

Understanding the Poem

1. Why has the poet pitted the flight of Time against the 'lazy leaden-stepping hours' and 'the heavy Plummets pace'?

Answer. In the poem, the poet Milton states that humans can conquer the power of time by attaining immortal life in heaven. The poet asks for time to escape since it might also face death while humans gain everlasting happiness. Thus, time personifies to be jealous of human life.

The "lazy leaden-stepping hours" refers to a clock describing the slow movement of time, measuring hours with "leaden" hands. The "plummet" or a pendulum in a watch clock that moves slowly refers to the time's action. Therefore, time's movement is bounded to a clock and forced to end with the end of human life, whereas a human soul is immortal and manages to exist even after death.

2. What are the things associated with the temporal, and what is associated with the eternal?

Answer. In the poem, the things associated with the temporal are the temporary things that exist to a certain point. Human qualities like "Envy", "lazy", "womb", "greedy", "vain", "glut", "plummets", "leaden", "hours", and "mortal", "Death" and "Chance" are the limitations of human life, seemingly enslaved by Time.

The things associated with the eternal are "Love", "Peace", "Truth", "Joy", "Throne", "soul" and "Stars", which shall attain in heaven.

3. What guides human souls towards divinity? Who is the final winner in the race against Time?

Answer. According to different individuals' perceptions, the poet John Milton has portrayed the common conception of time as moving too slowly or too fast. Time is both our limitation and our opportunity. In every individual's mind, time acts as an intangible tool that controls the lives of creatures. Time also serves as the part of the field in which we may create and fulfil our destiny. Time is a known force that stimulates a person's lifespan forward, making necessary changes in all passing moments, but humans should not be affected by its influence.

Time has a physical reality, not simply in the movements of clocks and planets but also in limiting experience to only one event at a time. The ageing of our bodies reminds us that entropy and decay define time as the condition of impermanence. Time can only affect a person's life as long as they are alive. Therefore, its power is limited.

The poet explains that we must understand that there is only one end in the race against time, i.e., death. Time swallows everything in our lifetime, but it should also end like everything else in the universe. Time's power stops when the human soul is freed from its global home and is managed by death to the divine field, where endless happiness is waiting, along with a joyous connection with the Creator. Humans must, therefore, celebrate every moment of their life because, in the race against the "glut" and "greed" of time, they will be the true victors.

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1. Why does Milton feel it is not necessary to put up a monument in stone for Shakespeare?

Answer. In the poem, the poet Milton feels that it is not necessary to put up a monument in stone for Shakespeare because he has already made a mark in the minds of his readers. Instead, he had built a memorial for himself through his works which he would remember for a lifetime. Readers received Shakespeare's words the way one would accept the terms from God. Therefore, his statements created an everlasting impression in his readers' thoughts, which is mightier than a monument.

2. What does the 'weak witness of thy name' refer to?

Answer. 'Weak witness of thy name' refers to the tombs of stone that are not enough or required to honour Shakespeare's memory. He had built a more robust and eternal achievement through his works (sonnets and plays), which are eyewitnesses of his memory. He believed that Shakespeare would be worshipped and cherished as a masterpiece in his readers' hearts.

3. How does Milton describe Shakespeare as the source of inspiration for all succeeding generations of poets?

Answer. Milton describes Shakespeare as the source of inspiration for all succeeding generations of poets by saying that his statements leave an enduring impression in his readers' minds. Meanwhile, one reads or listens to his sonnet or play, and they are left astonished and become fascinated and paralysed with wonder. So, they are stunned to become marble statues in the tomb of Shakespeare over succeeding times. These works even astonish future generations, passed on from the previous one.

4. What is the best tribute that posterity has bestowed on Shakespeare?

Answer. The posterity or future generations have considered Shakespeare's plays and poetry as great works of English Literature. As a tribute, today's generation has kept his memory alive in their hearts and minds through his works. The works of Shakespeare have driven inspiration for the present generation. People read, learn lessons for life and celebrate from the plays and dramas of Shakespeare. Thus, he is remembered as a 'live long monument' in people's hearts. Shakespeare's death anniversary is celebrated every year in Stratford-upon-Avon to pay tribute to this literary genius.

