

Analysis of Lycidas.

The following analysis of "Lycidas" is from Grade XI of the Dalhousie, N. B., superior school. Criticism is asked for from other eleventh grades, who are invited to analyze "L' Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" through the REVIEW.

[Those studying the following analysis should do so with book in hand, as it was necessary to shorten many quotations from lack of space.—EDITOR.]

1. Milton's tribute to King in the language of flowers: (a). Laurels—High in art. (b). Myrtles—Constant in love. (c). Ivy never sere—Everlasting friendship.

2. Milton's regret for King's unfinished education: (a). Berries, harsh and crude—Immature mental and spiritual education. (b) Premature falling of the leaves—Untimely death.

3. Milton's reason for writing this poem:

Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compel me to disturb your season due.

The curtailing (bitter constraint) of King's possible greatness through his untimely death (occasion dear) compelled Milton to write (to disturb) only what greatness King had manifested up to the time of his death, thus not allowing Milton or any other poet to sing the greatness of what King might have been when his life was fully rounded out through many years of noble deeds (season due).

4. Milton's estimate of King: (a). Class—Left no peer. (b). Kind—a great poet. (b). Degree of greatness—Embalmed in the nation's literature.

5. Invoking the aid of the Muses to mourn for King. First appeal to the source of inspiration.

Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.

6. Milton breathes a prayer to be thus remembered at his death.

So may some gentle muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn,
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

7. Memories connected with King: (a). Educated at the same college.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed by the same flock by fountain, shade and rill.

(b). Studied nature together.

Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn.

(c). Studied all night from books.

Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that orse at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.

(d). Wrote poetry together.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with clover heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damatas loved to hear our song.

8. Nature's lament for King.

But oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!

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Milton calls upon Nature to mourn for King, because great poets particularly are Nature's children.

9. Reproving the Nymphs for their negligence in allowing King to drown.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?

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(a). Reason for reproving the Nymphs—I. Off duty and the results. "Where were ye, Nymphs?" 2. Possibilities of being on duty. "Had ye been there." (b). One cannot escape his fate. "What could the Muse herself . . ."

10. Why give such concern about study and deep thought rather than have a good time.

11. Definition of "Fame."

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise—
That last infirmity of noble mind—
To scorn delights and live laborious days.

(a). Positive—I. The impulse that raises one's life; 2. The last weakness to be blotted out in noble mind. (b). Negative—I. Not a product of man's own growth; 2. Not temporary reputation. (c). How fame is won—I. Giving up all unaiding pleasures; 2. Steady hard work. (d). Highest fame—Approval of God.

12. Second appeal to the sources of inspiration: (a). Invoking the Spirit of Greek poetry—"O fountain Arethuse." (b). Invoking the Inspiration of Virgil.

And thou honoured flood
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds.

13. Investigation into the death of King.

And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea.

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