CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Paradise Lost

John Milton · *1667; revised 1674 · original English text (modernized spelling)*

Milton retells the first disobedience: the rebellion of Satan, the creation and innocence of Adam and Eve, their fall, and God's promise of redemption through the Son. The poem sets out to "justify the ways of God to men" — and to show that grace is stronger than the ruin pride brings.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Why did free creatures fall — and how can a just God still save them?

"Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall."
God the Father · Book III, line 99

Satan's fall is pride that will not repent; man's fall is answered by the Son, who offers himself in man's place, and by grace that brings good out of evil.

KEY CHARACTERS

Satan
pride, envy, despair

God the Father
justice and foreknowledge

The Son
self-giving love

Adam
reason and love, then weakness

Eve
beauty, curiosity, the first to repent

Raphael
the teaching angel

Abdiel
faithful alone among the faithless

Michael
judgment and hope

Sin & Death
the offspring of rebellion

GRACE BEYOND THE FALL

"O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense! / That all this good of evil shall produce"
Adam to Michael · Book XII, lines 469–470

"A Paradise within thee, happier far."
Michael to Adam · Book XII, line 587

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
The Fallen Angels
BOOKS I–II
Pride rouses itself on the burning lake.

- The poet invokes the Heavenly Muse to tell of man's first disobedience
- **Satan** and the rebel angels lie defeated in Hell
- Satan rallies them; they build the palace **Pandemonium**
- In council the devils debate war, peace or revenge on God's new creature, man
- Satan volunteers to find the new world; at Hell's gate he meets **Sin** and **Death**

"The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."
Satan · Book I, lines 254–255

02
Heaven's Counsel
BOOK III
Justice and mercy meet in the Son.

- God foresees that man will fall, though made free and able to stand
- Justice requires death for the disobedient
- The **Son** offers himself to die in man's place
- The angels sing his praise
- Disguised as a young cherub, Satan deceives the angel Uriel and reaches the earth

"Behold me then: me for him, life for life / I offer: on me let thine anger fall; / Account me Man"
The Son to the Father · Book III, lines 236–238

03
Eden
BOOK IV
Innocence seen through the eyes of envy.

- Satan looks on paradise and admits his own despair
- **Adam** and **Eve** live in innocent love, labor and prayer
- Satan crouches like a toad at Eve's ear, whispering a dream
- The guardian angels find him and the cherub Zephon rebukes him
- Satan flees the garden

"Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell"
Satan, alone · Book IV, line 75

04
The Warning
BOOKS V–VIII
God sends a teacher so that man falls knowingly, not ignorantly.

- The archangel **Raphael** is sent to warn Adam
- He tells of **Abdiel**, the one angel who refused to join Satan's revolt
- The war in Heaven: the Son drives the rebels out
- Raphael recounts the six days of creation
- Adam tells of his own making and his first sight of Eve

"Heaven is for thee too high / To know what passes there; be lowly wise"
Raphael to Adam · Book VIII, lines 172–173

05
The Fall
BOOK IX
One choice, and all is changed.

- Satan enters the serpent
- Eve chooses to work apart from Adam that morning
- Flattered and persuaded, she eats the forbidden fruit
- Adam, not deceived but unwilling to lose her, eats as well
- Lust, shame and mutual blame follow

"Earth felt the wound; and Nature from her seat, / Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe, / That all was lost."
The narrator · Book IX, lines 782–784

06
Judgment and Hope
BOOKS X–XII
Sentence, repentance, and a promise.

- The Son judges Adam and Eve — and clothes them
- Satan returns in triumph, and his host is turned into hissing serpents
- Eve asks forgiveness first; together they repent in tears and prayer
- **Michael** shows Adam the history to come and the redemption in Christ
- Hand in hand, they leave Eden

"The world was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and Providence their guide"
The narrator · Book XII, lines 646–647

Obedience & Pride | Free Will | Justice & Mercy | Temptation | Repentance | Providence

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. Satan speaks the poem's most memorable lines. Watch what happens to his speeches, and his shape, from Book I to Book X.
2. Compare Satan's council in Book II with the council in Heaven in Book III. Who offers himself for others?
3. Note how Milton shows that the fall was free: Adam and Eve are warned, able, and responsible.
4. Read Eve's and Adam's choices in Book IX side by side. What does each love more than God in that moment?
5. Mark the first act of repentance in Book X, and who makes it.
6. Ask why the poem ends with exile and yet with hope.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text (modernized spelling), Project Gutenberg #26, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/paradise-lost/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.