



INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE & OPEN LEARNING  
Gauhati University

HOME ASSIGNMENT  
M. A. ENGLISH  
( PREVIOUS – 2009-2010)

**Guidelines for Submission:**

1. Write your name, session, roll number, the topic selected and the title of the answer *clearly on the top*.
  2. Each of the two topics given in each paper will be answered as **two essays of *not more than 500 words each***. There will be negative marking for writing in excess of the word-limit.
  3. Each answer (essay) carries a weightage of **10 marks**. (10 marks x 2 essays = 20 marks)
  4. Keep a margin of about 1 inch on each side of the page.
  5. You can submit the essay written in your own hand-writing on clean, foolscap sheets, or A-4 sized paper.
  6. In case you prefer to submit type-written answers, make sure that there are no typing errors which will deduct from the overall impression.
  7. Do not submit commercially purchased answers as such a practice is deemed to be unfair.
  8. You are permitted to submit your assignment by 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2010. Please note that if you submit beyond the last date of submission, as mentioned in the IDOL prospectus i.e., after 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2010, it may not be considered.
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**Paper I – Literature & Social History**

Question/Topic I : Trace the history of the English language in the English Middle Ages.

Question/Topic II : Highlight the contributions of the University Wits to English literary history.

**Paper II – Poetry 1 : Chaucer to the Romantics**

Question/Topic I : Make a brief study of the structure and thematic pattern of the Shakespearean sonnet.

Question/Topic II : Analyse the significance of the images of the urban in the Romantic poetry prescribed for your study.

**Paper III – Drama**

Question/Topic I : Make a brief comparison of the portraits of women in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and in Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

Question/Topic II : Discuss briefly Pinter's use of "pauses" in relation to his conception of human communication.

**Paper IV – Non-fictional prose**

Question/Topic I : Comment on the structuring of Russell's *Autobiography*.

Question/Topic II : Comment on Johnson's *Lives* in the context of eighteenth-century ideas of language and taste.

**Paper V – Fiction : 18<sup>th</sup> century to the Victorian**

Question/Topic I : Trace the development in the figure of the protagonist from *Moll Flanders* to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

Question/Topic II : Briefly outline the idea of the 'narratee' in Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*.

AN EXAMPLE OF STUDENTS' WRITING AND THE EVALUATION

Topic: Milton and Satan

[General Comment: This answer was written originally as an essay for the assignment of twenty marks. It was also rated as one of the better answers than many others. The answer/essay can be shortened if we exclude repetitive descriptions of Milton's historical background. The student has tried to include different ideas. The connection between Milton and the character of Satan should have received much closer attention. That kind of focus will be much tighter in a shorter essay which will exclude much description. This essay shows originality in many ways and shows the writer's attempt to arrive at a clear conclusion. However, there is no proper conclusion. We have shaded those passages which contain various errors of grammar, spelling and style]

John Milton (1608-74) was a solitary and devoted figure of the seventeenth century. He was like a master and at times 'Vituperative protector of several general causes he selected to embrace. Milton was taken into account as an important poet after Shakespeare in the history of English literature.'

Comment: This description is inaccurate.

Milton wrote many pamphlets and poe-ms. He started his pamphleteering career with "Of Reformation touching Church-Discipline in England (1641)", "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1643), "Areopagitica (1644)" etc. and among poems he wrote 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity (1629), 'L' Allegro and II Penseroso (1631/32)', 'Lycidas (1637)', 'Paradise Lost (1667)' and 'Paradise Regained (1670)'.

Comment: List of works can be avoided in a short answer.

During the 17th century the revolutionary change that came over the national life of England was in the political field. The age old political convictions and conventions crumbled down in the 17th century and new democratic ideals grew up. King's theory of Divine Right began to be openly contested. The Parliament and the king, Charles I came into a precipitous conflict. The source of collision were 'complex'; Charles I and his father James I lacked the dexterous and pliancy of Queen Elizabeth in answering to the needs of the Parliament nor they looked after the rose of the commercial classes. King Charles I trusted that he had accomplished his duties as a king and permit his subordinate as much freedom as they had the ability to enjoy. He failed to understand the mental condition of his subordinate in both England and Scotland, which led to the civil conflict. The civil war came to an end in 1649 after the execution of the king under the leadership of Cronwell. Milton represented the indomitable intellectual force of the civilwar of England. He strongly protected the execution of the king, as a remuneration he was offered a post of Latin Secretary in the government of Cronwell. But in 1660 the scene of English politics took a reversed order. Charles II ascended the throne of England and with the restoration of the king, specially the puritan, who were responsible for Charles I execution were arrested and Prosecuted Milton was also arrested.

Comment: This background history need not be narrated in a short answer.

The religious condition of England also changed a lot. There was a revolt against the Anglican Church and the Anglican Archbishop, Laud. There was a rose and fell of the Anglican Church. Religion governed the personal and national life of people.

Comment: This can be written in a single line.

The religious and political debate in the middle of the 17th century, which divided the English nation, helped Milton to decide the direction of his career and change the shape of his literary ambitions.

Comment: In these two paragraphs stylistic errors have also led to errors of factual descriptions.

With the break down of his expectation for the development of determined protestant republic in 1660, Milton moved away apparently from political literature and had redirected his creative drove into a refined project for an epic poem in English. He wrote his famous epic poem the 'Paradise Lost', a volume of twelve boo-ks. The book was about 'man's first disobedience' and 'loss of Eden'. (English study Material, Paper 2, block 2, Pg. no. 29). Nevertheless, in its 'mammoth' stroke, it surrounded action began with Satan's 'revolt' against God for the expulsion of Adam and Eve from 'Paradise'.

Paradise Lost was based on Milton's cosmology. It contained Heaven, Chaos, Earth, and Hell. Before the fell of Satan there was Heaven and Chaos and instantly before the fell of Satan; "Hell was carved out of the nether most region of Chaos". (English Study Material paper-2, block,2, pg-37). There was a gate watched by Sin and Death. The world that was formed after Satan's 'expulsion' from Heaven was a sphere and there was no chaos. It was joined to the Heaven by a golden chain and golden staircase.

Comment: Such descriptions can be shortened.

Satan was one of the main character of 'Paradise Lost'. He was a fallen archangel and his companion were 'Beelzebub', 'Belial', 'Moloch', 'Mammon' and 'Raphael'. 'Paradise Lost' would lose its trust and vigour without 'Satan'. "Lascelles Abercrombie said, "It was surely the simple fact that 'Paradise Lost' existed only for one figure, that was Satan just as the Iliad existed for Achilles and the Odyssey for Odysseus". (BB Jain's Paradise Lost book II, Narain series, Pg. no. 151). Strength and courage was the key of his character. But Milton represented Satan as an embodiment Evil. But Milton represented Satan as an embodiment Evil. Satan could change his appearance. He changed himself to a rapacious bird of dark plumage, a lion and then a tiger, "among four-footed kind" (Jstore.org. Milton's Paradise Lost). He also changed his appearance as a toad and a biblical serpent. It was as a toad he tried to cheat Eve.

**Comment:** The quoted comments are too general to be of much significance.

**Comment:**

Milton unconsciously put of himself into Satan. Firstly, he presented Satan with his republicanism. Secondly Satan was given "courage never to submit or yield", and this was his own. While he asserted that he would "justify the ways of God to man", (BB Jain's, Paradise Lost book II, Narain's series, Pg. no. 157), he was unknowingly created Satan in his own image and justified the ways of Satan to God.

**Comment:** These statements are better at the end. Repetition only fills up space.

'Paradise Lost' faced lots of critical 'reception'. Most of the critics viewed that Satan was the hero of Paradise Lost however some of them also refused to it. 'Dryden' had accused Milton, for creating a wicked character, the hero of Paradise Lost. 'Saurat' has put forward the theory that Milton himself was the hero of the poem. Though Milton created Satan, he personally put himself into the struggle against Satan. It was Milton who 'exposes', 'denounces', 'condemns' and finally defeated Satan. According to Saurat Satan represented the evil in Milton himself and so he drove him out of the 'Paradise' of his heart. Keats called Paradise Lost a "corruption of our language". Keats also declared that "life to him (Milton) would be death to me." (Study Material, English, Paper 2, vol-2, pg. no. 32). Shelly discovered Milton's evil Spirit far more greater than his Milton's evil spirit far more greater than his God. During that time Hazlitt discovered "Satan the most heroic subject that ever was chosen for a poem". (Study Material, English, Paper 2, vol-2, pg. no. 32). Walter Raleigh viewed that Milton had closely applied Satan as the hero of the epic. Some others like Charles William opined that Satan was rather a fool than a hero.

**Comment:** This collection of critics' comments can be meaningful only if we 'weave' it into our own analysis.

But the most occupied debates were given by EMV Tillyard and CS Lewis. Tillyard said that the fact of the poem could be "known by knowing the true state of Milton's mind when he wrote it". (Study Material, English, Paper 2, vol-2, pg. no. 33. CS Lewis, commented that "Milton had laid down his "A Preface to Paradise Lost" is; till date, the "flag bearer of Miltonism". (Study Material, English, Paper 2, vol-2, pg. no. 32).

**Comment:** The quotations are not properly contextualized.

'Paradise Lost' tried to maintained the 'Virtue of Patience' not suffering, "Of enlightened learning not submissive ignorance". (Andrew Sanders, second ed. Pg. no. 234). It didn't simply viewed us Adam's being un-Paradised, but also about Adam's possessed of true humanity: 'mortal', 'suffering', (Andrew Sanders, second ed. Pg. no. 234) and his gaining of both elegance and freedom. Adam and Eve's going away from Paradise was sorrowful, but it also presented the view of a 'subjected' world which was 'all before them' and now they could choose their own home. Very recently, 'Paradise Lost' was put under colonialism.

**Comment:** This paragraph is not clearly connected with the argument.

'Paradise Regained' (1671) was a sequel to 'Paradise Lost'. It contained four books. It dealt only with one particular view of Christian story in four books. In 'Paradise Regained' Satan tried to tempted Christ in the Wilderness could be called a ritual "re-enactment of the Original fall". (David Daiches, vol. 2, pg-449). But Satan failed. Christ's opposition led to the defeat of Satan's evil plot. Christ faced the trick of Satan's "quasi hemo", 'Man not as God', (David Daiches, vol. 2, pg-449) and his joy was therefore released for Mankind. The state of Milton achievement in Paradise Lost did not matched by what was apparently gained by its successor 'Paradise Regained'. In spite of its title Paradise Regained didnot claimed the idea, that the release of human race joint on Christ's opposition to temptation in the Wilderness, "though a job-like patient submission to the will of God is clearly a dominant theme". (Andrew Sanders, second ed. Pg. no. 235).

**Comment:** This paragraph does not further the argument or does not agree with the topic.

Milton was a poet of Renaissance period and it was reflected in his writings. Milton expressed through Satan the true spirit of Renaissance. The Renaissance enforced insatiable thirst of knowledge, for adventure and exploration. It was this thirst that implied Satan in spite of all dangers and risks, to broke away from Hell and explored the newly created human world.

**Comment:** In the whole paragraph there are errors of style, grammar and reading.

Milton through this epic poem he conveyed the message that rise and fall was a part of human being life and only 'Fall' enriches the experience of human being's life.