

# Aula 3

## THE AGE OF MILTON

### **META**

Relacionar a biografia e a obra de Milton ao seu momento histórico a elas correspondente.

### **OBJETIVOS**

Ao final desta aula, o aluno deverá:

Identificar, as condições de produção, circulação e recepção de cultura no período.

Identificar e analisar, nos sonetos de Milton, poema, seus elementos composicionais e principais características.

### **PRÉ-REQUISITOS**

O contexto sócio-histórico da formação da literatura inglesa.

Reconhecer e identificar os principais gêneros literários do período, relacionando-os às suas condições de produção, circulação e recepção.

**Luiz Eduardo Oliveira**

### INTRODUÇÃO

Milton is regarded as one of the greatest poets in English literature. He is second only to Shakespeare and was born in London in 1608, being educated at Christ's College, Cambridge. After leaving the University, he studied at home in Horton, where he dedicated himself to study and compose poems, essays and plays. *Paradise Lost*, which is comparable to almost all the great epic of classical writers, is his great masterpiece. His literary works can be divided into three groups for convenience. At first, he wrote his shorter poems at Horton. Next, came his prose work inspired by his Puritanism and his political sympathies. His three greatest works belong to the last group. As we are going to see, his life is closely related to the main episodes of his period.

### DESENVOLVIMENTO

#### **The Puritans**

The English Civil War (1642–1651) was a series of armed and political battles between the Parliament, represented by the “Roundheads” and the Royalists, also called “Cavaliers”. The first (1642-46) and second (1648-49) wars opposed the supporters of King Charles I (1600-1649) against the supporters of the Long Parliament, while the third (1649-51) was a conflict between supporters of King Charles II and the Parliament. The war ended with the Parliamentary victory at the Battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651.

Three were the immediate consequences of the war: the trial and execution of Charles I; the exile of his son, Charles II; the replacement of English monarchy by the Commonwealth of England (1649-53) and then the English Protectorate (1653-59) under Oliver Cromwell's (1599-1658) personal rule. Constitutionally, the wars established the precedent that an English monarch cannot govern without Parliament's consent, although the idea of parliament as the ruling power of England was legally established only after the Glorious Revolution, in 1688.

The Parliament in those days was composed in its majority by Puritans. As many historians have pointed out, they were not associated with a specific theology or church, although most of them were Calvinists. The representation of English Puritans, both in literature and in historiography, portray them as protagonists of a critical attitude regarding the religious tolerance of the reign of Elizabeth I. Many of them had studied at Cambridge University and became innovative priests in their local churches, encouraging direct personal religious experience, moral conduct and simple

worship services. They were named Puritans because of their intention (or pretention) of purifying the Church of England, removing any traces of the Roman Catholic Church.

When James I (1566-1625) became king of England, in 1603, the Puritan leaders asked him to grant some reforms. The king rejected most of their proposals and approved a new version of the Bible, the famous “King James Version”, beginning a persecution which made many puritans abandon the Church of England and leave the country to a new adventurous life in North America. He was an intellectual who loved political theory and never missed an opportunity to lecture Parliament about his prerogatives as a king.

When Charles I (1600-1649) ascended the throne, the religious and political conflict between the Parliament and the crown had deepened a lot. In 1625 and 1629, he dissolved Parliament and ruled alone until 1640. The repression of the government increased and made many Puritans emigrate to America. On the other hand, those who remained formed a powerful group within the Parliament. With the conflicts in Scotland, his proposals to raise Money in Parliament were constantly rejected, what made him dissolve the Short Parliament in 1640. It was in this context that the figure of Cromwell emerges.

Cromwell was a member of the middle gentry and belonged to a family descended from the sister of King Henry VIII's minister, Thomas Cromwell(c. 1485-1540). He was converted into a Puritan in 1630, becoming an intensely religious man who manifestly believed that God was guiding his victories. He became Member of Parliament in 1628, entering the English Civil War on the side of the “Roundheads” or Parliamentarians. He was soon promoted to one of the main commanders of the New Model Army, playing an important role in the defeat of the troops of Charles I.

One of the signatories of King Charles I's death warrant in 1649, he dominated the short-lived Commonwealth of England as a leading member of the Rump Parliament (1649-53). His forces defeated the Confederate and Royalist coalition in Ireland and occupied the country, putting an end in the Irish Confederate Wars. During this period, a series of Penal Laws were passed against Roman Catholics (a significant minority in England and Scotland but the vast majority in Ireland) and their land was confiscated.

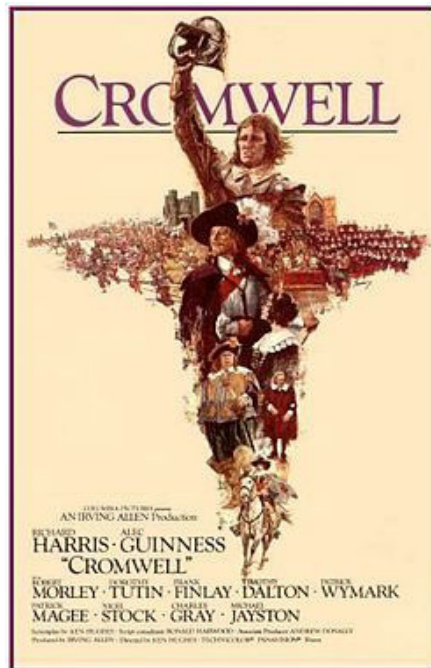
In 1653, he dissolved the Rump Parliament and set up a short-lived assembly known as Barebone's Parliament, being then invited by his fellows to rule as Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland in the same year. He died in 1658 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The Stuarts returned to power in 1660 and they had his corpse dug up, hung in chains, and beheaded.

Cromwell is one of the most controversial figures in English history. Object of many movies, plays and poems, some of them praising his dee-

ds, some criticizing him as a ruler. To Winston Churchill (1874-1965), for example, he was a military dictator. Leon Trotsky (1879- 1940), in turn, considered him a class revolutionary. Cromwell was selected as one of the ten greatest Britons of all time in a 2002 BBC poll in Britain. However, his measures against Catholics in Scotland and Ireland have been characterised as genocidal. To John Milton (1608-1674), who was made by him Latin Secretary, he was a hero of liberty.



Oliver Cromwell, by Samuel Cooper (died 1672). See source website for additional information. This set of images was gathered by User:Dcoetzee from the National Portrait Gallery, London website using a special tool. All images in this batch have been confirmed as author died before 1939 according to the official death date listed by the NPG.  
[https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver\\_Cromwell#/media/File:Oliver\\_Cromwell\\_by\\_Samuel\\_Cooper.jpg](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Cromwell#/media/File:Oliver_Cromwell_by_Samuel_Cooper.jpg)



#### Films to be watched

Cromwell is a British 1970 historical drama film written and directed by Ken Hughes. It is based on the life of Oliver Cromwell, who led the Parliamentary forces during the English Civil War and, as Lord Protector, ruled Great Britain and Ireland in the 1650s. It features an ensemble cast, led by Richard Harris as Cromwell and Alec Guinness as King Charles I, with Robert Morley as Edward Montagu, 2nd Earl of Manchester and Timothy Dalton as Prince Rupert of the Rhine. Fonte: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromwell\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromwell_(film))



To Kill a King is a 2003 English Civil War film starring Tim Roth, Rupert Everett and Dougray Scott, directed by Mike Barker. It centers on the relationship between Oliver Cromwell and Thomas Fairfax in the post-war period from 1648 until the former's death, in 1658. Fonte: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To\\_Kill\\_a\\_King](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Kill_a_King)



A Field in England is a 2013 British historical psychological thriller film directed by Ben Wheatley. The film, shot in black-and-white, is set during the mid-17th century English Civil War. The film was released on 5 July 2013 on multiple platforms simultaneously, including cinemas, home media and video on demand. It was also broadcast on Film4 on the day of its release. Fonte: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Field\\_in\\_England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Field_in_England)



Portrait of John Milton in National Portrait Gallery, London (detail) [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Milton#/media/File:John-milton.jpg](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Milton#/media/File:John-milton.jpg)

John Milton is writer who, more than anyone else, represents the period, once his life and work can be related to the main historical episodes which took place those days. He was born in London and was the son of a composer with the same name and his wife Sarah Jeffrey. In 1625, he began attending Christ's College in Cambridge and was graduated with a B.A. in 1629, ranking fourth of 24 honours graduates that year at the University of Cambridge. In order to become an Anglican priest, Milton stayed on and obtained his Master of Arts degree on in 1632.

After receiving his M.A., Milton retired to his father's property at Horton, Berkshire, where he spent six years of private study, reading works of theology, philosophy, history, politics, literature and science.

In a recent publication, *The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution* (2007), Angelica Duran reveals the way through which Milton's works interacted with the work of his contemporaries in Science, collaborating to create the conditions for the so called "advancement of learning" of the time. Duran shows, for example, how new developments in ornithology worked to shape the Lady's power in the young Milton's celebratory "A Mask", and how mathematics informed the sexual relationship of Adam and Eve in his *Paradise Lost*. Since he was a student, he could manage many foreign languages – Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, and Italian. Because of all these impressive deeds, Milton is held as one the most learned English poets of all times.

Just like at school and in the university, Milton continued to write poetry. The masques *Arcades* and *Comus* were composed for noble patrons during this period, being performed in 1632 and 1634. In *Lycidas*, he collaborated with a pastoral elegy a memorial collection for one of his friends of Cambridge.

In 1638, Milton went on a year tour to France and Italy. It is said that he met famous intellectuals of the time. On returning to England, while the Bishops' Wars were taking place, he began to write prose pamphlets in the service of the Puritan and Parliamentary cause. His first polemic paper was *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England* (1641), which was followed by others like *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* and *The Reason of Church-Government Urged against Prelaty*. He vigorously attacked the Church of England and their leader William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury.

Besides being supported by his father, he became a private schoolmaster. This experience led him to write his essay *Of Education* in 1644, in which he proposed a reform of the national universities. In June of 1642, Milton married the 16 year-old bride Mary Powell. According to his biographers, Mary returned to her family a month later and stayed there until 1645, with the outbreak of the Civil War. Symptomatically enough, in the meantime he published a series of pamphlets on the legality and morality of divorce. In his *Areopagitica* (1644), his attacks on pre-printing censorship became internationally famous.

With the parliamentary victory in the Civil War, Milton became the official Champion of the republican principles represented by the Commonwealth. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), he defended popular government and sanctioned the regicide, although indirectly. His already great reputation secured him a place in the new government as Secretary for Foreign Tongues by the Council of State in 1649. He was responsible for composing the foreign correspondence in Latin. In this same year, he published *Eikonoklastes*, an explicit defence of the regicide, written in response to the *Eikon Basilike*, a best-seller of the period which portrayed Charles I as an innocent Christian martyr. A month later, however, the exiled Charles II and his party published the defence of monarchy *Defensio Regia pro Carolo Primo*, written by the famous humanist Claudius Salmasius (1588-1653).

In 1652, Milton published his Latin defence of the English people, *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*, also known as the First Defence. His talent in prose writing – most of it was written in Latin during that time – gave him a European reputation. In this same year he published his Sonnet 16, in praise of “Cromwell, our chief of men”.

In 1654 he completed his second defence of the English nation, *Defensio secunda*, in response to an anonymous tract intitled “Regii sanguinis clamor”, which contained many personal attacks on him. In this same year he became totally blind. His blindness forced him to dictate his verse and prose to be written by others. One of his best-known sonnets serves as a testimony of this situation, “When I Consider How My Light is Spent”, titled later modified by an editor to “On His Blindness”.

With the death of Cromwell, in 1658, caused the English Republic to collapse. A year later, Milton published *A Treatise of Civil Power*, attacking the church of England, as well as *Considerations*, denouncing corrupt practices in the church. With the end of the Republic, he wrote many proposals of a non-monarchical government, against the wishes of a group of members of parliament and soldiers.

## CONCLUSÃO

On the Restoration, in 1660, Milton was persecuted by the new government. A warrant was issued for his arrest and his writings were burnt. After a general pardon was issued, he was arrested and briefly imprisoned, when some influential friends intervened and helped him. Milton married for a third and final time on 24 February 1663. The bride was Elizabeth (Betty) Minshull, aged 24. He spent the remaining decade of his life in London, only retiring to a cottage during the Great Plague. Mary Powell, his first wife, had died in 1652 from complications after Deborah’s birth. In 1656,

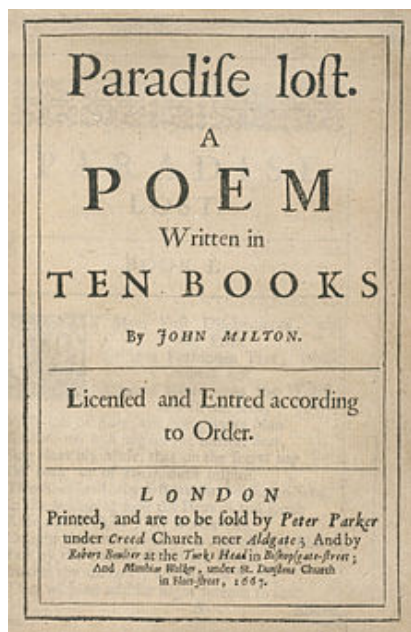


he married Katherine Woodcock. She died two years later in the same way: after giving birth to daughter Katherine, who also died.

During those years, Milton published many prose works, such as *Art of Logic and a History of Britain*. His only explicitly political tracts were *Of True Religion* (1672), arguing for toleration (except for Catholics), and a translation of a Polish tract advocating an elective monarchy. Milton died of kidney failure on 8 November 1674 and was buried in the church of St Giles Cripplegate, Fore Street, London.

Milton's poetry was, until very recently, unknown to many people. His first published poem was *On Shakespear* (1630), included anonymously in the Second Folio edition of William Shakespeare. In 1645, he published his *Poems*. His great masterpiece, however, is the blank-verse epic poem *Paradise Lost*, which was composed by a blind and impoverished Milton from 1658 to 1664. As a blind poet, Milton dictated his verse to a series of aides in his employ. In 1667, he sold the publication rights for *Paradise Lost* to publisher Samuel Simmons for £5, equivalent to approximately £7,400 income in 2008, with a further £5 to be paid if and when each print run sold out of between 1.300 and 1.500 copies. It is said that the first run was a quarto edition priced at three shillings per copy, published in 1667, and it sold out in eighteen months.

After the publication *Paradise Lost*, a sequel was published, *Paradise Regained*, which was published at the same time as the tragedy *Samson Agonistes* (1671). Before his death, in 1674, Milton supervised a second edition of *Paradise Lost*. In 1673, Milton republished his 1645 *Poems*.



*Paradise Lost* is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th-century English poet John Milton (1608-1674). The first version, published in 1667, consisted of ten books with over ten thousand lines of verse. A second edition followed in 1674, arranged into twelve books (in the manner of Virgil's *Aeneid*) with minor revisions throughout and a note on the versification. It is considered by critics to be Milton's major work, and it helped solidify his reputation as one of the greatest English poets of his time. Fonte: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise\\_Lost](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost)



### RESUMO

John Milton was the greatest English writer of the 17th Century. He was born in Bread Street in London on 9 December 1608. His father also called John and was a scrivener (a man who wrote contracts and other legal documents). His mother was called Sarah. From the age of 12 he was sent to St Paul's school. In 1625 Milton went to Cambridge University, being awarded a BA in 1629 and an MA in 1632. After leaving university Milton continued studying at home. He also wrote poetry. In 1629 Milton wrote a poem called *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*. In 1634, a masque by John Milton called *Comus* was performed. In 1638-39, Milton traveled in France and Italy and he met Galileo. In 1639, he returned to England he became a schoolteacher in London. In 1642 the civil war began between king and parliament. John Milton was a strong supporter of the parliament. In 1642, he wrote pamphlets attacking episcopacy (the belief that the church should have bishops). In 1643, he wrote a pamphlet arguing that divorce should be allowed and in 1644 he wrote a pamphlet in favor of freedom of speech. Following the execution of King Charles I in 1649, Milton wrote material supporting the Commonwealth (the republican government that ruled from 1649 to 1660).

Tragically in 1652 Milton went blind. However, in 1667 his great work *Paradise Lost* was first printed. In 1671 another work by Milton, *Paradise Regained*, was published. Meanwhile, Milton was married 3 times. He died on 8 November 1674 aged 65 and was buried in St Giles Church in Cripplegate, London.



### ATIVIDADES

Read the poem carefully and then answer the question below:

#### ON SHAKESPEARE

What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones,  
The labor of an age in pilèd stones,  
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid  
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?  
Dear son of Memory, great heir of fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?

Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
 Hast built thyself a live-long monument.  
 For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art,  
 Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
 Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book  
 Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,  
 Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,  
 Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;  
 And so sepúlchred in such pomp dost lie,  
 That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

Source: The Norton Anthology of Poetry Third Edition (W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1983)

- 1) Qual é o tratamento dispensado por Milton com relação a Shakespeare?
- 2) Como você explica o fato de ele ser puritano e ainda assim admirar um poeta como Shakespeare? Sua biografia dá suporte para isso?
- 3) Qual é a estrutura do poema? Como você o classifica? Essa forma é ou foi usada no Brasil?

### COMENTÁRIO SOBRE AS ATIVIDADES

Este questionário serve para reforçar a familiaridade do aluno com textos literários escritos em inglês, bem como para conhecer mais de perto a poesia de Milton. Como seus poemas épicos são muito longos, preferimos trabalhar em sala de aula com seus sonetos.



### PRÓXIMA AULA

The Middle Ages (historical introduction)

### REFERÊNCIAS

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