was immediately popular. In the early 21st century, it is

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regarded as the greatest epic poem in English.

Milton's other works include *History of Britain* (1670), which covers the settlement of the island up to the Norman Conquest in 1066. A volume containing two long poems, *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained,* was published in 1671. *Samson Agonistes* focuses on the last day of the biblical Samson's life and how he regains favor with God after giving into temptation, is blinded, and is captured by his enemies. *Paradise Regained* tells about how Jesus resists Satan's temptation in the wilderness. Both poems are examples of Christian heroism in which characters are tempted to turn away from God, reject temptation, and then reaffirm their faith. Milton died in November 1674.

Milton's works have influenced storytelling ever since they were published. *Paradise Lost* offers something unusual in literature: an imaginative vision of what everyday life in Paradise might have been like. Furthermore, Milton used a variety of literary devices, including epic similes—long, elaborate figurative comparisons—that have influenced authors to the present day.

# Characters

## Satan

Satan, formerly known as the archangel Lucifer in Heaven, is cast into Hell after waging a battle against God with the other fallen angels he has convinced to join his rebellion. At times conflicted about his intentions in the face of an all-powerful God, he ultimately realizes he is doomed to suffer eternally. He attempts to corrupt God's newly created race of humans by tempting the first two humans, Adam and Eve. Even though Satan is the evil antagonist of the story, he is also the most complex character, and his perspective is compelling.

## God

God is the ruler of Heaven and the universe. He sees and knows everything, and, though he expects obedience from all that he has created, he has also endowed all creatures with free will so that their love and obedience is by choice. Even though Satan rebels against him, God already knows the outcome of the rebellion and Satan's corruption of Adam and Eve. God is not very relatable; he does not have emotions like the other characters, and his pronouncements often seem cold and harsh.

## The Son

The Son is difficult to conceptualize, because he is essentially the same as God, just a different part of him. His role in Paradise Lost is more a role of action, as he volunteers to die for the sins of mankind. After he dies, he returns to life as Jesus to defeat Satan before returning to Heaven.

## Adam

Adam is created by God to be innocent and perfect. Even though God knows Adam's past, present, and future, he imbues him with free will, which causes Adam to be susceptible to temptation. Adam is closer to God than Eve and is supposed to be smarter and stronger. He is curious about his surroundings and asks Raphael questions about the astronomical workings of the universe and whether angels eat food, showing that humans are innately curious and desire knowledge.

## Eve

Eve is Adam's companion, and Raphael tells Adam that she is lesser than him in wisdom and strength, although Adam considers her as wise and as equal to him. Satan chooses to tempt her, because he sees her as an easier target, and convinces her to eat the fruit, leading to the fall of man.

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# Character Map




- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

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## Full Character List

| Character | Description |
|---|---|
| Satan | Satan is the ruler of Hell, who wages a war against God and Heaven. |
| God | God is the ruler of Heaven and the universe, all-seeing and all-knowing. |
| The Son | The Son may be equal to God; while God is considered spirit, the Son takes form to carry out God's plans. |
| Adam | Adam is the first human created by God. |
| Eve | Eve, the first woman, is born from Adam's rib. |
| Abdiel | Abdiel is a rebel angel who returns to God to repent. |
| Beelzebub | Beelzebub is second-in-command of Satan's army. |
| Belial | Belial is a devil on Satan's council in Hell who advocates for doing nothing. |
| Chaos | Chaos is the personified material out of which God created the universe. |
| Death | Death is the son of Sin and Satan. |
| Gabriel | Gabriel is second-in-command of God's army and the guardian of the staircase to Heaven from Earth. |
| Mammon | Mammon is a devil on Satan's council in Hell who advocates for finding riches. |
| Michael | Michael is the highest-ranking archangel in Heaven and commander of God's army. |
| Moloch | Moloch is a devil on Satan's council in Hell who advocates for a violent war. |
| Mulciber | Mulciber is the devil architect of Pandemonium, the capital of Hell. |
| Night | Night is Chaos's companion. |
| Raphael | Raphael is an angel sent by God to warn Adam and Eve about the temptation they will face from Satan. |
| Sin | Satan's daughter, Sin, is half-serpent and the guardian of the Gates of Hell. |
| Uriel | Uriel is an angel who is tricked by a disguised Satan. |

## Plot Summary

In the tradition of ancient Greek epics, John Milton begins his poem by calling on the guidance of a heavenly muse to help tell his tale, stating that his goal is to justify the ways of God to man. He begins his story in medias res (in the middle of things). God has cast Satan and his rebel army of fallen angels out of Heaven, and they are floating on a fiery lake in Hell. These angels become devils and form a council to debate how to overthrow God. Through his second-in-command, Satan convinces them that the best target is man, God's newest creation. Satan volunteers to fly to the world full of God's new creatures. His daughter, Sin, and their incestuous son, Death, help him escape from Hell. The personifications of Chaos and Night also help pave the way for Satan to enter the new world, because they have no particular allegiance to God.

God, in his omniscience, already knows that Satan will succeed in tempting and corrupting mankind. He announces that man will be punished for his disobedience, because he created humans to be strong enough to withstand temptation. He claims that his new creations will be punished by death unless someone in Heaven is willing to die on their behalf. Only God's Son volunteers.

Satan lands in the new world and sneaks into the Garden of Eden disguised as a cherub. Once inside the garden, he spies God's new creations, Adam and Eve, and is deeply envious of their innocence and happiness. Though he has a moment of doubt and almost feels love for the humans, he resolves to continue with his plan to corrupt them. It is the only revenge he can get against God. He overhears Adam and Eve discussing how God forbade them from eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and decides that he will trick them into disobeying

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God by eating the fruit.

Uriel, the angel guarding Paradise, realizes that the cherub is Satan in disguise and sends for the archangel Gabriel to find the intruder. Gabriel confronts him, and Satan reveals himself and prepares for battle. God then sends Satan a warning: a pair of Golden Scales in the sky that demonstrates how pointless it is to fight. Satan flees, recognizing that God does have the ultimate power and advantage.

Satan whispers an upsetting dream about eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge in Eve's ear while she is sleeping. God decides that although he cannot control their actions, he must warn Adam and Eve about Satan. He sends his archangel Raphael to discuss with Adam the idea that they have the free will to make their own choices and to warn them about the temptation they will face and its consequences.

Raphael also tells Adam the story of Satan's rebellion in Heaven—which began when Satan, then a high-ranking angel, became envious of the Son, who would become King of Heaven. Satan then convinced other angels to rebel against God and forms an army. Yet all angels are immortal—while they can be wounded, they can't be killed. The battle that Raphael describes to Adam seems pointless, especially because the all-powerful God can call an end to the war whenever he likes. He does so on the third day, telling his Son to banish the rebel angels to Hell.

After Raphael finishes telling Adam the story, Satan returns to the Garden of Eden, taking on the disguise of a serpent. He finds Eve alone and speaks to her. Eve is curious about how he came to be able to speak, and he tells her that he learned by eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. He tells her that if she eats the fruit she can become a goddess and gain knowledge as well. After hesitating, she eats the fruit and then offers it to Adam. Though he realizes that she has disobeyed God's orders, he eats the fruit so they will share the same fate.

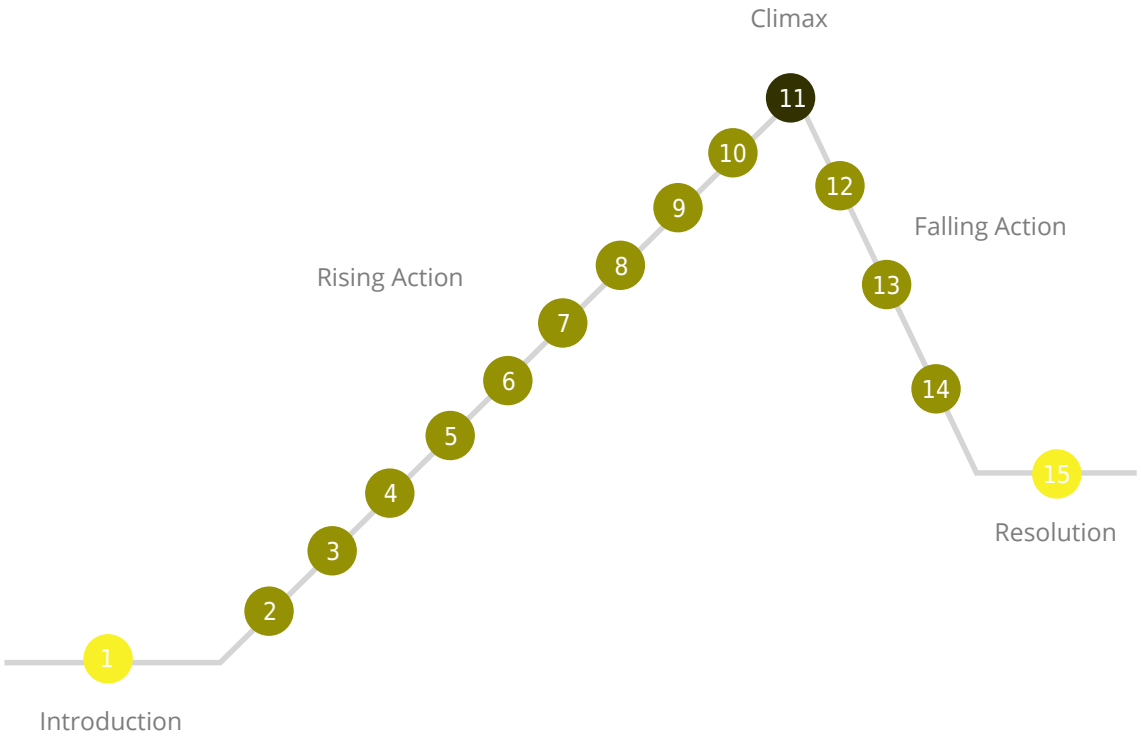
God then sends the Son to the Garden of Eden, where he condemns Eve and all future women to experience pain when they give birth. He also condemns Adam to have to labor to grow his food and tells Eve she must submit to Adam. Satan is gleeful that he has accomplished his plan, and his children, Sin and Death, build a bridge between Hell and Earth. Though Satan arrives triumphantly in Hell, believing he has outsmarted God, God punishes Satan by turning him and the other devils into serpents, doomed to eternally hunger for fruit that turns to ashes when they bite into it.

God next orders angels to make the new world more hostile to mirror Adam and Eve's fall. The angels create storms and turn creatures against each other to create discord and suffering. Adam and Eve begin fighting and blame each other for the punishment they are enduring. Ultimately they decide to repent to God, swearing to be obedient. God agrees to be merciful, allowing them and their offspring into Heaven in the afterlife if they are obedient to him.

God sends the archangel Michael to show Adam what his and Eve's future will look like: their sons will murder each other, tyrants will rule, and biblical floods will wipe out most people. Yet he offers them hope in addition to depicting the suffering that future humans will endure: he shows Adam a rainbow meant to reflect God's mercy and biblical characters such as Noah, Enoch, and Jesus—men who will redeem humanity through their selfless acts. Adam and Eve finally leave Paradise, accepting their fate.

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# Plot Diagram




## Introduction

1. The author begins to tell the story of the fall of humanity.

## Rising Action

2. Satan and rebel angels fight against God and loyal angels.

3. After the battle Satan and rebel angels are in Hell.

4. In revenge, devils plot to corrupt humankind.

5. Satan flies to Earth to carry out plan.

6. God calls council of angels to tell about Satan's plan.

7. The Son offers to sacrifice himself for human redemption.

8. Satan tricks his way into Garden of Eden.

9. Satan sees Adam and Eve in Garden of Eden.

10. Archangel Raphael warns Adam and Eve about Satan's plan.

## Climax

11. Satan tempts Adam and Eve to eat forbidden fruit.

## Falling Action

12. God is angry because of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

13. God orders punishment of pain and death for all humans.

14. Archangel Michael shows a vision of redemption with Christ.

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## Resolution

15. Adam and Eve are forced from the Garden of Eden.

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# Timeline of Events

### Days 1–3

The battle occurs in Heaven.

### Days 4–12

Satan and rebel angels are thrown into Hell.

### Days 13–16

Satan and devils lie on the lake of fire.

### Day 17

God begins six days of creation.

### Days 17–21

Lake of fire action continues.

### Day 22

Adam and Eve are created.

### Day 22

Devils are in council in Hell; Satan flies to Garden of Eden.

### Day 22

"Exaltation" of the Son occurs.

### Day 22

Satan is unsuccessful in tempting Eve while asleep.

### Day 23

Raphael warns Adam about Satan's plans and tells about the war in Heaven.

### Day 29

Temptation and fall of Adam and Eve occur.

### Day 29

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Sin and death show up in Paradise.

### Day 31

Archangel Michael reveals future events and promises a Messiah.

### Day 29

Order of the heavens and nature becomes disorder.

### Day 31

Michael orders Adam and Eve out of Paradise.

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# Book Summaries

## Book 1

### Summary

Book 1 begins with a prologue in which Milton states the purpose of *Paradise Lost:* to justify the ways of God to humans and to tell the story of their fall. Following the epic tradition, Milton invokes a heavenly muse to help him tell the tale. The muse he calls upon is the same one who inspired Moses to write part of the Bible, he claims. Milton uses the gift of the muse to explain what led to the fall of man, and he introduces the character of Satan, a former great angel in Heaven known as Lucifer. Satan tried to overthrow God's rule and banded together with other rebel angels to begin a civil war. They were defeated by God and cast out of Heaven and into Hell.

The story begins with Satan and the other rebel angels waking up to find themselves floating on a lake of fire in Hell, transformed into devils. Upset, Satan gathers the fallen angels together. They work to build a capital in Hell for themselves, Pandemonium, and form a council to debate waging more warfare against God. Satan and the other angels don't seem to recognize that it is only through God's permission that they were able to loosen the chains that bound them upon their arrival in Hell. God allowed it because he is all-knowing and all-seeing and intends to change their evil intentions into goodness.

### Analysis

Greek epics involved heroes, wars, and heroic acts. They usually began with the writer invoking a muse as his guide. By invoking a muse that inspired Moses, Milton places *Paradise Lost* in the same epic category as religious texts and signals that he is writing an epic in the tradition of the ancient Greeks. Milton echoes and mimics earlier Greek epics in a few ways. His lengthy introduction and naming of all of the fallen angels in Hell resembles an epic catalogue, a long list of soldiers found in epics like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey.* Further, Milton portrays Satan as a military leader who assembles and commands his troop of fallen angels. This is similar to the ancient Greek epics that glorified war heroes and serves to paint Satan as a kind of idealized protagonist.

But rather than tell the tales of heroic men, Milton is dealing with issues of Heaven and Hell, God and Satan, and the fall of man. He also draws a distinct parallel between Satan's rebellion against God and man's disobedience to God.

By beginning *Paradise Lost* with a focus on Satan, Milton sets him up as the possible protagonist of the book rather than the antagonist. Though Satan realizes he has been defeated in his battle against God, his sense of pride doesn't allow him to ask God for forgiveness and reentrance into Heaven. Here, Milton hints at the idea that even though Satan thinks he has control of his own life and decisions, God is always one step ahead of his creations. Milton never makes clear if he wants his audience to empathize with Satan, but making him the hero of the epic would have been a risky decision in Milton's Christian era. Milton's audience would have been more likely to understand the complete power God had over Satan and that his battle was doomed to be futile. Contemporary audiences are more likely to see Satan as the sympathetic underdog of the story and to see God as rigid and unfeeling.

## Book 2

### Summary

With Satan sitting on an elaborate throne, the council convenes to debate the next move. One devil, Moloch, makes the case for an all-out war against God and Heaven, arguing that they have nothing to lose because they are already in Hell. Another devil, Belial, disagrees, suggesting that they do nothing. He believes that God may eventually become less angry and dispense with their suffering. Mammon, a third devil, says that trying to return to Heaven would be useless. He suggests that they make Hell a domain that would be comparable to Heaven. Finally Beelzebub, Satan's second-in-command, suggests that the devils find God's new world and either conquer it for themselves or corrupt its inhabitants, mankind. The idea is actually Satan's, but he has Beelzebub suggest it so that he can volunteer and look heroic to the other devils. The council agrees and decides to use God's new creation, man, as a tool in their war. Satan sets out to find the new world where man resides. He flies out of the Gates of Hell

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with the help of his children, Death and Sin.

On the other side of the Gates of Hell are Chaos and Night, the "dark materials" that God uses to create worlds. They give him directions to Earth after Satan promises to turn the universe back over to them to control. Satan approaches Earth with God watching him all the while. Even though God has ordained that man has free will, he knows that Satan will succeed in corrupting man. God warns that although man can be saved, he must accept that death is a just punishment for his sins.

## Analysis

Milton continues his allusions to Satan as a military commander when he shows the council of devils debating strategies to defeat God. Though they seem to have an orderly debate, none realize that Satan has already decided what will be done: he is letting them believe they have some kind of say in the matter. It's possible that Milton is satirizing what he saw as the corruptness and ineffectualness of politics here—that under the illusion of orderly proceedings and polite discussion, puppet strings are secretly being pulled by those in power. Satan is also compared to a Persian or Indian ruler in an implicit criticism of monarchy; because God is the only true king, Satan's rich throne indicates the empty, corrupt splendor of all earthly kings.

By focusing on the complaints of the devils, Milton continues to portray them as sympathetic; they are forced to do God's bidding without any say in the matter and without really understanding that God knows and controls the outcome of everything. This relates to the epic's overall theme of fate and free will, since Satan believes that God restricts his ability to be free. Yet Satan does not seem to question why, if God rules every action and has prior knowledge, he would be "allowed" to leave Hell and fly to Earth to corrupt God's new creation.

Sin, Death, Chaos, and Night are all literal characters in *Paradise Lost* as well as allegories—they represent a larger concept. Through the characters of Sin and Death, Milton seems to be suggesting that sin and death arise from disobeying God's wishes. Satan creates Sin from his mind after becoming jealous of the Son, and so Sin becomes both an idea and a character. By colluding with Satan, Death and Chaos help bring the concepts of sin and death into the earthly world.

# Book 3

## Summary

Milton again invokes his heavenly muse at the beginning of Book 3. He asks for her guidance in helping him to describe God and Heaven and compares himself to the blind Greek epic poet Homer and the blind prophets Phineas and Tiresias. Book 3 shifts from the newly erected Pandemonium in Hell to God's court in Heaven. God watches as Satan approaches Earth and calls together his heavenly council. God is all-seeing and all-knowing, so he knows that man will ultimately be corrupted by Satan. However, since God imbued man with the free will required to resist Satan's temptation, man's downfall will be his own fault. Though God already knows the past, present, and future outcome of all things, he says that nothing is predestined; knowing what happens does not mean that he controls it. God decides that he will ultimately offer man the chance for redemption but that somebody will have to die in his place for the sins he commits. The Son offers himself as a sacrifice for man's sins in order to balance the scales of divine justice. God is pleased to hear this and says that even though humanity will suffer because of man's choices, humans will also be redeemed through the Son's act of sacrifice.

Satan arrives at the borders of Earth and encounters a staircase to Heaven. There he encounters the angel Uriel and quickly disguises himself as an angel. He tells Uriel that he has come down from Heaven to see the new world God has created. Uriel gives the disguised Satan directions to enter Paradise, where man resides.

## Analysis

Milton's religious beliefs led him to reject the Christian belief of predestination: the notion that God had already predestined all of man's actions. Milton believed that even though God could see the past, present, and future, he endowed humans with the free will to make their own choices inside of that foreknowledge. Milton's God argues that if he did not endow humankind with free will, then they would be unable to choose to be obedient to him and therefore would not truly love or worship him of their own free will. Essentially, God says that knowing what man will do does not mean that he is the cause of man's actions. For readers of *Paradise Lost*, these

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distinctions seem tricky and even contradictory, since it is difficult to conceptualize that God knows the future, including his own actions, and yet is not responsible for future events.

Although God has not preordained the fall of man, he still knows that it will happen, and so he can plan to create good out of Satan's evil plans. Even though we see God and Satan in the same section here, the contrast of the passiveness of God and the determination of Satan continues to pit Satan as the unlikely protagonist of the story.

Conceptualizing the unique characters of God and the Son is difficult. It might be easier to imagine God as pure spirit and the Son as a more material form who can carry out God's plans. To complicate things further, the Son is also considered to be Jesus, who is a separate figure from God. Milton treats God and the Son as separate characters, rather than as the same entity.

# Book 4

## Summary

Now that Satan has gained entrance to Paradise, he stands on a nearby mountain and views it for the first time. He has a moment of doubt as he beholds its beauty and pristine landscape. He thinks about his relationship with God, who had only shown him kindness and fairness until he rebelled. He laments the fact that God had made him a powerful angel in Heaven, because it gave him the yearning for more power. Satan considers repenting to God but still feels too bitter over everything that has transpired for it to be an honest confession. He also realizes that because he lives separated from God and thus in despair, he is unable to escape Hell even in this new Paradise. Hell is in his mind.

Newly determined, Satan recommits to his plan to corrupt man and overthrow good with evil. Satan enters Paradise and disguises himself as a bird, roosting in a tree in the Garden of Eden. From his perch he notices two beings that look different from all the other animals in the Garden. He watches them eat and drink and is filled with envy and rage. Satan experiences another pang of guilt as he contemplates what he is about to do to these two humans, but his resolution to corrupt them remains. He leaves the tree and approaches them.

The story shifts to Adam and Eve, who are discussing how blessed they feel to be in the Garden and how they must remain obedient to God's order that they not eat any fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam and Eve have no concept of death, but they agree that it must be bad and they know they will suffer it if they disobey God. Eve recalls how she first met Adam and the story of her earliest understanding of being alive. She describes encountering her reflection in a pond without realizing she is seeing herself. She remembers initially turning away from Adam when she met him because she found herself more beautiful. As Satan eavesdrops on them, he is filled with jealousy at their happiness. He decides to use the Tree of Knowledge as the tool of his corruption because God has forbidden it.

Uriel has been watching the disguised Satan from afar and realizes that he has been fooled. He tells one of the guardian archangels of Eden, Gabriel, that he suspects a fallen angel has entered Paradise. Gabriel sends two angels to search for the being that Uriel described, and they find Satan disguised as a toad. They force him to shape-shift back into his true form, and they bring him to Gabriel, who recognizes him as Satan. Gabriel questions him, and Satan tries to lie about his motives. Gabriel sees through him and tells Satan he will bring him back to Hell and seal the gates so he can never leave. They prepare to battle each other, but God puts a stop to it, sending up a pair of Golden Scales in the sky. The scales show that if Satan tries to fight, he will be defeated. Convinced that he would be on the losing end of a battle, Satan leaves for Hell.

## Analysis

Because Satan ultimately refuses to repent to God, all that is left for him is suffering and Hell; he remains determined to spread that suffering to God's new world. Even though Satan is moved by the beauty of Paradise and the innocence of Adam and Eve, seeing what he can no longer attain moves him to recommit to his plan of corruption. Milton again shows Satan as a somewhat sympathetic character, afflicted by envy and doubt. It's no coincidence that this is also the first time that the reader has access to Satan's internal thoughts, which conflict with his outward displays of confidence and hubris. The idea that Hell can exist in Satan's mind as well as being an actual place is an important concept; after Adam and Eve are told that they must leave Paradise, the archangel Michael assures them that Paradise is not just a physical location, but a state of mind that they can find within themselves.

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The Tree of Knowledge and God's command that Adam and Eve not eat from it suggests the connection between ignorance and innocence. Adam and Eve are so ignorant that they don't even understand the concept of their punishment: death.

Eve's story of coming into existence and learning about her origin reflects the prevailing beliefs about women during Milton's time that women were inferior to men. Milton portrays Eve as vain when she gets caught up in her own reflection and is unable to recognize Adam's superiority when she first sees him. Milton argues that Adam is in communication with God while Eve primarily experiences God indirectly through her love of Adam. In Satan's eyes this makes Eve the easier target of his temptation. However, it is important that Milton explicitly says that Adam and Eve, as a married couple, have a physical relationship and that there is nothing implicitly evil or corrupt about sex.

God's interference in the conflict between Satan and Gabriel shows what power he has over everything—a power that Satan recognizes—causing him to flee rather than stay and battle Gabriel.

# Book 5

## Summary

After Adam and Eve wake up the next morning, Eve recalls a dream she has had in which an angel told her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. She explains the dream to Adam: In the dream, the angel offers her a piece of fruit and she hesitates. The angel tells her that if she eats the fruit she will become godlike. Eve says she awoke before she could eat the fruit. After Eve relates the dream, Adam reassures her that she did nothing wrong and that she has remained obedient to God.

God watches Adam and Eve from Heaven and sighs to the archangel Raphael that he knows they will ultimately give in to their temptation to eat the fruit. He sends Raphael to visit them in Eden, where Raphael reminds them that they must obey God even though free will gives them the choice to disobey him. Raphael tells Adam and Eve about Satan's rebellion in Heaven, which began with Satan's jealousy toward the Son, who would become King of the Angels. In preparation to fight God, Satan gathered all the angels under his command and attempted to trick them into following him away from the rule of God and the Son. They all agreed to follow Satan except for Abdiel, who tried to convince them to repent and remain in Heaven. They mocked him, and Abdiel alone returned to God.

## Analysis

Adam and Eve are right to be troubled by Eve's dream, for it's unlikely that she would have come up with the idea of disobeying God on her own. But Eve has committed no sin; the temptation came from Satan, not her own inclination. Yet the dream is still a foreshadowing and plants a seed of uneasiness in both Adam and Eve, though the reader already knows how it will end. In this way the reader has the same vantage point as God, able to see the future outcome as well as past actions that will result in their disobedience. And as much as either God or the reader would like to prevent disobedience, free will dictates that only Adam and Eve could have prevented it.

Raphael's meeting with Adam and Eve heightens the inevitable tragedy that will befall them, since Raphael is there to explain that they have free will and so any choice to give in to temptation will be their error. It is ironic that Raphael is sent to provide them with knowledge about their own ignorance, which should help them resist temptation. In the end, the irony is evident in that Adam and Eve know what will happen if they give in to temptation but do it anyway.

There's a political parallel between Satan's rebellion in Heaven against what he sees as God's tyranny and Milton's view of the English monarchy as a tyrannical power. Yet Milton uses the angel Abdiel as the lone voice justifying the ways of God and, as such, seems to be suggesting that God's rule is rightful and just.

# Book 6

## Summary

Raphael continues to tell Adam the story of Satan's rebellion in Heaven. Raphael says that after the rebellion, Abdiel returned to God and the other angels who did not follow Satan and that God praised him for his loyalty. Then God put together his own army of angels, though he is careful to ensure that it does not outnumber Satan's army of rebels. The battle between the

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armies began, and the rebels were ultimately forced into Hell by the Son.

Raphael tells Adam that the loss of the battle by Satan means that Satan now wants to corrupt man, since man is God's newest and most prized creation. He warns Adam not to give in to temptation, since that would be to disobey God.

## Analysis

Although Milton is critical of other epic poets for only writing stories about war, Milton lines up *Paradise Lost* yet again with the ancient Greek epics, depicting armies in deep battle with gains and losses on both sides. The difference here is that angels cannot be killed, only wounded, and therefore the battle could go on forever. God is even able to stop the battle when he decides it has gone on long enough—and he never even gets involved, otherwise. Satan and the other rebel angels never seem to realize how futile their battle ultimately is, given God's omnipotence.

It's possible that something is lost in Raphael's "translation" of Heaven to Adam. He explains to Adam that he can only describe Heaven in metaphors that Adam might understand. Otherwise Adam wouldn't be able to grasp the concept of Heaven. This explains why he describes "arming" battalions of immortal angels, an idea that seems somewhat silly given that they can't actually die. This serves to make the battle seem almost boring to the modern reader, who knows that nothing terrible or dramatic will befall any of the angels, since they can heal almost instantly. Similarly, Satan's belief that a cannon could destroy God's angels seems ridiculous—they are still immortal.

Raphael's larger point to Adam seems to be that even though Satan and the other fallen angels rebelled, they were never an actual threat to God or Heaven. Raphael wants Adam to see that even if disobeying God feels like a powerful choice, power is only an illusion. God can do what he wants whenever he wants.

# Book 7

## Summary

Milton invokes the muse Urania, possibly different from the "heavenly muse" he invoked in Book 1, to help him continue his story. Back in Eden, Raphael tells Adam about God's creation of the new world and that he created it as a reaction against Satan's rebellion. He decided to populate the new world with mankind, a new kind of being that, unlike the angels, has to grow in goodness and virtue over time in order to enter Heaven. God's aim was to unite the new world with Heaven through mankind's obedience and love.

## Analysis

Milton invokes Urania, the Greek Muse of Astronomy, and as Raphael begins to tell the tale of the creation of Earth, her invocation seems appropriate. Milton's use of biblical references in telling the story of the creation of Earth reflects the seriousness with which he wants readers to consider his story. Readers in Milton's time would have been very familiar with this section of the Bible, known as Genesis, and the technique of incorporating familiar biblical details makes Milton's account seem more credible.

This Book also serves to show Adam's innate curiosity about his origins and his uncertainty about what God allows him to know. This curiosity foreshadows Adam's temptation to know more through eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Although the Bible says that God created Earth, Milton places an emphasis on the actions of the Son, who is another dimension of God through which God carries out actions. Even though Milton depicts them as separate characters, their actions and thoughts come from the same being.

# Book 8

## Summary

Raphael and Adam continue their conversation about the creation of Earth, and Adam puzzles over the relationship between planets and the heavens. Raphael tells Adam that God has purposely made some things about the universe a mystery and that Adam should be content with the knowledge

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that God allows him to have.

Adam tells Raphael his first recollections as man and how he didn't know who he was or how he came to be. In a dream he saw the vision of the Garden of Eden, and when he woke up God spoke to him and warned him against eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam asked God for a companion, and after trying unsuccessfully to make Adam content with an animal companion, God created Eve from Adam's rib. Adam fell in love with her immediately. He tells Raphael that he finds Eve so wise and complete in herself that he has difficulty seeing her as inferior to him. Raphael accuses him of being too dazzled by Eve's beauty and departs Adam with a final warning about falling for Satan's temptations and disobeying God.

## Analysis

This book further shows Adam's growing curiosity about his place in the world and what happens beyond Paradise. In relaying Raphael's explanation about the movement of the planets and stars, Milton shows some of the prevailing astronomical beliefs of his era but uses them largely to make the point that scientists shouldn't question the mysterious workings of God.

Adam and Eve have different memories about their first moments of consciousness that demonstrate their inherent differences. Eve is obsessed with her own reflection while Adam observes the world around him and directly communicates with God. Here Milton is showing that Adam is closer to God than is Eve.

Adam's unabashed adoration and love of Eve foreshadows their fall: He is willing to do anything to be with her. His usual logical and rational thinking is blinded when it comes to thoughts of Eve; this is Adam's greatest flaw that Satan can exploit.

# Book 9

## Summary

Book 9 details the climax of Adam and Eve's story, the fall of man. The story begins with Satan, who has been in hiding after being banished from the Garden of Eden. Satan sneaks back into the Garden disguised as a mist. Once inside the Garden, he transforms into a snake. He experiences one final moment of hesitation over what he's about to do to Adam and Eve, but his resentment of them prompts him to continue.

Adam and Eve arise in the morning and argue over whether to work in the Garden together or separately. Adam experiences a sense of foreboding at Eve's suggestion that they work separately, believing that they are more likely to give in to temptation if they aren't by each others' side. However, Eve points out that there is a lot of work to be done and argues that she can't really be considered virtuous if she is always being protected and her virtue is never actually tested. So they separate, unaware that this will be their last innocent experience together in the Garden.

Satan finds Eve alone and speaks to her in the form of a serpent. Eve asks him how he learned to speak, and Satan tells her about eating fruit that gave him the power to speak and understand everything. He offers to show her where to find the fruit and leads her to the Tree of Knowledge. Eve recognizes it as the tree from which God has forbidden her and Adam to eat. Satan tries to persuade her that the knowledge the fruit gave him revealed that Eve should, in fact, disobey God to show Him that she is able to think for herself. Satan points out that he ate from the tree and is still alive. He reassures Eve that God would never punish her for something as trivial as eating fruit. Satan also flatters Eve, saying that if she eats the fruit, it is likely that she will gain the knowledge required to become a goddess.

Eve considers Satan's argument and takes into account that the snake ate it and did not die. She's tempted by the fruit's beauty and taste, and, attracted by the idea of having greater knowledge and intelligence, she finally takes a bite. Satan slithers away into the forest, and Eve continues to feast on the fruit. Eve considers offering Adam some of the fruit because she believes that eating it has raised her up to his level and she treasures the idea of being his equal. Eventually she decides to share the fruit since if she must die for her disobedience, she wants Adam to die with her. She finds Adam and explains what has happened and how she came to eat the fruit. Adam is shocked and upset but resolves to eat the fruit as well because he does not want to live without Eve. He eats the fruit, and he and Eve consummate their newfound knowledge, having sex because of physical lust rather than marital love. They wake later only to lament what they have done and feel shame. They begin to fight, blaming each other for what has

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transpired.

## Analysis

Milton describes the unfolding events in Book 9 as a tragedy, and he means not only that what happens to Adam and Eve is tragic, but also that *Paradise Lost* itself should be considered a work of tragedy along the same lines as the epic tragedies that preceded it. Milton believed that *Paradise Lost* should be considered the most epic tragedy of all because it is about the downfall of humankind. In classical terms, a tragedy involves a character of high status who has an error in his or her character called a tragic flaw. This flaw leads to the downfall of the character or characters. In a work of tragedy, the punishment of the downfall must exceed the crime and lead the audience to pity the outcome. In *Paradise Lost*, the tragedy is that both Adam and Eve have tragic flaws and their flaws lead not only to their downfall, but to the downfall of the human race.

Satan's logic about God seems to have degenerated since the beginning of *Paradise Lost*. He doubts whether God even created angels and believes that God is trying to get revenge on him with the creation of man. Satan appears to believe his own version of events, but rather than having independent and appealing logic of his own, he simply seems delusional. Milton shows here that the free will that God has endowed creatures with can be a double-edged sword, turning their minds into their own worst enemies.

Satan's tempting of Eve plays into the sense of narcissism that found her staring at her own reflection when she was created. He flatters her and tells her how beautiful she is, how like a goddess, and this approach holds her attention. The fact that Eve is tempted to keep the fruit to herself rather than sharing with Adam shows her changing way of thinking: she is beginning to lose her innocence and keep secrets, even hoping to manipulate Adam into loving her more. Even though she decides to share the fruit with Adam, her reasons are selfish: she doesn't want Adam to be with another woman if she dies. Adam's choice to eat the fruit is not motivated by the same reasons as Eve's; his desire is to stay with her no matter the cost. In this way he places Eve over God—valuing her too much, as Raphael warned him—which is a sin of disobedience.

# Book 10

## Summary

God knows instantly that Adam and Eve have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. He reassures the guardian angels of Paradise that it was he who allowed Satan to sneak in, because he does not control Satan or Adam or Eve—they have free will. The Son is sent to Paradise to give God's judgment to Adam and Eve. The Son has offered to sacrifice himself on mankind's behalf for the sins of Adam and Eve, and he travels to the Garden of Eden to find them. He calls them out of hiding, and they are ashamed. The Son asks them about eating from the Tree of Knowledge, and Adam admits that while Eve ate it first, he did not refuse when she offered it to him. The Son points out that Adam placed Eve above God, obeying his wife rather than divine command. Eve tells the Son that she was tempted into eating from the Tree of Knowledge by a serpent, and so the Son condemns the serpent to always slither on the ground rather than walk upright. The Son also tells Adam that all his descendants will be punished by having to toil for their food, and he tells Eve that as a consequence of her disobedience she and all her descendants will be forced to suffer pain in childbirth and, as a lesson for not listening to Adam, will be forced to submit to their husbands.

As Satan leaves Paradise he is greeted by his children, Sin and Death, who have built a bridge from Hell to Earth in anticipation of the fall and its possibility for corruption. Satan is pleased and sends them along to Earth to continue his work. Their entrance on Earth changes it, introducing the concepts of sin and death to man. Satan returns to Hell and announces to his followers that his mission was a success and that he has effectively corrupted God's new creation. Before his followers can congratulate him they turn into snakes along with Satan as punishment from the Son.

God is upset at the effect that Sin and Death have on his new creation but realizes that he will have to let them stay because he cannot interfere with free will. However, he decrees that when Judgment Day arrives, they will be sent back to Hell. God then commands his angels to change the new world to reflect the fall of mankind, making its weather less pleasant and creating discord among animals and man. Adam and Eve notice the difference in their world and are upset; they don't understand why their descendants must be punished as well.

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They argue but ultimately agree to stop fighting about who is at fault. They both ask God to forgive them.

## Analysis

Book 10 is the last book in which many of the main characters appear; Satan, his children, and the devils are gone in the rest of the epic. The Son's handling of the punishment of Adam and Eve is not cruel, as he tries to explain God's rationale for why it must happen. He even provides them with clothes because they have felt shame since the fall. Through these acts God shows that he is a kind ruler of man rather than an unjust punisher. This is the culmination of Milton's stated intention in telling the story of *Paradise Lost*, to justify the ways of God to man.

The bridge from Hell to Earth creates an easier path for Satan and his followers to tempt man into Hell, while the stairway to Heaven has been removed, making its entrance more difficult for man. God's removal of the stairway is also meant to show that God is changing the new world to reflect the fall of man. Eve's forced subjugation to Adam also reflects a situational irony: where she hoped to be his equal, she is now doomed forever to be subordinate.

Satan soon realizes that he has not escaped God's punishment, since he and his followers are turned into snakes, and God also chooses a punishment to fit the crime: for them to always desire fruit that turns to ashes when bitten into. Yet God makes a distinction between Satan's punishment and man's punishment: since Adam and Eve ask for forgiveness, God will be merciful to them, while Satan and his followers are doomed forever because they are incapable of feeling sorrow.

# Book 11

## Summary

God hears the prayers for forgiveness from Adam and Eve, and the Son convinces God to show them mercy. He also reminds God that he will sacrifice himself in death for their sins. God compromises by saying that although they will be punished, if they behave then they can live in Heaven after death. He sends the archangel Michael to remove Adam and Eve from Paradise. They are shocked by this announcement and worried that they will not be able to speak with God if they leave. They are comforted when Michael tells them that they can talk to God from anywhere, anytime.

After putting Eve into an enchanted sleep Michael shows Adam a vision of his future generations, beginning with the murder of his son Abel by his other son Cain. Adam is upset by this and by the knowledge of all the future suffering and death his offspring will face. Michael shows Adam another vision of his future generations, and this time the caution is about the temptation and desire of women. The final vision he shows Adam is of the story of Noah, who along with his family and animals is the only survivor of a deadly flood that God sends the world as punishment. Adam feels anguish over what he sees because he has caused this pain and has no way to change it. Adam is shown one final image of a rainbow, and he is heartened that his offspring will continue to survive through Noah.

## Analysis

The visions that Michael shows Adam are meant to inform him of the balance between man's capacity for sin and and his capacity for obedience. Michael is careful to encourage Adam and show him hope so he is not overwhelmed with despair. The visions are also a continuation of Milton's justification of the ways of God to human beings, since they show the rationale for God's punishment but also his capacity for renewing hope at times of despair. Despair is what corrupted Satan and made it impossible for him to repent, and God wants to ensure that Adam and Eve do not fall prey to it.

The stories of Enoch and Noah echo the story of Abdiel, the rebel angel who returned to God after turning his back on Satan. With these stories God wants to paint a portrait of those who follow their moral compass, even if they are the only ones willing to stand up for their beliefs in what is right and just. Milton uses these stories to strengthen his argument justifying the ways of God to men, since he had not yet fully explained why Adam and Eve's future generations would suffer so greatly for their one-time sin. With the visions presented, Adam's understanding of the effect of his sin, and why the consequences are necessary, deepens. God is saying that individual humans' actions have wider and more far-reaching effects than they can imagine.

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# Book 12

## Summary

Archangel Michael continues telling Adam about the future with the story of Nimrod. Nimrod was a tyrant who challenged God's knowledge when he ordered his citizens to build a tower in an attempt to reach Heaven. This disobedience led God to interfere and stop the tower from being built. He also punished humans by forcing them to speak different languages, when they had previously communicated easily in one tongue. Michael also tells Adam the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. Moses invents laws as interpreted from commandments by God, and Michael tells Adam that man needs these laws because otherwise they do not know how to behave justly.

Michael also tells Adam how the Son will be transformed into the human being Jesus and will ultimately die for the sins of man. Jesus will then rise from the dead, overcoming Satan's corruption. The risen Jesus will spread the message to mankind that if they are obedient to God, they will be rewarded with an eternal afterlife in Heaven. Adam is relieved to hear this, as he had feared that death was the ultimate punishment. In a way, Adam sees this as a superior outcome to the alternative of never having sinned.

Michael finally escorts Adam and Eve out of Paradise, and they are reassured that they will still be able to be with God one day. They enter the new world.

## Analysis

In many ways Nimrod's disobedience of God echoes Satan's; he believes that he can trick God and attain knowledge that is not his to have. This sense of pride is a fatal flaw of both Nimrod and Satan. God shows that he will punish those who attempt to gain power that is not theirs to wield. Milton also draws a political parallel, inferring that while he sees God as a just ruler since he is fair and merciful, man is more easily corrupted and unable to wield power correctly.

Just as the actions of Adam and Eve are powerful enough to affect the lives of all humans throughout time, Jesus's sacrifice has the capacity to redeem them. Jesus is positioned as a counterpoint to Adam, as both Adam's fall and Jesus's redemption are essential components of humankind's relationship to God from then on. This is in keeping with Christian dogma, as Jesus is often called the New Adam or Second Adam.

Adam's epiphany that the fall is ultimately a good thing is poignant. Even though he has been shown all the suffering of future generations, he also sees that God is ultimately merciful to those who are repentant. Adam realizes that if there is no suffering or death, there is also no salvation or afterlife in Heaven. After glimpsing the scope of suffering and redemption, he is able to see the bigger picture and the ultimate good his fall has served for humankind.

## “ Quotes

*"The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. ... /Here we may reign secure, and in my choice/To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:/Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n."*

— Satan, Book 1

Satan is the leader of Hell. He would rather be in command of a place full of suffering and misery than to be God's servant in Heaven without his own independence.

*"So will fall,/He and his faithless progeny. Whose fault?/Whose but his own? Ingrate! He had of me/All he could have; I made him just and right,/Sufficient to have stood though free to fall."*

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— God, Book 3

God wants to make it known that even though he has knowledge of all future events, he has given his creatures free will over their own choices. Man is "free to fall," and God has made it this way so that man's choice to obey God comes from love, not powerlessness.

*"Though both/Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd;/For contemplation he, and valor form'd,/For softness she, and sweet attractive Grace,/He for God only, she for God in him."*

— Narrator, Book 4

Here the narrator compares Adam and Eve in order to show that they are not created as equals in the eyes of God. Eve is depicted as belonging to the inferior sex, weaker and less smart. Adam is seen as closer to God in his creation, while Eve was created out of Adam's rib, and so her connection to God is through Adam.

*"Be then his Love accursed; since love or hate,/To me alike, it deals eternal woe./Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will/Chose freely what it now so justly rues./Me miserable!—which way shall I fly/ Infinite wrath and infinite despair?/Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell."*

— Satan, Book 4

There is no happiness for Satan. The only mode he can operate in is wrath or despair, and whichever way he goes, he brings Hell with him, because Hell is a state of mind he now personifies.

*"This one, this easy charge, of all the trees/In Paradise that bear delicious fruit/So various, not to taste that only Tree/Of Knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life,/So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,/Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou know'st/God hath pronounced it death to taste that Tree."*

— Adam, Book 4

Adam reveals his innocence before the fall of man. He doesn't even know what death is but intuits that it is bad. The reader also sees his preoccupation with the Tree of Knowledge. Though he knows it is forbidden, he can't help thinking about it, and because death is hard for him to conceptualize, the punishment seems abstract.

*"Fair angelic Eve,/Partake thou also: happy though thou art,/Happier thou may'st be, worthier canst not be:/Taste this, and be henceforth among the Gods/Thyself a Goddess, not to Earth confined."*

— Satan, Book 5

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Here is Satan at his most corrupt: tempting Eve in a dream to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge by flattering her and promising her knowledge and godliness. He knows her vanity is her weakness and, therefore, the easiest way to manipulate her.

*"What surmounts the reach/Of human sense, I shall delineate so,/By likening spiritual to corporal forms,/As may express them best, though what if Earth/Be but the shadow of Heav'n, and things therein/Each to other like, more then on earth is thought?"*

— Raphael, Book 5

It is difficult to explain the goings-on of Heaven to someone like Adam, who has never experienced it. Here Raphael is saying that he will do his best to approximate in language that Adam can understand when he describes the battle between God's and Satan's armies in Heaven.

*"Joy thou/In what He gives to thee, this Paradise/And thy fair Eve; Heav'n is for thee too high/To know what passes there; be lowly wise:/Think only what concerns thee and thy being."*

— Raphael, Book 8

Raphael is advising Adam that too much knowledge is not necessarily a good thing; God has left some things a mystery to mankind on purpose. This sets up some of the curiosity that leads Adam and Eve to be tempted to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge—a curiosity that Milton implies is inherent in man.

*"Queen of this Universe, do not believe/Those rigid threats of death; ye shall not die:/How should ye? by the fruit? it gives you life/To knowledge; by the Threat'ner? look on me,/Me who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live."*

— Satan, Book 9

Finally Satan is able to confront Eve, and, having practiced his speech in her dream, he finally convinces her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. His logic and flattery appeals to her—he calls her "queen of the universe" and tells her that God is testing her independence. Also, Satan claims that he ate the fruit and did not die; therefore, Eve can eat it without dying.

*"What better can we do, than to the place/Repairing where he judg'd us, prostrate fall/Before him reverent, and there confess/Humbly our faults, and pardon beg, with tears/Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air/Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign/Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek."*

— Adam, Book 10

These lines depict the biggest difference between man and Satan. While Satan is firm in his disobedience and does not wish to repent to God for his mistakes, Adam and Eve realize they must repent so that God will be merciful to them and their

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offspring. Their assumption is correct—God is just and kind, and, while he still punishes them, he allows them into Heaven eternally after they die.

# Symbols

## Scales of God

While God rarely intercedes personally with his creatures—choosing instead to send intermediaries such as angels or the Son—he sends a powerful sign to Satan when he prepares to battle Gabriel in Paradise. God sends up a vision of scales in the sky, and on each side he depicts the outcome of Satan's actions. If Satan battles Gabriel, it will be pointless, but if he leaves, the consequences are less. In this way God demonstrates the ultimate power and knowledge he has over Satan and how pointless it is to try to outwit or go against him.

## Fruit from Tree of Knowledge

The fruit symbolizes the temptation to gain knowledge that only God should know. God forbids Adam and Eve from eating it, which makes them desire it even more. Satan ultimately tempts Eve into eating it first, and he uses flattery and deception to manipulate her desire. Adam eats it because of his love for Eve, and it causes both of them to fall from their innocent and ignorant state. To disobey God is to sin, and this is the first sin for which all future generations will be punished.

## Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden symbolizes the innocence and ignorance of Adam and Eve. It is a peaceful and bountiful place, full of gentle animals and food. Nothing bad ever happens, and Adam and Eve are happy there. Yet the Garden also contains the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, from which God has instructed Adam and Eve not to eat. This symbolizes that even in innocence temptation lurks, as does the potential for disobedience and sin. Once Adam and Eve disobey God, they are banished from the Garden, and the world around them changes to become more hostile. Though they have gained knowledge, they have lost innocence and access to the peaceful realm it inhabited.

# Themes

## Obedience and Disobedience

*Paradise Lost* is a cautionary tale: the characters in it can be categorized according to who is obedient to God and who is disobedient. Everyone's relationship to God depends on this factor, as do their punishments and rewards. Satan's rebellion is seen as the largest act of disobedience in the epic, followed closely by the fall of Adam and Eve. Milton infers that the order of the world depends on obedience to God, and so the punishment for disobedience is of equal and just proportion to the sin. To sin is to disobey God and to upset the balance of goodness in the world.

## Sin and Innocence

Milton depicts innocence in great detail, from the innocence of angels to the innocence of Adam and Eve in Paradise before the fall. Innocence is at the opposite end of the spectrum from sin, and for Adam and Eve it is closely connected to their ignorance. When Adam and Eve lose their innocence, it is because they disobey God's instructions and bring sin into the world. Once they have sinned, they can never be innocent again.

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## Fate and Free Will

*Paradise Lost* presents a puzzling conundrum: if God has knowledge of everything that has happened and will ever happen, and also possesses the power to change anything, do his creatures really have free will? Milton tries to make the case that God is careful not to influence his creatures but to leave their individual choices to them even when he can see the outcome. He does this because he wants all his creatures to obey him out of love form him, not because they are forced to.

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