

Milton's Blindness

By 1652, Milton was entirely blind. He believed that his condition was self-inflicted—the aftermath of years of reading and slaving over political tracts late into the night. Many of his poems are marked by a sense of loss that many scholars attribute to the profoundly dislocating experience of losing his eyesight, although Milton also wrote explicitly about his condition in a number of his poems, where he articulates his difficulties in coming to terms with his blindness and struggles to understand how it might fit into God's masterful plan.

Later Milton admirers, including the famous J.L. Borges, would insist that Milton's blindness proved to be something of a gift, enabling the poet to exercise his mind's eye more effectively and write with more vividness and richness.