

Intro to Paradise Lost

Author: John Milton

Written: 1658-1663 in London, England

Genre: Epic Poetry, Christian Mythology

Setting: Heaven, Hell, and Paradise (Earth)

Point of View: Third person omniscient

Paradise Lost is about Adam and Eve — how they came to be created and how they came to lose their place in Paradise. It's the same story found in the first pages of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, expanded by Milton into a very long, detailed, narrative poem. It also includes the origin story of Satan (in many ways, the tragic hero of the story). Originally, he was called Lucifer: a beautiful but prideful angel in heaven who led his followers in an unsuccessful war against God. Lucifer's thirst for revenge leads him to cause man's downfall by turning into a serpent and tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.

The poem's author, John Milton, was a radical Protestant Christian opposed to Catholicism and the Anglican Church that held power in England at the time. He also defended republicanism and was anti-monarchy; thus he supported Oliver Cromwell when he overthrew Charles I of the Stuart dynasty. *Paradise Lost* takes place in a mythic, prehistoric past, but Milton still filled it with allusions to the politics of present-day England.

There are a few brief (but very significant) allusions to this epic poem in *Frankenstein*. A cursory understanding of this narrative's plot and themes will be a big help in your time studying Shelley's novel.

Reading Assignment

- Sign up on the clipboard in class for one “book” (section) of Paradise Lost.
- Visit **paradiselost.org** which contains the poem and other resources
- Click on “SUMMARIES”, then “THE ARGUMENTS by JOHN MILTON”.
- Read the “arguments” (summaries) of all twelve books/sections.
- **Closely read the full text of your chosen/assigned book.**
 - You are only responsible for the details of your book.
 - That said, context is important for true comprehension.
- Use the various resources on the site to enhance your understanding.
- Prepare to verbally summarize the action of the plot in class.
- Prepare for some plot questions as part of the reading quiz.