Units 1 – 6: Allegory and Literary Criticism

The Pilgrim's Progress

by John Bunyan

Literature for Units 1-6

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bunyan/pilgrim.ii.html

Unit 1 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below, then answer the following questions in your reading journal:
    1. Why do we study literature?
    2. What influences literary works?
    3. How do allegories rely on the reader's belief system?
- Read *The Pilgrim's Progress* from "The Author's Apology For His Book" through "Part I, Second Stage."
- In your reading journal, track the allegorical elements found in the reading and begin making notes critiquing the story as an allegory.

Unit 1 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

by Franklin Painter

Nature and Office of Criticism

The study or reading of literature ordinarily has a threefold purpose:

1. knowledge
2. pleasure
3. culture

When we read for knowledge, we choose works that will teach us about a particular topic. For example, reading historical fiction novels gives us a first-hand look at the life and times of people during a certain time period. This helps to enhance our knowledge of the day-to-day life of people in that time period and of how the political and social environment affected the citizens. As we read, we can tell the value of knowledge gained from the novel and form our own opinions of how well the author presented the material to us.

When we form an opinion of a piece of literature based on how well the piece served its purpose, we are criticizing this work. This critique is known as literary criticism. "Literary criticism is almost as old as literature itself. No sooner had a writer produced a literary work, even in the most ancient times, than his contemporaries proceeded to express their judgments concerning it. Among the Greeks Plato and Aristotle were critics; Aristotle's *Poetics* is still valuable for its discussion of fundamental principles. All criticism involves comparison. For every species of literature, there is an ideal form, content, and spirit, which serve the intelligent critic as a standard of judgment. This ideal is based on a realization of the recognized principles of literary art. These principles pertain to *dictions, structure, matter,* and *spirit* or *purpose."*

Literary criticism has a distinct value for three classes of people:

- To the young student it gives a clear insight into literary form and cultivates his taste for literary excellence.
- To the author it is at once a stimulant and a wholesome restraint; it rewards him for what is good and chastises him for what is bad.
- To the public it is useful in pointing out what books are worth reading and in showing the principles by which a work is to be judged.

In criticizing it is important to recognize certain general influences in literature: *nationality, epoch,* and *surroundings.* We cannot fully understand any work of literature, nor justly estimate its relative

excellence, without an acquaintance with the national traits of the writer, the general character of the age in which he lived, and the physical and social conditions by which he was surrounded. It is therefore unjust to demand in writers of an uncultivated period the same delicacy of thought, feeling, and expression that is required in writers of an age of refinement and intelligence.

Adapted for High School from:

The Nature of Allegory

A lecture delivered by Ian Johnston
of Malaspina University-College (now Vancouver Island University),
November 1998

When we say that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory (in fact, the most famous allegory in English literature) we are describing a certain form of literature which demands from the perceptive reader an awareness of what is going on and from the literary critic an appreciation for the challenges this allegorical form presents.

Simply put, an allegory is a fiction, almost invariably a story, which is designed, first and foremost, to illustrate a coherent doctrine which exists outside the fiction. Thus, the story and everything in it bear an immediate and point by point reference to a very specific aspect of the controlling doctrine which the fiction is illustrating. In that sense, allegories tend to be what we might call "philosophical" fictions, a term which means that they are to a large extent shaped and controlled by ideas or by a system of ideas which exists independently of the allegorical text.

This should be easy enough to understand, because in one way or another most of us are thoroughly familiar with allegories, fictions which exist primarily to illustrate ideas rather than to explore them independently. Many films which pit good heroes against nasty villains (e.g., traditional western movies, James Bond films) operate within a fairly obvious and popular framework of belief. Even many sporting events present themselves in an allegorical context.

Allegories tend to be very popular because they are the simplest way to appeal to and to confirm the belief system of the audience. We like to see the good people win out and the bad ones punished, often in a very simple way, because that confirms the belief system we bring to the world (or which we would like to bring to the world). Often allegories are the least complicated and most pleasing ways to remind people of a particular belief system. Hence allegories have always been an important way of educating people, from childhood onwards, because they present important doctrinal or abstract ideas in the form of a pleasing fiction. And a large part of the popularity of *The Pilgrim's Progress* arises from the fact that it was the essential text in the raising of many Protestant children within the home.

Allegories need to be distinguished from symbolic stories. Both allegorical structures and symbolic structures derive their full meaning from something beyond the literal meaning of the word, event, image, or character in the fiction. That is, they both point to a range of meanings beyond themselves. The major difference is that in allegories the reference point is clear and relatively unambiguous; whereas, with symbols the range of meaning is more ambiguous and uncertain.

For example, money in Chaucer's General Prologue and images of disease in *Hamlet* clearly exert a recurring symbolic influence throughout the works. But what they refer to is not immediately explicit, and, as readers, we need to interpret, argue about, and come (if possible) to some consensus about the range of possible meanings. By contrast, in *The Pilgrim's Progress* something like Christian's scrap of paper or the Slough of Despond refer explicitly to some important aspect of the overarching doctrine which is controlling the shape of the fiction and which every detail of the fiction is designed to illustrate. About such reference there is no ambiguity and no need for argument about a range of interpretative possibilities.

This point is particularly clear if we compare the characterization in Chaucer and Shakespeare with the characterization in Bunyan. The characters in the earlier two works are clearly (for the most part) complex, ambiguous, and arguable. There may be some (like the Knight and the Parson) who are ideal characters and serve to point to a clear Christian standard, but for the most part we cannot simply define the characters in these works according to a simple and given frame of reference. In Bunyan, of course, the situation is quite the reverse. The characters in the work almost all serve exclusively to

present unambiguously a certain principle in the doctrine; we do not have to argue about the significance of people like Ignorance, Talkative, Lord Hategood, Obstinate, Pliable, and so on. In a sense they are not characters; they are not even character types; they are the personifications of very explicit characteristics introduced into the fiction in order to illustrate a clear point. Their very names make this tendency obvious to the reader. In a sense, there is only one character in this story, Christian himself: the development of his spiritual understanding depends upon his ability to see the world in very simple terms.

In between clearly allegorical meaning and more ambiguous symbolic meaning stands a third category of literary reference called parable. In a parable, we seem to be working clearly within an allegorical framework in the sense that a very simple meaning seems to be indicated, but often the simple meaning turns out to be not so immediately obvious to figure out. The famous examples of this form, of course, are the parables of Jesus in the New Testament and, in modern times, the short stories of Franz Kafka.

Unit 2 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below, then answer the following questions in your reading journal:
    1. How is a book related to its author?
    2. In what does the moral nature appear?
    3. In what does the intellectual nature appear?
    4. What types of things can we learn about an author through his works?
- Read *The Pilgrim's Progress* from "Part I, Third Stage" through "Part I, Fifth Stage."
- In your reading journal, continue to track the allegorical elements found in the reading and continue making notes critiquing the story as an allegory.

Unit 2 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

by Franklin Painter

The Author and His Work

Every literary work reveals, to a greater or lesser degree, the personality of the author. Every literary production may be regarded as the fruit of the writer's spirit; and there is good authority for saying that "men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs from thistles." A book exhibits not only the attainments, culture, and literary art of the writer but also his intellectual force, emotional nature, and moral character. The intellectual and the emotional nature of a writer is clearly reflected in his works. Intellectual force, for example, is recognized in the firm grasp of a subject, in the marshaling of details toward a predetermined end, and in the vigor of utterance.

A large, sensitive soul manifests itself in sympathy with nature and human life. The "wee, modest, crimson-tipped" daisy, and the limping wounded hare touched the tender sympathies of Burns; and it was Wordsworth who said:

To me the meanest flower that
blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too
deep for tears.

There is no class of society, from kings to beggars, from queens to hags, with which Shakespeare has not entered into sympathy, thinking their thoughts and speaking their words.

The moral character of an author appears in his general attitude toward truth and life. A strong moral sense appears in a firm adherence to right and an unblinded condemnation of wrong. A genial, charitable spirit is shown in a kindly disposition to overlook the weaknesses of men and to magnify their virtues. Life may be looked upon as something earnest, exalted, divine; or it may be regarded as insignificant, wretched, and ending at death. It is character that gives fundamental tone to literature; and, as Matthew Arnold has said, the best results are

not attainable without "high seriousness." The difference between the flippant and the earnest writer is easily and instinctively recognized. No one can read Ruskin, for instance, without feeling his sincerity and integrity, even in his most impracticable vagaries.

It is sometimes supposed that the art of authorship can be divorced from the personality of the writer. In serious authorship this supposition is a mistake. The best writing is more than grace of rhetoric and refinement of intellectual culture. Back of all outward graces there is need of a right-thinking and truth-loving soul. One of the essential things in the training of a great writer is the development of an upright, noble character. Milton was right in maintaining that the great poet should make his life a noble poem.

Our knowledge is of two kinds: the first comes from our own experience; the other, from the experience and testimony of our fellow-men. Personal experience carries with it a conviction and power that do not usually belong to the knowledge received from the testimony of others. What we have experienced has become a part of our lives. The writers of vitality and power are those who draw largely on their individual resources—the treasures of their own experience. They write, not from the memory, but from the heart. If they borrow from others, they assimilate the information, and thus vitalize it before giving it out again. The best part of our knowledge is that which comes to us through experience and assimilation. It is a permanent possession. When an author's experience, either in an ideal or a realistic form, is introduced in his work, it becomes an interesting biographical element.

It is often highly important to understand the fundamental beliefs of a writer. His works may be in a measure unintelligible till his standpoint is fully understood. Sometimes his various writings are only an expansion and application of one or two great fundamental principles. The works of Herbert Spencer, for example, are in the main an elaboration of the theory of evolution. Byron represented a skeptical reaction against the conventional manners and beliefs of his day.

It is important to understand the mood and purpose of an author. We are not in a position to fairly judge a work until we know its spirit and object. Until we know whether the writer is playful or earnest, joyous or sad, satirical or serious, we cannot give his words the right tone and value; and until we see clearly what he is driving at, we cannot properly estimate the successive steps in his production nor judge of its worth as a whole.

Unit 3 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below, then the following question in your reading journal:
    1. In what ways can worldview and allegory be used to create literature?
- Read *The Pilgrim's Progress* from "Part I, Sixth Stage" through "Part I, Eighth Stage."
- In your reading journal, continue to track the allegorical elements found in the reading and continue making notes critiquing the story as an allegory.

Unit 3 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Interpreting Allegorical Fictions

A lecture delivered by Ian Johnston
of Malaspina University-College (now Vancouver Island University),
November 1998

Interpreting allegorical fiction presents for the literary critic a tempting danger. Since the fiction is so clearly and closely controlled by the external doctrine, there's a natural temptation to devote one's time as an interpreter to discussing the doctrine (the controlling ideas). This can be a major mistake, because it takes one's attention away from the text under scrutiny and directs it elsewhere.

For the literary critic, what matters in an allegorical fiction is not (repeat *not*) the adequacy,

coherence, or consistency of the doctrine which is being illustrated (important as that may be for other forms of enquiry). What is of central importance is how the literary text deals with the belief system, how it brings it alive (or fails to bring it alive), how it succeeds as a literary work (that is, using the resources of literature) to create a particular vision.

This point is worth stressing again and again. When one comes to write about such a clearly allegorical piece of work as *The Pilgrim's Progress* or Dante's *Divine Comedy*, there is a natural temptation to spend most of one's time discussing the doctrine being illustrated. This is especially the case with students, many of whom find it much easier to discuss ideas than literary techniques. But the ideas which shape *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* are not the factors which have made these two allegorical epics justly famous and enduring. Those qualities depend upon the various ways in which the writers have brought the ideas alive, having shaped them in particular ways to create a story which give the ideas immediacy, impact—in short—life.

We should remember that no one would ever put Dante's *Divine Comedy* or Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* on a list of primary texts in a philosophy or theology course. As rational defenses of particular ways of looking at the world, these works are clearly unsuitable. However, these two books would belong near the top of any list of great books of religious allegorical fictions. And they would belong there, not because the ideas they present are original or closely argued from first principles, but because they provide emotionally satisfying illustrations of the doctrines they assume.

Let me put this another way. When we were discussing Milton's desire to justify the ways of God to man, I suggested that that term *justify* might point to two possible activities. It could refer to a rational defense for (as in, say, a criminal court hearing, where on the basis of evidence and rational arguments the different sides argue for a correct rational interpretation of something). Or the term *justify* could refer to an aesthetic defense; that is, it could suggest that the understanding of a certain issue is not going to be arrived at rationally but emotionally. I will derive a sense of closure and completeness and satisfaction from the power of fiction rather than argument. The persuasive power will come through my imaginative sympathies primarily, rather than through a sense of rational closure.

What this means in practice is that, while the evaluative interpretation of an allegorical fiction will require some attention to the shaping ideas, the major weight will have to fall on the various ways in which the fiction works as a fiction, that is, as a work of art. In dealing with Bunyan's text, for example, we need to acknowledge the shaping Puritan doctrine, but the major task will be seeing what Bunyan has done to make his presentation of that doctrine, which is available to us in many other places, so compelling.

Unit 4 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below, then answer the following questions in your reading journal:
    1. Looking at his life, why do you think *The Pilgrim's Progress* was so important to John Bunyan?
    2. What was Bunyan's primary goal?
- Read *The Pilgrim's Progress* from "Part I, Ninth Stage" through "Part I, Conclusion."
- In your reading journal, continue to track the allegorical elements found in the reading and continue making notes critiquing the story as an allegory.

Composition

- Using your notes on allegorical elements in the story, write an essay explaining the Christian doctrine presented in the novel. What is the allegorical message to the original reader of the story? What is the message for Christians today? You may need to do some research on this topic, so please remember to quote your sources. Feel free to use the lecture in this unit as a resource.
- Look through your notes and make a bulleted list of the information you will include. Be sure to put quotation marks around direct quotes, then note the source and page number.
- Complete an outline for your essay.
- Check the **Language Arts Resources** section of your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website at **www.ArtiosHCS.com** for a link to a website with information on writing an analysis essay.

John Bunyan's Spiritual Journey

by Mary Elizabeth Hall, Christian fiction author and editor

The Pilgrim's Progress sprang from John Bunyan's heart like fruit from a well-nourished vine, but it was only after traveling a long, dark path that Bunyan was brought to the godly wisdom which undergirds this beloved allegorical work. By his own admission in his autobiography, *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan "delighted in all transgression against the law of God: so that, until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, into all manner of vice and ungodliness."

Even as conviction of sin grew in his heart, doubt and confusion tormented him for many years before he became convinced by Scripture that he was accepted and loved by God. "The words are these," he wrote. "'Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Through this blessed sentence the Lord led me over and over, first to this word, and then to that, and showed me wonderful glory in every one of them. These words also have oft since this time been great refreshment to my spirit. Blessed be God in having mercy on me." Through this Scriptural passage (Hebrews 12:22-24) and many others, Bunyan was assured of his salvation and felt called into preaching ministry.

Finding himself in disagreement with the local Quakers on certain doctrinal matters, which he described in his first published work, *Some Gospel-Truths Opened*, he preached according to English Puritan theology. The Puritans desired to "purify" the Church of England of what it considered "popish" influences. According to the European Protestantism from which the Puritans derived their doctrine, salvation is granted by God as a matter of grace rather than by the works of man, and all matters pertaining to life and doctrine are subject to the authority of Scripture.

Note: Sometimes misunderstood to mean that a fickle God bestows and withholds salvation from longing penitents on whims according to a changeable nature, Protestantism instead declares that faith and desire for salvation are granted to the hearts of all whom God leads to repentance. Often wrongly characterized by outsiders as overly strict, intolerant of others, and harshly repressive, Puritans actually encouraged deep love for God, enjoyed rich fellowship, and were generous to the poor.

Demanding reforms of the Church of England, the Puritans insisted that the affairs of church and civil government were to be carried out under the authority of the Bible. In one punitive response to these demands, Parliament enacted the Conventicle Act of 1664, which prohibited the assembly of more than five people for religious purposes outside the auspices of the Church of England. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written at least partly while Bunyan was imprisoned for violating this prohibition, incorporates many elements of Protestant theology, such as salvation by the grace of God, the authority of Scripture in discerning doctrinal truth, and the need for perseverant dependence on God alone through times of trial. As a thoroughly Protestant believer, Bunyan unfortunately failed to restrain himself from ruthlessly disparaging Catholic doctrine and culture, however, sadly displaying an uncharitable attitude when he did so.

Although Bunyan was from a poor family and had little education, his writing ability was superb. Artfully blending elements of Scripture with everyday experiences, Bunyan made skillful use of heroic form, satirical humor, and poetic techniques throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress* to support his overarching message that Christianity is the only way to eternal life and perfect joy. The work has never been out of print, has been translated into hundreds of languages, and has formed the foundational teaching in Protestant homes for centuries.

Unit 5 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below, then answer the following question in your reading journal:
    1. How does dramatic structure continue to affect Bunyan's allegory?
- If you have not completed the reading assignment from Unit 4, do so.

Composition

- Using your notes on allegorical elements in the story, write an essay explaining the Christian doctrine presented in the novel. What is the allegorical message to the original reader of the story? What is the message for Christians today? You may need to do some research on this topic, so please remember to quote your sources. Feel free to use the lecture in the unit as a resource.
- Using your notes and your outline, write a rough draft.
- Check the **Language Arts Resources** section of your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website at **www.ArtiosHCS.com** for a link to a website with information on writing an analysis essay.

Unit 5 – Assignment Background

Adapted for High School from:

Bunyan's Allegory and Style

A lecture delivered by Ian Johnston
of Malaspina University-College (now Vancouver Island University),
November 1998

Bunyan's Allegory

Many of the details of what I have just been describing will be clear enough in Bunyan's fiction. Let me list a few here, before attending to the more important question of what Bunyan does to make this faith so compelling. The particularity of Bunyan's vision can be brought out particularly well by comparing it to Chaucer's vision of a Christian pilgrimage from quite a different perspective.

First, Bunyan's hero, Christian, sets out on his pilgrimage from an overwhelming sense of fear. That question, "What must I do to be saved?" sets the tone for his immediate problem. Unlike Chaucer, there is no sense of a social celebration to be shared with others in an act of worship and communal thanks for having survived the illnesses of the winter in this life; Christian's sense is dominated by what will happen to him in the future if he does not act. The Wrath to Come, the imminent destruction of him and his community, awakens him to his spiritual nature; that appears long before any immediate desire to see the Celestial City. This fearful emotional charge has reached Christian as a result of his reading the Bible on his own. That has awakened in him a spiritual need.

His journey requires him to turn his back on his community and his family. In that sense, his mission is radically individual and remains so throughout the journey. No human responsibilities or contacts can qualify in any way his responsibility for his own soul, and most human beings he meets along the way are temptations to stray from that personal responsibility. In fact, the journey begins by running away from one's most immediate human contacts:

"So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears and ran on, crying, Life! life! eternal life! So he looked not behind him but fled towards the middle of the plain."

The gestures here are important. To focus on his newly awakened duty, Christian has to shut out the sights and sounds of the world, which are distractions. In Chaucer, by contrast, the main point of the pilgrimage is the rich variety of sights and sounds the communal activity provides. The active carrying out of the faith depends upon rich social experience; in Bunyan such social experience is dangerous. If the price of turning one's back on one's neighbors is that they ridicule the pilgrim, then that is the price one must be prepared to pay.

Bunyan's Style

The details of Bunyan's allegory, the shaping ideas in this vision of experience, are, I take it, clear enough from the attention Bunyan gives to them during the course of the story. Of more immediate

concern to us now is the question of Bunyan's style: What has he done here to make his belief so compelling to so many people? How is it, in other words, that Bunyan's tale is not just an allegory but a great work?

There are a number of answers to that, and in the time remaining I would like quickly to review some of the most important.

The first quality of this work which makes it so popular is undoubtedly the prose style. Bunyan writes in the language of the working people. Many of those most influenced by this book were probably unable to read, but having the book read to them was enough. The prose is colloquial, energetic, instantly comprehensible. In that respect, it is the most accessible text we have read, rivaled only in this respect by the King James Version of the Bible. One could cite many examples here (Bunyan's imagery derived from the experience of country folk and expressed in a language familiar to them, for instance), but the point does not need much elaboration. One has only to contrast Bunyan's style with the style of, say, *Paradise Lost*, to see the difference. Or, to make a better comparison, one can compare the effect and influence of *The Pilgrim's Progress* with the effect and influence of *Gulliver's Travels*, another spiritual pilgrimage, but one written for a much more sophisticated audience in a style far less accessible (hence, *Gulliver's Travels*, particularly the first two books, has often had to be adapted for popular entertainment, particularly for children; something which *The Pilgrim's Progress* does not require).

A second factor contributing to the vitality of this allegory is its intensely dramatic nature. Bunyan sets up a conventional form for exploring spiritual development, namely, a physical journey. But this journey pays very little attention to all the various things a writer might have introduced and instead focuses almost exclusively upon dramatic interchanges. What matters here is not the rich sensuousness or independent existence of nature but the human response to experience filtered through the narrow gate of the Puritan spirit concerned with salvation. The result is an extraordinary urgency in the narrative. Christian's soul is at stake in every encounter.

Bunyan achieves this urgency by his constant personification of the trials and tribulations which Christian must face. Sometimes these are recognizable figures from the world around us, but often they are personifications of his own doubts and weaknesses. Hence, throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress* the central metaphor of life as a battle is always present, and the encounters are delivered with an energy and vividness which transform doctrine into unforgettable incidents.

Bunyan's success in this regard can be measured in part by the extent to which his metaphorical personifications have entered the public vocabulary, providing a shared sense of what life is all about: encounters with the Slough of Despond, with Apollyon, Giant Despair, and Ignorance. By making this series of encounters dramatically exciting in the form of an easily accessible narrative, Bunyan allows people to shape their own lives in accordance with his vision. If you like, he provides them with a vocabulary and a topography according to which they can think about and plan their own spiritual lives. Depression, for example, is a concept difficult to grasp and almost impossible to resolve through thought; Giant Despair, on the other hand, is a sharply etched character who is my enemy and whom I must, as a true believer, fight as best I can. There is no doubt about which understanding of spiritual gloom is more effective psychologically.

If we remember that the majority of those who found Bunyan's vision so congenial often led desperately poor material lives in subsistence conditions, we can perhaps better understand the popularity of his vision of life as a struggle against the obstacles which threaten the spirit. To give up to despair or to relax one's faith in the granting of grace is to forget the nature of the test: such a vision, especially given in a wonderful story, can be a constant source of inspiration in difficult times.

And this vision has always been appealing to those who see that their inner light, their spiritual sense of themselves, their responsibility for the salvation of their souls is more important than the prevailing values of society. Bunyan's most vigorous attacks through his dramatic presentations direct themselves against conventional wisdom: Worldly Wiseman, Formalist, Hypocrisy, Civility, Legality. As George Bernard Shaw has pointed out, Bunyan is not concerned so much here with anything like the seven deadly sins as he is with any compromise with existing social customs. And to present life as a series of battles against such monsters, and one's spiritual duty the assertion of one's will in the face of them has a powerful appeal which goes well beyond the doctrines of grace, salvation, and faith (or at least is fully comprehensible without them). This aspect of Bunyan's vision makes it easy to see why such

Protestantism is such an active promoter of democracy.

It may be the case that, because of this intensely and urgently dramatic structure, the real achievement of this allegory is not so much to convey the details of the belief system (although these are clearly given) as to convey a certain attitude to life as an assertion of one's will in opposition to what presents itself as given by society and our fellow human beings. I take it that is what Shaw means in his comparison of Bunyan with Nietzsche. But Bunyan takes the trouble to get his doctrinal points across, and there is no doubt that the goal of the pilgrimage for Christian, the entry into the Celestial City and the union with God, is worth all the effort it takes to get there. If this story stresses the importance of the individual will shaping life in direct contravention of social norms, it is nonetheless a very Christian vision which justifies that defiance.

In that sense, Bunyan's allegory owes much of its success to more than just the urgency of his prose and the sense he conveys of the deceitfulness of the world. Complementing this is the joy Christian feels when he is in touch with his spiritual certainties. Life for the pilgrim may be lived in the constant presence of reminders of death and destruction, but the compensating joy in the glories of the rewards for the elect are delivered in a passionate prose which conveys the absolute certainty of Christian's convictions.

To get a sense of this, one need only compare Milton's description of heaven in Book III of *Paradise Lost* with Bunyan's vision of the Celestial City. The fact that Bunyan focuses on the emotions felt in the breast of the believer rather than on any direct description of the glories of God and the heavenly host may be one reason why Bunyan manages to avoid some of the difficulties Milton gets himself into, but the passionate sincerity of the prose carries a conviction that Milton's style in Book III cannot manage:

"Now as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound; and drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was built of pearls and precious stones, also the street thereof was paved with gold; so that by reason of the natural glory of the city, and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick; Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore, here they lay by it a while, crying out, because of their pangs. If ye find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love."

And yet this glorious celebration is, as always, accompanied by an ominous sense of the alternative, for the very last detail of this story is the sight of Ignorance being turned away from the gates of Heaven. Ignorance is unfit because, although he shares much the same faith as Christian and Hopeful, he does not share their total self-abasement, their sense of their own complete unworthiness: he has made the slightest of concessions to life and, although he has completed almost the entire journey, he is still not worthy: "Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction."

Unit 6 – Assignments

- Use the links found on your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website and read the some of the essays. Note the information they include in their analysis.
- Read your rough draft aloud and improve sentences that do not make sense or need to be changed.
- Look at your original sources and make note of phrases or sentences that are similar to your original source material - put quotation marks around these and cite your source using MLA format. There are links in the **Language Arts Resources** on your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website about the MLA format.
- Submit your final draft, complete with cover page and works cited page. Look over the rubric in the **Language Arts Resources** on your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website to be sure you have followed the guidelines.