

Milton Group Work

Book 9

Use the following to guide you to a close reading of selections from your lines. Use any remaining time to discuss other issues you notice in the text, and the General Questions at the end of this worksheet.

Group 1

Lines 494-612

1. What is the effect of comparing the serpent to Jupiter? (lines 505-510, n.3)
2. What is the effect of aligning Eve with Circe and her animals? (l. 518-22, n.4)
3. On p. 1985, n. 6 tells us that Satan's language here and elsewhere is "couched in the extravagant praises of the Petrarchan love convention." Why do you think this is an appropriate tactic for Satan to adopt? Put another way, what does Satan's speech have in common with Petrarchan poetry?
4. What claim does Milton's serpent make, not in the Bible, about his own experiences?

Group 2

Lines 613-732

1. Milton writes that the serpent "into fraud / Led Eve our credulous mother, to the tree of prohibition, root of all our woe" (643-45). To determine what Milton's saying here, to what noun does "root of all our woe" refer?
2. Eve clearly knows that she is not to eat of this tree under threat of death (662-63). How does Satan try to convince Eve that surely God will not punish her with death? (684-709)
3. How does Satan then reinterpret "death" to make it sound attractive (710-15)?
4. Are there theological problems with his claims? Logical ones?

Group 3

Lines 733-885

1. On p. 1990, n. 9 tells us that Eve begins to adopt language that sounds like Satan's (see also p. 1991, n. 1). What is the effect of this mirroring?
2. In her soliloquy, why does Eve wonder whether to share her newfound knowledge with Adam, and why does she finally resolve to share? (816-33)

3. When Eve talks to Adam, what reasons does she give for sharing? (879-85) What's the effect of comparing these two sets of lines?

Group 4

Lines 886-1033

1. Adam is immediately resolved to share Eve's fate (l. 904-916) – why? What do the last two lines here remind you of?
2. Adam sees their fates as joined here, and lines 952-59, and he chooses to eat the apple. Do you think that this has the effect of Milton relieving Adam from guilt in the Fall (he has “no choice”) or giving him equal share (he chose to follow Eve)?
3. Look at Eve's third explanation of her actions, lines 977-89 (1 and 2 are above, Group 3's questions 2 and 3). Is Eve consistent in her claims?
4. What happens when Adam eats the fruit (and Eve eats more fruit)?

Group 5

Lines 1034-1189

1. As you know, Adam and Eve are awakened to carnal knowledge; what follows immediately (p. 1995-6)? What follows soon after (p. 1997)?
2. What literary device does Milton use to depict the feelings that follow and their control over Adam and Eve? Explain.
3. Answer the following questions and explain the effect of “The Blaming”:
 - a. What does Adam blame Eve for?
 - b. What does Eve blame Adam for?
 - c. What does each blame himself/herself for?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What image of Adam and Eve do you leave Book 9 with?

Describe your take on Milton's treatment of Eve – Sympathetic? Feminist? Misogynist? Progressive? Derogatory? Some combination?

What is the effect of expanding the Biblical story? Does it help us understand more, or does it complicate events more than need be?