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Paradise Lost

John Milton

Read by: Thomas A. Copeland Language: English
 Length: 10 hours and 55 minutes Style: Solo
 Genre: Poetry, Epics; Religion

Product Formats and Options				
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The story of Adam and Eve, the original human couple in the book of Genesis, is the story of mankind’s fall from Grace. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton elevates the story into an epic poem in blank verse that is a masterpiece of sound and rhythm considered by many as one of the greatest poems in the English language. It was first published in 1667 in ten books, with Books 7 and 10 consisting of two parts each, and modified in a second edition in 1674 to consist of twelve books. It draws on traditional classical form by beginning in the middle of the story, invoking the muse and posing the epic question, but the subject matter is quintessentially Christian. The main characters are God, Adam and Eve, and Lucifer (or Satan), who takes center stage in a powerful and sympathetic characterization that has prompted many critical essays. Romantic poets such as William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley saw Satan as the real hero and admired his rebellion against the tyranny of heaven. Milton’s theology here is subversive, and reflects his support for Puritan reformation of the church and a parallel belief in the republican commonwealth that followed the English Civil War. Samuel Johnson wrote that *Paradise Lost* shows off Milton’s “peculiar power to astonish” and that he “seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others: the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful.”

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John Milton (December 9, 1608 – November 8, 1674) was an English poet and polemicist widely ranked as one of the “pre-eminent 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.