

John Milton's Blindness

Part A.

Directions: Read this sonnet by John Milton, and answer the questions.

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, through my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide.
"Doth God exact day labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly—thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

—John Milton

1. What about his blindness most disturbs Milton?
2. What question is the main point of the first eight lines?
3. What phrase in the closing six lines summarizes the answer?
4. Describe the character and beliefs reflected in his sonnet.

Part B.

Directions: Although “On His Blindness” reflects serenity about his limitation, Milton’s blindness did not prevent him from continuing with his work as a poet. Select one of the following situations, or devise an original one, and shape Milton’s advice to the particular situation.

- an athlete paralyzed in a car accident
- a pianist whose hearing is deteriorating
- an artist whose hands are becoming crippled by arthritis

Situation:

Milton’s advice: