

## RESEARCH: Resources

### An “A to Z” Overview of John Milton: An AI Creation

**Edward R. Raupp, Ph.D.**

Professor of Humanities

Gori State University

Gori, Georgia

+995 599 11 66 56

[edwardraupp@gu.edu.ge](mailto:edwardraupp@gu.edu.ge)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5147-7835>

Let’s have some fun at the nexus of artificial intelligence and the life and times and works of John Milton. We gave the following prompt to Chat GPT, an AI text generator, on February 21, 2024: “Write an “A to Z” of John Milton. Include his life and times, his poetry, and his prose.” What follows is the response. Is it a “reasonable” response to the prompt? You decide – if you are a human!

#### A - *Areopagitica*:

One of Milton’s notable prose works, *Areopagitica* is a powerful defense of free speech and press, written in 1644 during the English Civil War.

#### B - Blindness:

Milton became blind in the later years of his life, around 1652. Despite his blindness, he continued to dictate his work to assistants.

#### C - *Comus*:

*Comus* is a masque, or a festive play, written by Milton in 1634. It reflects his early poetic skills and interest in dramatic works.

#### D - Divorce Tracts:

Milton wrote several tracts advocating for divorce, including “The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce” (1643), expressing his views on personal liberty and the dissolution of unhappy marriages.

#### E - Epic Poetry:

Milton is best known for his epic poems, particularly *Paradise Lost* (1667), an epic that explores the biblical story of the Fall of Man, and *Paradise Regained* (1671), which focuses on the temptation of Christ.

#### F - Free Will:

Milton’s works often grapple with the themes of free will and the consequences of individual choices, prominently explored in *Paradise Lost*.

#### G - Great Britain:

Milton lived during a tumultuous period in English history, witnessing the Civil War, the execution of Charles I, the establishment of the Commonwealth, and the eventual restoration of the monarchy.

#### H - Humanism:

Milton was deeply influenced by humanism, emphasizing the value of education, individualism, and the study of classical texts. His humanist ideals are evident in his writings.

**I - In Medias Res:**

Milton often used the literary technique of starting a narrative “in medias res,” meaning in the middle of things. *Paradise Lost* begins in the midst of the action, with Satan and his fallen angels already in Hell.

**J - Justification of the Ways of God to Men:**

A key theme in *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s epic poem seeks to justify the ways of God to humanity, exploring the nature of good and evil and the consequences of disobedience.

**K - King Charles I:**

Milton served in various capacities during the English Civil War, and he passionately supported the execution of King Charles I in 1649, advocating for the establishment of a republic.

**L - *Lycidas*:**

Milton’s elegy *Lycidas* (1638) is a pastoral poem written in memory of his college friend Edward King, exploring themes of loss and the transient nature of life.

**M - Miltonic Sonnet:**

Milton is credited with popularizing the “Miltonic Sonnet” form, which consists of 14 lines with a varied rhyme scheme, often used to express personal and political themes.

**N - Neoclassicism:**

Milton’s works embody neoclassical ideals, emphasizing reason, order, and restraint. His poetic style reflects a departure from the ornate language of the Elizabethan era.

**O - On His Blindness:**

A poignant sonnet in which Milton reflects on his own blindness, contemplating his inability to serve God through his writing.

**P - Political Prose:**

In addition to his poetic works, Milton wrote extensively on political and religious matters, including works like “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates” (1649) and “The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth” (1660).

**Q - Quakerism:**

Milton had connections with the Quakers, a religious movement that emerged during his lifetime. While he did not fully embrace Quaker beliefs, he engaged in theological discussions with some Quaker leaders.

**R - Republicanism:**

Milton was a staunch republican, advocating for the establishment of a Commonwealth in England and expressing his political views in various pamphlets and prose works.

**S - *Samson Agonistes*:**

Written in 1671, *Samson Agonistes* is a dramatic poem that explores the tragic biblical story of Samson, reflecting on themes of loss, redemption, and individual destiny.

**T - The Restoration:**

After the monarchy was restored in 1660, Milton faced political difficulties due to his republican stance. He went into hiding briefly but was later pardoned.



**U - Unlicensed Printing:**

In *Areopagitica*, Milton argued against the licensing of books by authorities, advocating for the freedom of the press and the unrestricted dissemination of ideas.

**V - Vernacular Epic:**

Milton chose to write his epic poems, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, in English rather than Latin, contributing to the development of the vernacular epic tradition.

**W - Writings on Education:**

Milton's essay "Of Education" (1644) emphasizes the importance of a broad and liberal education, advocating for the development of both intellectual and moral virtues in individuals.

**X - Xenophon:**

Milton was well-versed in classical literature, including works by Xenophon, a Greek historian and philosopher whose writings influenced Milton's political and moral thought.

**Y - Youthful Poems:**

Milton wrote several poems during his youth, showcasing his early talent and love for poetry. These include "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "L'Allegro," and "Il Penseroso."

**Z - Zealous Defender:**

Throughout his life, Milton was a zealous defender of his beliefs, whether in matters of religion, politics, or personal liberty. His writings reflect a passionate commitment to his principles.