



## Areopagitica

*John Milton (1737 - 1809)*

Read by: Thomas A. Copeland	Format: MP3 CD in DVD case, jewel case, or paper sleeve
Length: 2 hours 47 minutes	Catalog: DB-1268
Language: English	UPC: 0701236969887
Style: Solo	Genre: Essays & Short Works, Political Science
MSLP: \$9.99	

*Areopagitica*, subtitled *A speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England*, is an extended essay written in 1644 by English poet John Milton opposing licensing and censorship. It was published as a pamphlet at the height of the English Civil War on November 23 of that year, thus defying the Ordinance for the Regulation of Printing passed in 1643 by Parliament, which required authors to obtain a license from the government before the publication of any work. Written in five parts, it follows the form of a Classical oration and takes its name in part from Areopagitikos, a speech by Athenian orator Isocrates in the 4th century BC delivered from the Areopagus, a hill in Athens where councils and

tribunals met. Some believe it is also a reference to the defense given by St. Paul at the same Areopagus against charges of promoting foreign gods and false teachings, depicted in Acts 17:18-34. The issue was personal for Milton, as he had suffered censorship in his efforts to publish several tracts in defense of divorce, and his arguments are strengthened by his evident passion. *Areopagitica* is considered one of the most influential and important defenses of the principle of a right to freedom of speech and expression, as well as “the noblest and most extensive defense of freedom of the press in English”.

**John Milton** (December 9, 1608 – November 8, 1674) was an English poet and polemicist widely ranked as one of the “preeminent writers in the English language”. He was born in London to a prosperous family and was tutored privately before attending Cambridge. After graduating in 1632 he studied privately for six years and then traveled the European continent. He returned to England in 1639 to work as a private schoolmaster and launch a career as a pamphleteer as tensions were building towards the English Civil Wars. The desertion of his bride shortly after their marriage in 1642 prompted him to publish tracts on divorce; subsequent conflict with the authorities drove him to write *Areopagitica*. In 1649 he was appointed Secretary of Foreign Tongues for the Commonwealth of England, handling foreign correspondence in Latin and gaining recognition throughout Europe for his defense of the English people. He served in the position even after becoming totally blind until the Restoration in 1660, when he was arrested and briefly imprisoned before gaining release through the intervention of friends. He lived quietly in London thereafter. Recognition for his poetry came late; his early poetry was published anonymously except for a collection of poems in 1645. Highly literate, he wrote in Latin, Greek and Italian as well as English, coined numerous new English words from Latin and was the first to write non-rhymed verse outside a theatrical setting. The publication of *Paradise Lost* in 1667 brought him immediate renown as a major epic poet. He has been cited as important influence by many, among them Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, William Blake, William Wordsworth, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy.