Maryam: Hi everyone, please give me a ✅ if you’re ready to proceed with the discussion based on the poem *On his blindness*

Maryam: I found some useful notes online on various sites. So I’m going to copy and paste and forward it here. Please take the time to read through it and we can discuss thereafter.

Maryam: The first seven and a half lines of this poem are one big, long, confusing sentence. Here’s our summary: “When I think of how I have lost my vision even before middle age, and how I am unable to use my best talent to serve God, I want to ask if God requires his servants to work for him even if they don’t have vision.”

But before he can speak up, a figure called Patience answers his question. Patience is like, “You think God needs your work? No, man. His best servants are the ones who bear life’s burden the best.

Lines 1-2
When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,

The speaker thinks about how all of his light has been used up (“spent”) before even half his life is over. As a man without light, he now lives in a world that is both “dark and wide.”

The first word of the poem, “When,” gives us an idea of the structure of the sentence that will follow. The structure is, “When this happens, that happens.” As in, “When I broke the glass, I had to find a broom to sweep it up.”

But be careful – the second part of the sentence doesn’t come until lines 7 and 8. Milton’s audience was more used to reading dense and complicated sentences, so you’ll want to take the first seven lines slowly. (That’s OK, we also think Milton’s audience would have had a doozy of a time figuring out text messaging.)

Most readers believe that the poem is clearly about Milton’s blindness, but the poem never directly refers to blindness or even vision. Instead, we think that “light” is a metaphor for vision.

The metaphor is complicated. The speaker says that his light can be “spent,” and this word suggests that he is thinking of something like an oil lamp. The light is “spent” when the oil in the lamp runs out. To
make a contemporary comparison, it would be like someone comparing his vision to a flashlight that runs out of batteries before it is supposed to. Milton is suggesting that he got a bad deal.

The word "spent" also makes us think of money. Milton is reflecting on how he has used or "spent" his vision, now that it is gone. Has he used it wisely, or did he fritter it away because he thought it would never run out?

The word "ere" means "before." How does Milton know that he became blind before his life was halfway over? For this to be true, wouldn't he have to be some kind of psychic who knew when he was going to die? The usual explanation of this line is that Milton guesses roughly how long he will live. Milton went completely blind at the age of 42.

Finally, calling the world "dark and wide" makes it sound like a scary place, doesn't it? Interestingly, Milton makes it seem as if the world has run out of light, rather than growing dark because of any blindness on his part.

Lines 3-4

And that one Talent which is death to hide

Lodged with me useless, [...]

These lines are the trickiest in the entire poem, because they appear to be simpler then they are.

The key word is "talent." You probably read "talent" and think of skills like throwing a perfect spiral or being a piano prodigy. But there's a double meaning intended for people who know history or Biblical scripture. In the ancient world, a "talent" was also a standard of weight used to measure money, just as a "pound" is a measure of both weight and currency.

You can read Mathew 25 (it's short), but here's our brief summary of "The Parable of Talents." A lord gives three of his servants some money ("talents") to hold on to when he leaves for a trip. Two of the servants use the money to gain more money for their master. (In contemporary language, we'd call this "investment.") But the third servant just buries the money, the ancient equivalent of hiding it under your mattress. When the lord returns, he's happy with the first two servants and gives them more responsibilities, but furious with the third servant. He exiles the third servant into the "darkness," which is the equivalent of "death."

When Milton says that talent is "death to hide," he is referring to the money in the Biblical story and also to his own "talent," in the sense of a skill or trade.

There is no way to tell what specific talent he means, but our guess would be his intelligence and his writing and reading skills, which he had used in service of Oliver Cromwell's government. This "talent" is "lodged" or buried within the speaker just like the money in the story. It cannot be used to make greater profit.

Lines 4-6

[...] though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;

The speaker has just told us that his talent is as useless as money buried in the desert, but now he says that his uselessness has nothing to do with a lack of will. To the contrary, his soul desires (is "bent") to use his skills in the service of his "Maker," God.

When he is faced with God, he wants to have a record of accomplishment to show Him.

God is being compared with the lord from the "Parable of the Talents" in Matthew 25. When God "returns" to him like the master in the parable, the speaker wants to show that he has used his talents profitably.

The word "account" here means both "story" and "a record of activities with money."

If the speaker turns out to have wasted his profits, he worries that God will scold or "chide" him. And if God is anything like the lord from the parable, the speaker could get cast into a darkness even more fearful than the one created by his blindness.

Lines 7-8

"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"

I fondly ask. [...]
Maryam: Can we move on and answer the questions in tut501?

Maryam: On that note, please go through it, page 15-19

Maryam: Q1. What crisis is the poet facing? Substantiate by quoting from the poem and explain the metaphor

Eng Dudu 2: The poet is blind

PLS Hombisa: TYPE AND FORM

THE POEM IS AN ITALIAN OR MILTONIC SONNET. THIS BECAUSE 14 LINES ARE MADE UP OF
An octave of eight lines made up of two quatrains. This is where the problem is presented and
A sestet of six lines. This is where the problem is resolved

In the octave the problem is presented the speaker feels depressed when he thinks (consider in line 1) about his problem the problem is that he is going blind "ere half of my days" before he is even half way through his life. He has one great gift from God a "talent" which has been logged (given to him) to use but it is useless (line 4) because he cannot see to write anymore.

THE POET uses a metaphor to refer to his eyesight. He calls it his "light" (line 7). This is effective comparison because our eyes are important light allows us to see clearly. Light also represents God and the sun and connotations of brightness and happiness. This contrasts with the life without light the dark world in line 2

THE POET describes his problem in the octave in one long sentence that ends in the middle of line 8. In his sense he list all the things he is worried about and that may happen as a result of his blindness. He is frustrated because the talent God has given him is useless in line 4. He is also frustrated because his soul is absolutely bent on saving his maker which is God line 4 to 5 and he cannot do this if he cannot see.

PYC 3: Loss of his sight, "my light is spent"

Eng Salmah: The poem is autobiographical. It's about a man who had the ability to write poetry but he was also going blind and he thought that by going blind he would be unable to write his poetry or he would be unable to fulfill his poetic talent and as a result he would not be able to serve god

Maryam: Yes that's a good substantiation for @Eng Salmah explanation

Maryam:
Eng Salmah: The metaphor would be light is spent because he is comparing his vision to a light source that could run out 😊

PYC 3: He lost his sight but the metaphor in the first lines conveys that light was still visible in his intelligence

Eng Samiksha: The crisis faced by the poet is his onset of glaucoma and blindness. “My light is spent” Milton believed that his ability to write poetry was a god’s gift. His blindness, however, meant that he could not use his gift.

Eng Mag: line 1 the speaker is telling us about how he has lived his life “light is spent” emphasis the days of his life.

Maryam: Good points

Q2. Why is it so difficult for him to accept the predicament in which he finds himself?

Eng Salmah: Because he believes god has given him a talent to write poetry but then god takes away his eye sight so how is he to fulfill his talent and serve God if God takes away his ability to do it

Eng Samiksha: He was afraid, therefore, that God would be angry with him for not using his talent even though he wanted to use it but couldn’t because he was blind.

Eng Mag: Because he wil b held accountable for not using his talent as he sees it useful as a result of him being blind

Eng Tsho: He is unable to accept because his blindness makes it hard for him to use his poetic gift

Eng Faridha: He feels that he won’t be able to use he’s talent for writing poetry and somehow won’t be contributing to society due to he’s blindness. Also that god will punish him for not using he’s talent
Maryam: Q3. What does the word _talent_ mean in the context of the _poem_?

Eng Salmah: The goft of special abilities that we are blessed with.

Maryam: Specifically in the poem... Wouldn’t that mean his gift of writing poetry?

Maryam: In the context of the poem

PLS 8: Poet’s gift of reciting poems

Eng Samiksha: Milton is using the word metaphorically to mean his "natural gift" for writing poetry.

Maryam: Q4. Explain the 2 meanings of the word _talent_ (Modern times and old fashioned)

PLS 6 Vanessa: a gift from God

Eng Mag: The poet feels it is useless, he is confused about how can God gives him a talent that he cannot use it because he is blind, he feels that the talent God gave him is done by people who can see so, he feels this talent is wasted on him.

PLS 17 Laylaa: Modern would probably be a special form of self expression that you’re exceptional at

PYC 3: Emphasising the verse that’s in Mathew 25(Verse 14) in the Bible, it talks about talents, then for us to also digest the fact that the poet serves God,

PLS 8: Talent as in the coins that the master gave to his servants to multiply wen he was going away but unfortunately only2 out of 3 did multiply and then the talent as in a natural gift from God , in dis case its Milton’ gift of reciting poems

It is a personal gift...
Maryam: The old fashioned term for talent was the standard of weight used to measure money, and then the allusion is made to the biblical story of the coins.

Maryam: Q5. Explain how the poet feels about his talent, and what would happen if he does not fully use it.

PYC 3: "Coins" I got that somewhere on analysis.

Eng Salmah: It’s a gift from god and he will be punished if he doesn’t use it.

Eng Tsho: He feels that it is useless and more like spiritual death if he is unable to use it. He also think that God might be angry and scold him not using it “lest returning chide”

PLS 8: He feels that God is punishing him by taking away his gift but then asks himself how God can expect him to continue serving him while he has taken away his only gift that he can use to serve him. He feels that now that his talent is useless, God will punish him as the master punished the servant that did not multiple his coin, rather he buried it as a result he was chased away, that is what Milton thinks will happen to him.

Eng Bubu: I think the poet feels frustration that he cannot use his talent due to his 'light spent' of which we assume is Vision and he thinks that if he does not use it, The Maker will be upset with him for not using his talent.

PYC 3: Okay,

After considering the poet’s frustration after losing his sight, it’s quite clear that his first worry concerns his writing talent, it’s reflected that the speaker will not be able to serve his talent again and that’s why he used figurative language in order to reveal his fear/frustrations.

ENG Brian: He Feels So Bad Because He Is Not Able To Be Who He Wants To Be And He So Believe God Wholeheartedly Irrespective Of His Condition.

Maryam: Q6. What is the significance of the parable (biblical story) of talents in the poem?
Maryam: True, that's the simplest answer one could possibly give. It's as if God will understand him if he uses a religious text/language by using the parable.

PLS 8: I think it emphasises how Milton feels about losing his sight comparing to the 3 servants and it can be telling us that Milton was a believer who had faith in God, tells us his religion.

PYC 3: He still had faith though he is becoming blind....he still feels his writing intelligence.

I think am lost here 😞.

Maryam: The poet blame God for how can he give him a talent which he cannot use because he is blind. He continues questioning God that he gave him a talent for a reason so he wants to use this talent to serve God. He is worried that when he dies what he will produce to God as a prove that he works for him while he was alive on earth "my true account".

Maryam: Q7. Explain the various imagery used in the poem i.e. Personification, oxymoron, pun, and provide examples from the poem.

Maryam: Is there an oxymoron in the poem? 😊.

Eng Salmah: Mild yoke.

Eng Salmah: Check pg 19 of tut letter.

Maryam: Two words that have opposite meanings e.g. Bittersweet, cruel kindness.

PYC 3: Personification: “death to hide”.

The speaker feels like his talent may fade, however 😓.

Maryam: Can anyone explain this?

Maryam: Patience is a virtue but it's personified because it's a name in the poem (capital letter).

Eng Salmah: Yoke means hardship or submission so his saying the hardships is mild... it's an oxymoron because hardship is generally significant so in this case its contradictory.

Eng Samiksha: Guys the answers for most of these questions are there 😊.
Maryam: I know this discussion is so that we’re forced to go through it, so last minute before the exams there’s no stress.

PLS 8: The way I understand it, oxymoron is lyk an apposite. Yoke suggests submission, hardships but God’s control is mild or loving and gentle. Milton suggests that God controls his servants with kindness.

Maryam: Last question to end of the night...

Q7. Is the poets argument convincing? Give reasons.

Eng Dudu 2: Line 1 the word ‘spent’ is a pun.

Eng Mag: Let us also do they rhyming please, I want to get used to it.

Eng Salmah: No i don’t think it is because there is more then one way in which one can serve god...and if one door closes another one opens so if he feels his blindness means an end to his life...is not convincing enough.

PLS 8: I think it is, coz of different tones used and dey are supported. For example at firsr Milton is confused, nd questioning but after understanding how God works, he accepts the situation and move on.

Maryam: Sure, remember that the trick is to look for words that have the same sound or ending, and give them an alphabet name. For example, spent and bent rhyme, so we call them a. But present and prevent also rhyme with spent and bent, so they’re also a.

Maryam: Need and speed rhyme so we call it c. No other rhymes with c so we use the next alphabet, d for best and rest.

PYC 3: Yes, it is...I am in love with the fact that ‘faith’ in God remain within him after the signs of him losing an eyesight.

Maryam: Yes you got it.

PYC 3: Good,

PLS 8: Yes salmah I agree wth u but den Milton says that was the only talent that he had and he new nd could use it for serving God. As u said dat wen one door closes another opens, I think he must now try something different, make it a habit den a hobby den myb at the end wil become a talent which he wil use to serve his God since he is blind and couldn’t recite any more. # Jst saying.

Eng Dudu 2: Would u plz clarify naming of the words as they rhym im little bit confused why do we say a,b or c.

[9/30, 21:03]
It is like God be saying take my yoke for it is easy and give me yours I will carry it for you ...all your sorrow, pain /troubles

[9/30, 21:04] Maryam: The alphabets are used so we can easily identify which words rhyme with which, especially when giving the rhyming pattern