

# Chapter - 7 Poems By Milton

## Understanding The Poem

### On Time

#### Question 1.

Why has the poet pitted the flight of Time against the 'lazy leaden-stepping hours' and 'the heavy Plummets pace'?

#### Answer:

In the poem, Milton states that humans can triumph over the destructive power of Time by attaining eternal life in heaven so Time is personified to be 'envious' of humans. He asks Time to flee since it will also face its own death while humans gain eternal bliss. The "lazy leaden-stepping hours" refers to a clock depicting the slow pace of time, measuring hours with "leaden" hands. Time's movement is compared to that of a "plummet" or a pendulum in a clock which moves slowly. Therefore, Time's movement is limited by a clock and bound to end with the end of human life but human soul can exist eternally.

#### Question 2.

What are the things associated with the temporal and what is associated with the eternal?

#### Answer:

In the poem, the things associated with the temporal are the earthly objects and human qualities which are attributed to Time. "Envious", "lazy", "womb", "greedy", "vain", "glut", "plummets", "leaden", "hours", and "mortal", "Death", "Chance" are the limitations of a human life seemingly enslaved by Time.

The things associated with the eternal are "Love", "Peace", "Truth", "Joy", "Throne", "soul", "Stars", which are attained in heaven.

#### Question 3.

What guides human souls towards divinity? Who is the final winner in the race against Time?

#### Answer:

In this poem. John Milton has thwarted the common conception of Time as moving too fast or too slowly, according to the individual's perception. Time is perceived as an intangible

entity which rules the lives of mortals but actually, it is just in the mind of the individual, but not imagined. Time is a recognized force that drives a person's lifespan forward, bringing inevitable change in every passing moment but they should not be affected by its influence. Time's wrath can only affect a person's life as long as he or she is alive, therefore its power is limited. Milton explains that we must realize that there is only one destination in the race against Time, i.e. Death. Time devours everything in our lifetime but it too must come to an end like everything else in the universe. Time's power ends when the human soul is released from its earthly abode and is guided by Death, to the realm of the divine, where eternal bliss is waiting, along with the joyful union with the Creator. Humans must, therefore, celebrate every moment of their life because, in the race against the "glut" and "greed" of Time, they will be the true victors.

## **Understanding The Poem**

### **On Shakespeare**

#### **Question 1.**

Why does Milton feel it is not necessary to put up a monument in stone for Shakespeare?

#### **Answer:**

Milton, in his poem, feels that it is not necessary to put up a monument in stone for Shakespeare because he had become immortalized in the hearts of his readers. He has built a monument for himself through his own works which flow easily and his readers receive his words as one would receive the words of God. Therefore, his words create an everlasting memory in the minds of his readers.

#### **Question 2.**

What does the 'weak witness of thy name' refer to?

#### **Answer:**

"Weak witness" refers to the "pyramids" of stone which are not enough or required to honor the memory of the genius of Shakespeare. He has already built a more impressive and ever-lasting monument through his works (plays and sonnets) which are the witnesses of his memory. Kings and Pharaohs lack this 'monument'.

#### **Question 3.**

How does Milton describe Shakespeare as the source of inspiration for all succeeding generations of poets?

**Answer:**

Milton describes Shakespeare as the source of inspiration by stating that his words leave an ever-lasting impression on his readers. When one reads or listens to one line from a play or sonnet, they are awe-struck, and become spellbound and paralyzed with wonder. So they become marble statues in the tomb of Shakespeare, overcoming Time. These works even amaze future generations, passed on from the previous one.

**Question 4.**

What is the best tribute that posterity has bestowed on Shakespeare?

**Answer:**

As a tribute to Shakespeare's genius and natural talent, posterity or future generations have kept his memory alive in their hearts and minds. The works of Shakespeare are read, spoken, taught and celebrated amongst the greatest canons of English Literature. Lines from his plays and sonnets are quoted with everyday speech and used frequently as a reference in preparing various forms of writing and reading materials. Shakespeare's death anniversary is celebrated every year in Stratford-upon-Avon to pay tribute to this literary genius. Famous actors, playwrights, poets take to the stage to perform his plays and recite his sonnets. For instance, in 2016, to celebrate Bard's 400th death anniversary, a life-size installation, featuring over dozens of Shakespeare's famous creations handcrafted from paper and cardboard was displayed at an exhibition hosted by Birmingham City University, in the United Kingdom. In addition to it, BBC news correspondents around the world, in their own tribute to the Bard, one of his most famous passages: "All the world's a stage..." from the famous play As You Like It.