

ON HIS BLINDNESS

John Milton

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674) was born in Bread Street, London on 9 December, 1608. He was a well known Puritan poet of the 17th century. It is widely acknowledged that he lost his eye-sight but developed his insight to the maximum. He composed L'Allegro and IL Penseroso (1632) Comus (1634), and Lycidas (1637). His great epic poems Paradise Lost (1667) and Paradise Regained along with the play Samson Agonistes were his highly thoughtful and evelasting creations. He was known for his grand style.



"On His Blindness" is a Petrarchan sonnet. The opening eight lines are called 'octave' whereas the concluding six lines are called 'sestet'. This sonnet deals with his mental condition when he was deprived of his eye-sight.

A. Work in small groups and discuss these questions:

1. How is a visually challenged person socially recognised?
2. Discuss the modes and manners of a man who is unable to see the world.
3. Point out the feelings and emotions of a man who has lost his/her eye-sight.

ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He, returning, chide;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask: but Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
 Either man's work, or His own gifts; who best
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state
 Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
 They also serve who only stand and wait.'

B. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What is meant by 'my light is spent'?
2. Why is the world 'dark and wide' to the poet?
3. Who is the 'Maker' in this sonnet?
4. Is God a hard task master?
5. Does God require His appreciation?
6. Is Milton afraid of the Almighty?
7. Discuss the meaning of the closing line, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

consider (v): think

e're : before

talent (n): a natural ability to be good at something

Puritan (n): a member of an English religious group in the 16th and 17th centuries.

hide (v): conceal

lodg'd (v): lived, resided.

bent (v): past form of 'bend', to (cause to) curve

least (adj): the superlative form of little

chide (v): scold

denied (v): refused

fondly (adv): in a loving way; foolishly

patience (n): the ability to wait or continue doing something despite difficulties

prevent (v): to stop doing something

murmur (v): to speak or say very quickly.

gifts (n): something which are given as present

yoke (n): a wooden bar which is fastened over the neck of two animals

doth (v): does

biddings (n): order

ocean (n): sea

C.1. LONG ANSWER QUESTION

1. Discuss the poet's feelings and emotions.
2. Why is the poet sad? What has happened to him?
3. Why does the poet fear from God in this poem?
4. Which do you think is superior - insight or eye-sight?
5. How does the poet get consolation?
6. Who answered his question?
7. Is God absolutely merciful? Is he a King of kings?
8. Will God forgive the poet?
9. Do you think that God needs only humble submission? Give arguments.
10. What lesson do you learn from the poem?

C.2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups or pairs

1. The value of eyes in life
2. Loss of vision leads to suffering and problems in life.

C.3. COMPOSITION

1. Write a letter to your friend describing a boy of your village who has lost his eye-sight before his examination.
2. Milton was physically challenged but mentally agile.

D. WORD STUDY**D. 1. Dictionary Use**

Correct the spelling of the following words

sonet,	yoak,	feer,
lossen,	waitt	educaton,

D. 2. Word Meaning

- Ex. 1. Match the words given under the column 'A' with their meanings given under the column 'B'

A	B
hide	God
pauper	stanza of six lines
prevent	very poor
octave	to stop doing something

sestet
Almighty

stanza of eight lines
conceal

Ex. 2. Fill in the blanks, using the words given below

great God poet
merciful heart the blind

1. John Milton was a great
2. Surdas was also a poet
3. should not be looked down.
4. God needs pure
5. Let us pray to
6. A man should be absolutely

E. GRAMMAR

The Conditional Clauses or Adverb Clauses of Condition

Adverb clauses of condition begin with subordinating conjunctions: if, unless etc.

If he comes, I shall help him.

If you work hard, you will succeed.

If she goes to Gaya, I shall see her.

We shall go out, if the rain stops.

Unless you work hard, you will not succeed.

Unless he comes, I shall not go.

I shall open the window provided no one objects to me.

Supposing it rains, where shall we go?

I shall help you on the condition that you promise to be honest.

The sentences given above contain conditional clauses. Mark that no future tense is used in the conditional clauses, even though they refer to the future tense.

Ex. 1. Frame ten sentences with conditional clauses.

Ex. 2. Fill in the blanks

1. If he writes
2. If it rains
3. Unless he walks,
4. Unless she comes

5. Supposing he refuses to help

Sometimes Subordinating Conjunctions are not used in Adverb Clauses of Condition.

Had I not seen this with my own eyes, I would not have believed it.
Had I the wings of a bird, I would fly.

Frame two sentences on the pattern of the sentences given above. Sometimes Adverb Clauses of condition begin with a Relative Pronoun, or Adjective or Adverb (without any antecedent):

Whatever happens, I must go

However hard one may work, one cannot be sure of success.

Whichever course we adopt, we cannot solve this problem.

Whichever road we take, we shall be too late.

Ex. 3. Write five sentences on the pattern of sentences given above.

Ex. 4. Correct the following sentences:

1. Unless he will come, I shall not go.
2. If he walks, he will be improving his health.
3. If she passes, she gets a prize.
4. Unless you will labour hard, you will not pass.

F. ACTIVITIES

1. Take help from your teacher/reference books and do a project work on the reaction of the general people when they come across a physically challenged man.
2. Discuss the behaviour of a beggar who is without eye-sight.

G. TRANSLATION

Translate the following sentences into English:

1. यदि वह मुझे आमंत्रित करे तो मैं वहाँ जाऊँगा।
2. यदि वह सुबह में टहलेगा तो मैं शाम में टहलूँगा।
3. यदि वर्षा होगी तो मैं बाहर नहीं जाऊँगा।
4. कठिन परिश्रम करो नहीं तो फेल कर जाओगे।

5. प्रतिदिन सुबह में टहलो क्योंकि सुबह की हवा दिन भर की दवा है।
6. क्लास में शांति बनाए रखें नहीं तो शिक्षक वर्ग छोड़ देंगे।
7. शांति एक अमूल्य चीज है।
8. कुछ लोग शांति में विश्वास नहीं करते हैं।
9. जॉन मिल्टन एक महान कवि थे।
10. उन्हें कौन नहीं जानता है?

