

Milton

John Milton was born in London. His mother was Sarah Jeffrey, who was very religious person and the daughter of a merchant sailor. Milton's father, named John, too, had risen to prosperity as a scrivener or law writer – he also composed madrigals and psalm settings. Milton took part in small domestic consorts, he played often a small organ and he had "delicate, tuneable voice". At the age of twelve Milton was admitted to St Paul's School near his home. Five years later he entered Christ's College, Cambridge. While considering himself destined for the ministry, he began to write poetry in Latin, Italian, and English. On leaving Cambridge (he had been expelled for fighting with a tutor) Milton had given up his original plan to become a priest. He was incredibly inspired by jurist and theologian Hugo Grotius and the astronomer Galileo Galilei in Florence – which we can tell as there are references to Galileo's telescope in *Paradise Lost*. Milton died on November 8, 1674. He was buried beside his father in the church of St Giles, Cripplegate. It has been claimed that Milton's grave was desecrated when the church was undergoing repairs. All the teeth and "a large quantity of the hair" were taken as souvenirs by grave robbers. ✓

Milton's Key Beliefs.

Government –

Milton was concerned with the Puritan cause, Milton published pamphlets slamming episcopacy, divorce, liberty of the press, and on the issue of regicides. He also served as the secretary for foreign languages in Cromwell's government. After the death of Charles I, Milton expressed the view that the people have the right to depose and punish tyrants. Milton was also very radical at the time for demanding that the state serve its people rather than the people serve the state. Parliament were normally regarded as esteemed member of society, so to have them "serve" the masses was an ultimately controversial idea. || = ke po

His political opinions stirred much controversy. After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Milton was arrested as a defender of the Commonwealth, but was soon released. However, for his opposition Milton was forced to pay a massive fine.

Society –

Believed people had the right to depose and punish tyrants – a clear indication of his negative view of Charles I, as is the fact he was a part of Oliver Cromwell's army and fought against the King. He was definitely radical - often scathed for his views by some or celebrated by others. ✓

Economy-

Milton was not grandeur like many poets of the time; he was very much a modest character, bombastic in his ideas rather than his spending. In fact after his fine for defending the Commonwealth, he was a relatively poor man. The manuscript of *Paradise Lost* was sold for £5, another £5 to come if he sold out the first edition.

Religion –

Milton was a supporter of regicide. Some of his religious beliefs were very unconventional, and came in conflict with the official Puritan stand. Milton who did not believe in the divine birth, "believed perhaps nothing", had serious doubts with divorce as he believed chaste and modest were "chained unnaturally together". Milton's Poem Paradise Lost also conveyed a little about his beliefs - its cosmic vision is not actually based on the Copernican system, but more in the traditional Christian cosmology of its day, where the Earth (and man) is the centre of the universe, not the sun, showing some basic Christian following. However, his favourable stance on Lucifer does belie any notion of this with a powerful and sympathetic portrait of Lucifer, a rebel against the tyranny of Heaven. Biblical, classical and medieval influences almost alone work on him—especially the former two.

Do you
fully
understand
→ you have
written
here?

Milton also believed we had control of our own destiny, our lives are defined by the choices we make, and therefore does not believe in predestination. He could also upset Calvinists with his view that he would justify the ways of God to men.

What Happened to Milton?

Milton went blind in 1651, however, Jorge Luis Borges said "He sacrificed his sight, and then he remembered his first desire, that of being a poet,". However, this did not deter him from making religious and political statements, and his radical views continued until his death.

Did Milton pose a threat to the new Commonwealth?

Milton did not believe in liberty, he believed in reason, but he did believe in liberty in terms of a person's soul, as he said "only good men love liberty, the rest love licence.". Milton believed in meritocracy, which is why he was drawn to Cromwell, rather than Charles I. This was similar to the beliefs of the Commonwealth, and as Milton grew more and more renowned his support grew, which is surprising seeing as his family including nieces and nephews/extended family were predominantly Royalists. This strength shows that if he was to decide to change his radical views in favour of his family, in favour of the Royalists, then his respectability and renowned writings could have lead others to follow him, and therefore lead them against the Commonwealth. Therefore Milton could be a threat, however, seeing as his life works support Cromwell's cause, this would be very unlikely. We can also tell that after the restoration in 1660 he posed no threat because after threatened with execution only Marvell's intervention saved Milton. By then, Marvell argued, Milton was old and blind and posed no threat to Charles II. If his support for the Commonwealth was worthy of execution, there was no way he would have ever been a threat to his own men. He was Cromwell's right hand man – and that he could never betray.

Good
point

Well done.

Well researched,
integrated,
good, considered
significance
A $\frac{20}{20}$