

The Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide

The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan

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Overview

In the nineteenth century, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a standard volume in nearly every literate household in the United States and England. Most children read it along with the Bible and the great plays of Shakespeare. In the twentieth century, its popularity has declined, mainly because of changes in contemporary views of religion. *The Pilgrim's Progress* stands, for better or worse, as one of the monuments of Puritanism, a part of our historical past rather than an active influence in our present.

Nevertheless, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has a good deal to offer the modern reader, both in religious instruction and enjoyment. John Bunyan's religious background may have been Puritan, but the doctrine that is at the heart of *The Pilgrim's Progress* comes directly from the New Testament's Sermon on the Mount where Christ exhorts his followers to seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" and to avoid the broad path that leads to destruction. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan provides an allegorical narrative that presents in powerful, uncompromising terms what it means to follow the narrow path to Christian salvation, resisting all temptation and all worldly cares and diversions along the way.

Stated in these terms *The Pilgrim's Progress* sounds austere; its message appears alien to modern times. But if its doctrine is uncompromising, its characters and story are enlivened by Bunyan's simple yet profound understanding of human nature. As Bunyan's main character, Christian, travels along the King's highway, he encounters many different kinds of people. Some are pilgrims; others are outright enemies to Christian, scorning his devotion to a straight and narrow path. Their psychological strengths and weaknesses are readily apparent to a modern reader, even if they are presented as allegorical figures rather than realistic, complex personalities. The reader "hears" their voices, just as Bunyan undoubtedly heard them in the conversations and discussions he had engaged in as a dissenting preacher. In the character of Christian, a reader may justly think that he is catching glimpses of Bunyan himself.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a modern reader can become acquainted with the workings of a Puritan mind. For Bunyan, the gospel of Christ was a living message which informed his every thought and action, and this complete commitment to the teachings of Christ is very much at the heart of Bunyan's work. But *The Pilgrim's Progress* need not be read only for its Puritan elements, for its appeal is not primarily in its theology. Many critics see Christian as an Everyman figure whose quest represents any quest that begins in trouble and ends in maturity, reconciliation, and death. Christian's journey is finally a journey that everyone makes in some way; it is one person's way of confronting the essential difficulties and contradictions in human existence.

About the Author

John Bunyan was born at Elstow near Bedford, England, in November 1628. His father was a tinker, and Bunyan followed in his father's trade. Not much is known about his early life, but in his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, he says that as a teenager he was attracted to the pleasures of dancing, ringing the bells at the local parish church, and playing tipcat, a popular game. He would later renounce all these amusements as sinful activities.

In 1644, at the age of sixteen, he entered the Parliamentary Army, returning home in 1647. After his first marriage in 1648, he became a regular churchgoer, joining a Baptist society at Bedford. By 1653, he had become a lay preacher as a member of the Congregation at Bedford. When the monarchy was restored to power in 1660, Bunyan was imprisoned in Bedford for unlicensed preaching. There he would remain for the next twelve years. Bunyan could easily have avoided imprisonment if he had renounced preaching, but he remained firm, even though during his incarceration, he was at different times threatened with banishment from England and with execution. While in prison, Bunyan became the pastor and religious instructor of a congregation of prison inmates. He also wrote nine books, including *Grace Abounding*, which was published in 1666.

In 1671, Charles II annulled all penal statutes against Roman Catholics and Protestant nonconformists. Bunyan was granted a pardon and released in 1672.

He would be imprisoned again, but his second stay in jail was much briefer. In the last thirteen years of his life, Bunyan became a celebrated preacher, travelling to London every year to deliver sermons to large congregations. He also wrote his most popular works during this period.

The first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) is his masterpiece and went through ten editions by 1685. In 1680, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* appeared. He published *The Holy War* in 1682 and the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1684. On August 31, 1688, Bunyan died from a fever after having been caught in a heavy rain while on a ministerial visit.



Plot Summary

Pilgrim's Progress catalogs the journey of Christian, a man who is seeking his salvation on a pilgrimage to Heaven. Along the way, Christian encounters many obstacles that test his faith as well as many characters that are useful in showing him the difference between right and wrong, from the perspective of Christian religious faith. After Christian attains his heavenly reward, his family completes a pilgrimage to join him. Told as a dream, this seventeenth century religious classic uses Bible verses mixed with allegorical characters to preach its evangelist message.

Christian sets out on a journey to save his soul. He leaves behind his friends and family in the City of Destruction and follows the advice of his spiritual guide, Evangelist, in order to reach the Celestial City. His first obstacle is the Slough of Despair, which he manages to overcome with the help of a kind stranger. Christian is admitted into the Wicket Gate, the official starting point of his journey to the Celestial City. Only those who are invited through this gate are eligible for entrance into the Celestial City.

Christian mounts the Hill of Difficulty, and reaches the house called Beautiful, where a group of four sisters examine his conscience and give him supplies for his journey. On his way down the hill, Christian faces more obstacles. He battles Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation. He continues through the Valley of the Shadow of Death before being reunited with his old friend, Faithful.

Evangelist warns Christian and Faithful about entering the town of Vanity, which hosts a year-long carnival called Vanity Fair, meant to tempt pilgrims to abandon their journeys. In this town, Christian and Faithful are beaten and imprisoned. They stand trial for their religious faith and their rejection of the legal and moral codes of the town. Faithful is tortured and killed, sending him directly to the Celestial City as a martyr. Christian manages to escape from prison and is joined by Hopeful as he continues his journey.

Christian and Hopeful choose to take a shortcut that lands them in the dungeons of Doubting Castle. They are beaten and starved by the Giant Despair and urged to commit suicide. Finally, they use a magic key called Promise to escape from the Castle. They two pilgrims continue on their journey until they reach the Delectable Mountains. Here, a group of shepherds give them a map to avoid traps along the way.

The two meet Ignorance, who has joined the path by a shortcut and believes that he will be admitted to Heaven without any invitation. The three of them continue on the journey until they reach a fork in the road. Instead of looking at the map given to them by the shepherds, the group follows a bad man who leads them into a trap. They manage to get out and walk through the Enchanted Ground, where they have been warned not to fall asleep. To entertain themselves, they discuss their religious visions. Christian and Hopeful have both had visions of Jesus Christ, while Ignorance relies on his own heart as a reason why he should be allowed to enter Heaven.



Christian and Hopeful reach the River of Death, where the depth of the river changes to reflect the doubt or faith of the person who enters it. At first Christian is overwhelmed by doubt and almost drowns in the river. Hopeful rescues him and helps him until they are confident enough that the river has become shallow enough to allow them to cross. They are received into the Celestial City and carried off into the clouds. Ignorance also approaches the gates, but is denied entry because he has no invitation or Biblical revelation to make him worthy of Heaven.

The second part of the story tells of the pilgrimage undertaken by Christian's wife, Christiana, and their four sons. The family is joined by a neighbor, Mercy, who is hopeful of finding salvation by accompanying the family on the pilgrimage. Her wish is granted when she is admitted at the Wicket Gate. The group is attacked on the first leg of the journey but rescued just in time. They receive one of their first warnings to bring a conductor to guide and protect them on their journey. The group meets the Interpreter and is shown another series of moral images to interpret and learn from. They are given a guide, Great Heart, to conduct them to the next stage of their journey.

Great Heart brings them to the house called Beautiful, where the group is shown all the things that Christian once was. One of the sisters who live in the house quizzes the boys on their religious education. Great Heart reappears to lead the group on the rest of the journey. They pass through the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where Great Heart protects them from all the dangers and shows them the spots where Christian had his adventures. On their way out, they meet Honest, who accompanies them on their journey.

Their travels take them to Vanity, where all the sons are married off. The eldest son marries Mercy. More monsters are defeated and new members join the group. The journey continues to Doubting Castle, where the men of the group fight a battle that destroys the castle and the giant that lives in it. The group is reminded at various points about the fate of Christian during his pilgrimage. Finally the group arrives at the River of Death. The members of the group each receive a letter welcoming them into the Celestial City. The children of Christian and their wives remain on the living side to have children to continue Christian's legacy.



Part 1: Through Page 30

Part 1: Through Page 30 Summary

Pilgrim's Progress catalogs the journey of Christian, a man who is seeking his salvation on a pilgrimage to Heaven. Along the way, Christian encounters many obstacles that test his faith as well as many characters that are useful in showing him the difference between right and wrong, from a perspective of Christian religious faith. After Christian attains his heavenly reward, his family completes a pilgrimage to join him. Told as a dream, this seventeenth century religious classic uses Bible verses mixed with allegorical characters to preach its evangelist message.

The author sets out to justify why he has written the story. He hopes to teach people through the use of allegory and metaphor. He hopes that this approach does not offend those who feel that all religious works should be sacred. Instead, he wishes to produce something that helps people find a place with God.

Christian is a simple man who has a revelation of death and hell. He tries to tell his family about it, but they dismiss him as crazy. He devotes himself to reading and prayer, trying to figure out how to save himself from destruction. He meets Evangelist, who tells him he must leave his home, the City of Destruction. He leaves his family, who urge him to forget his revelations and return home. Two neighbors, Obstinate and Pliable, catch him and try to force him to go back home. Christian explains that he is going to a better place. Pliable agrees to go with him. The two of them continue on their journey, as Christian shares his Biblical teachings about Heaven, or the Celestial City.

On their way, they accidentally walk into the Slough of Despair. Christian sinks into the mire because of the heavy burdens of sin he carries on his back. Pliable is angry at his companion's misfortune. He pulls out of the mire and goes home, leaving Christian by himself. A man called Help appears to pull Christian out of the Slough of Despair. Help explains that the Slough is made of the fears of sinners as they approach death and that humans cannot repair the slough. The best solution was to put a set of steps in it, but people rarely see the steps and end up stuck in the mire.

Christian continues on his journey. He meets Worldly Wiseman from the town of Carnal Policy. Christian explains his mission. Worldly tells him that the path is too difficult and that he should give up. He suggests that Christian go to a village called Morality to meet with two men, Legality and Civility, who can help ease his burdens. Christian goes to see them but is frightened by the hill in front of their house, which seems ready to collapse. He regrets having listened to Worldly Wiseman.

While he is waiting and trying to figure out what to do now, he meets Evangelist again. Evangelist is angry to see that Christian has left the path he showed him. Christian explains his conversation with Worldly Wiseman. Evangelist tells Christian that Worldly Wiseman tries to persuade people that they do not need to take the hard path and that



they can get out of their sins by following rules and laws. Christian apologizes for abandoning the right path and listening to Worldly. He asks Evangelist is there is still hope for him. Evangelist tells him that he can still return to the right path.

Christian returns to the path and approaches the Wicket Gate. He knocks on the door and is met by Goodwill. Goodwill lets him in the gate, covering him to protect him from the arrows from the castle of the Devil. Christian explains his purpose and journey so far. Goodwill tells Christian to continue on the path up the mountain in order to be relieved of his burden.

On his way out, Christian stops to meet the Interpreter, who shows him many things. The first is a portrait of a man, presumably Jesus Christ, who is the only leader on the path. The second is a room full of dust, which is a metaphor for a man's soul that is only truly cleaned by the Gospel. The next is a pair of boys, Passion and Patience. Passion is concerned with the wealth of the world while Patience waits for the wealth of heaven. The next is a fire that the Devil is trying to put out with water while Jesus Christ gives it new fuel with oil. Another image is a golden palace where a man battles his enemies until he is admitted to a golden room. Another image is a man in an iron cage who cannot repent his sins. The last image is of a man who has seen the Judgment Day in a dream and knows he will be left behind because of his sins.

After seeing these warnings, Christian continues on his way up the mountain as fast as he can, although he still carries the burden of sin on his back. He reaches a part of the mountain that is marked with a cross and a tomb. Christian's burden falls off of his back and disappears into the tomb. Christian is delighted that his sin has been removed. Shining Ones, or angels, give him some special tools, including a roll of written text, to comfort him on his journey.

Christian meets Sloth, Simple, and Presumption, who are all sleeping and refuse Christian's help to continue on the path. He also meets Formalist and Hypocrisy, from the city of Vain-Glory, who are sneaking on to the path through a hole in the fence. They claim that people have been taking this shortcut to the Celestial City for a long time because the way through the Wicket Gate is too difficult. They use religious traditions and rules to justify their inclusion on the path. Christian warns them that they will not be welcomed at the end of the path. They laugh at him. They all continue on the journey until they come to the Hill of Difficulty. There are two easier paths on the sides of the Hill, marked Danger and Destruction. Formalist and Hypocrisy each choose one of these paths and die.

Christian climbs the Hill. He stops to rest in an arbor in the middle of the Hill. When he reaches the top, he meets Timorous and Mistrust, who have been frightened on the path and are turning back. They say that there are lions waiting. Christian wants to check his roll, but finds it is missing. He realizes that he left it in the arbor and has to go back to get it. This backtracking keeps him from reaching the top again before nightfall.

When he reaches the top, he finds a palace called Beautiful. He is introduced to the women of the house, Discretion, Piety, Prudence, and Charity. Piety asks him questions



about his journey, and asks him to recount the people he has met. Prudence asks him about his former life and how he was able to overcome his sins. Charity asks about Christian's family and why he left them behind. The next morning they show him their library, which is full of records of ancient religious acts. The day after that, they show him the armory, which is full of equipment and supplies for pilgrims as well as many famous objects from the Bible. When he prepares to set out on his journey, they give him all the equipment he will need.

As he is leaving the house, Christian discovers that his old friend, Faithful, is also making the pilgrimage, and he goes to catch up with him. On his way down the Hill, he enters the Valley of Humiliation, where he meets Apollyon, a reptilian monster. Christian is forced to fight the monster. He uses the special equipment given to him in the house called Beautiful, and eventually kills the monster using his holy sword.

Part 1: Through Page 30 Analysis

The author's apology reflects the views of his time period that it is morally wrong to tell stories for entertainment. Instead, the author needs to set up the framework of a mock dream in order to show that he is not telling an idle story to entertain, but is attempting to put his story into the religious framework of a vision or revelation.

Christian represents the common man, who is faced with the question of what will happen to him after death. He is disturbed by images of Hell and chooses to leave his home and family to seek salvation. On the way, he meets Evangelist, who acts as his spiritual guide. Christian shows his weaknesses in often being detoured from his goal by the forces of evil. One of the interesting points in this is that the evils that Christian avoids are not connected with murder or anything else so clearly evil. Instead, the people he meets show that laziness and greed are just as detrimental to the soul as any of those crimes. Mr. Worldly Wiseman tries to convince Christian that the moral codes of human society are enough to save him from Hell, whereas Evangelist tells Christian that following religious codes and traditions will not save his soul. This message is repeated when Christian meets Sloth, Simple, and Presumption, who are asleep on the path, as well as Formalist and Hypocrisy, who use tradition as a shortcut to Heaven.

The house called Beautiful and the women who live there, as well as the Interpreter, all offer a series of religious lessons in the images that they show to Christian. All of these images are elaborate metaphors that Christian must interpret through a Biblical context. For the most part, these images show other versions of the common man, who have been condemned because of their attachment to the mortal world while neglecting their duties to the spiritual one.



Part 1: Pages 30-60

Part 1: Pages 30-60 Summary

Christian continues on his journey, leaving the Valley of Humiliation and entering the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Christian enters the Valley of the Shadow of Death at night, making the experience scarier for him. He passes the Mouth of Hell and continually prays for guidance and help in overcoming his fear. When he reaches the other side, daylight reveals all the evil things that he has passed through. At the end of the valley, are the caves of two giants. The giant Pagan is already dead and the giant Pope is a crazy old man.

Christian catches up with his friend Faithful. Faithful explains that he had left the City of Destruction despite the mockery of the townspeople. He describes the various obstacles that he faced in his pilgrimage, including one instance where he was beaten by Moses and then forgiven by Jesus Christ. He also describes the various people who tried to get him to give up the pilgrimage, including Shame, who argued that it was shameful to admit one's sins.

The two continue the journey together. They meet Talkative, who tells them that he rejects all pointless conversation. Faithful believes him, but Christian knows that he actually talks at length about anything. Faithful now understands Talkative's true character, and gives him a lesson on the difference between saying and doing. They challenge Talkative about noble and religious deeds, but he only speaks about continuing discussions. Christian explains that many people talk about religious principles without practicing them, and that is dangerous. The pair meets Evangelist and tells him of their journey so far. Evangelist warns them that they are about to enter a city where they will face death. One of them will die but go directly to the Celestial City as a martyr.

They enter a town called Vanity, which holds a year-long carnival called Vanity Fair. This fair is set up by the evil forces to stop pilgrims on their way to the Celestial City. The people of Vanity Fair want to steal the clothing and possessions that Faithful and Christian bring with them. The pair is beaten and imprisoned. They take the punishment mildly and earn the respect of some. They are told that they will be put on trial and then punished by death for disturbing the community.

A trial is held, presided over by Lord Hate-Good. Faithful defends himself by stating that he is joined with God. Three witnesses testify against him, saying that he has condemned their town and that he has said that their religion and moral codes are false. The jury finds Faithful guilty. They sentence him to death by torture. Faithful dies and is immediately carried to Celestial City. Christian remains in prison until he has a chance to escape.



As he leaves Vanity, Hopeful joins Christian. They meet By Ends, a man who never does anything difficult and supports religion only when it is popular. Christian and Hopeful leave By Ends, who goes on to converse with other pilgrims about how it is possible for a person to take advantage of circumstances for personal gain and yet still be a respected member of the community. The group led by By Ends is so sure of their opinion that they challenge Christian and Hopeful to debate the issue. Christian tells them that it is always wrong to use religion for personal gain. He and Hopeful leave the group and continue on their journey together.

They quickly pass the Plain of Ease and come to a Lucre Hill. A man at this hill claims that they can become rich with the silver mine located in this hill. Christian knows that the area is dangerous and refuses to go to examine the silver mine. The group led by By Ends, however, is lured with the promise of easy riches. They fall into the silver mine and die.

Christian and Hopeful come to a statue of Lot's wife and discuss the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Continuing on, they reach a pleasant river, where they spend several days resting. After leaving the river, the pair is very tired. They see a meadow, called By Path Meadow. Christian thinks that this path will be easier and convinces Hopeful to go that way. They meet another pilgrim on the path, named Vain Confidence. When night falls, Vain Confidence falls into a pit. This causes Christian and Hopeful to regret their choice to walk down this path. They try to go back the way they came but are trapped in a flood.

When they wake the next morning, they find Doubting Castle and are taken prisoner by the Giant Despair and his wife Diffidence. The Giant beats and starves them, encouraging them to commit suicide to end their suffering. They are trapped in the dungeon for over a week before Christian realizes, after long prayer, that he has a magic key called Promise that can open any door. They use the key to escape the castle.

Part 1: Pages 30-60 Analysis

When Christian leaves the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he sees the caves of Pope and Pagan, both of which are dead or dying. The Pagan represents the European religions that predate Christianity, mainly the worship of Roman and Greek gods and goddesses and the animist religions of many European territories. The Pope represents the Catholic religion, which Christian, as a Protestant Englishman, has rejected. This same idea is repeated when Christian and Faithful reach Vanity Fair. The author mentions that English people and others of the Protestant Faith reject the shops of the Romans, meaning the followers of Catholicism.

The characters that Christian and Faithful, and then Christian and Hopeful, meet represent the same theme, that the appearance of religious faith is not the same as actually living one's life according to the teachings of the Bible. Talkative and By Ends both use religion as a discussion point, but they argue that the appearance of faith is



equal to faith itself. They discuss their decision to support religious principles only when it is in their best interest. This opinion meets its symbolic conclusion when By Ends and his friends, because of their greed that prompts them to investigate the dangerous silver mine, are taken off the path to Heaven.

Vanity and Vanity Fair are both strong representations of the worldly goods for which people forsake salvation. The town has an elaborate legal and merchant code that it uses to justify its actions. Faithful and Christian are tried for their allegiance to God in opposition to the religious and legal rules of civilization.

Christian has not learned from the experience of the many characters he has met on his path and chooses to take a shortcut around a difficult obstacle. This shortcut results in his imprisonment in Doubting Castle, where he is again tested by the idea of suicide as an end to suffering. He and Hopeful support each other in their resolution, though if either was left alone, they both might have ended their pilgrimage there. The two are able to escape only after long prayer, which reminds them of the tools that have always been in their possession.



Part 1: Pages 60-90

Part 1: Pages 60-90 Summary

Christian and Hopeful reach the Delectable Mountains and meet a group of shepherds. The shepherds explain that the mountains are very close to Celestial City. They show the two pilgrims many things, including the Hill of Error and the Mountain of Caution. The shepherds show them a door that leads into Hell. Christian and Hopeful use a spyglass to see Celestial City but are so shaken by their glimpse into Hell that they cannot hold the spyglass steady. The shepherds advise them of how to continue on their journey, and give them a map. Christian and Hopeful are warned not to listen to the Flatterer or to sleep on Enchanted Ground.

The two continue on their journey. They meet Ignorance. Ignorance shows pride that he has always obeyed religious laws and has taken a shortcut onto the path instead of being invited in through the Wicket Gate. Christian warns him that he might not be allowed to enter the Celestial City because of these shortcuts. The three travel together, hoping to teach Ignorance something along the way.

Christian tells the story of Little Faith, who was making the same pilgrimage when three thieves robbed him. Little Faith loses all his money but holds on to his jewels and his certificate of entrance into Heaven. Hopeful argues that Little Faith should have fought the thieves, while Christian argues that not everyone can rule through strength.

They reach a point in the path with two equally straight paths in front of them. They are not sure where to go and forget to consult the map given to them by the shepherds. A black man leads them down one path that veers away from Celestial City and into a trap. Here they meet Atheist, who tells them that Celestial City does not exist and that they should give up now. They turn away from Atheist and persist in their journey toward Celestial City.

Christian and Hopeful grow very tired but remember the shepherds warning not to fall asleep on the Enchanted Ground. They try to keep each other awake by telling stories about their lives. Hopeful explains that he used to lead a sinful life and was saddened by the idea that he would never be able to escape his past sins. Hopeful prayed until he received a vision of Jesus Christ that convinced him that his sins had been forgiven. Ignorance explains that his own chance for salvation comes from his own heart, but visions or other religious signs have not confirmed this. Hopeful and Christian both argue that Ignorance has no Biblical foundation for his faith and that revelation from God is necessary to show that one is worthy to enter the Celestial City. Ignorance begins to lag behind the other two, until he is no longer walking with them.

Hopeful and Christian leave the Enchanted Ground and enter the Land of Beulah, where they stay for awhile, resting from their journey. They are very close to Celestial City now. As they approach the city, the grandeur and riches they see around them



delight them. The pilgrims must cross the River of Death in order to reach the gates of Celestial City. The river is shallow for men of faith and deep for those who doubt. Christian is overcome with doubt and the river is very deep. Hopeful fights to keep him from drowning. Christian begins to regain his faith and the river becomes shallower. Two Shining Ones, or angels, meet them on the other side of the river and take them up into the clouds. Looking back, the reader sees Ignorance approach the gate, but see that he is not allowed in.

Part 1: Pages 60-90 Analysis

As the first part of the story heads toward its conclusion, Ignorance's beliefs give another clue into the religious message of the author. Ignorance is without Biblical training and without direct revelation from God. His pilgrimage to Heaven is based on his own feelings that he is worthy, without any signs from God that he will be made welcome. He enters the path from a shortcut and takes various shortcuts to get through the obstacles without showing his faith, such as when he crosses the River of Death on a ferry instead of showing his faith in walking through it. He is not allowed to enter the Celestial City and is met with contempt by the guards there. This shows that specific Biblical and divine favor separate the worthy from the unworthy.

The River of Death is a final test of religious faith. The river is easy to cross if one has faith in God and in one's own worthiness to enter Heaven. It is difficult for those full of doubt or worry. Christian is overcome with final doubts about his salvation, but Hopeful manages to save him. Like their time in the Doubting Castle, the two work together so that both can be saved.



Part 2: Through Page 30

Part 2: Through Page 30 Summary

The author reopens the story by relating the fame that has been given to the first part of the story. He has an imaginary conversation with the book itself to justify this second part, which will describe the pilgrimage of Christian's wife and family. In the opening of the second part, the author meets Mr. Sagacity, who explains to him what has happened within Christian's family since his departure.

Christiana, brokenhearted by her husband's departure, begins to wonder about her own salvation. She and her sons decide to see their father. She has a dream where her sins are revealed to her and where she is visited by Secret, a messenger from Heaven, who brings her a certificate to enter the Celestial City. While Christiana and her family are preparing to go on the pilgrimage, their neighbors, Mercy and Mrs. Timorous, visit them. Mrs. Timorous condemns all of Christiana's plans. Mercy, however, asks to accompany Christiana partway with the secret hope that she can complete the pilgrimage to save her own soul.

Mercy and Christiana's family set out together. Mercy is worried that she will not be allowed in at the Wicket Gate because she has not been expressly invited. The group uses the steps to get through the Slough of Despair. They approach the gate and wait. When the gate is finally opened, Mercy faints with worry that she will not be allowed to go on. Goodwill, the gatekeeper, however gives permission for the whole group to enter. While they are resting at the house, one of the boys, Matthew, eats fruit from the forbidden trees of the Devil's garden.

As the group leaves the gatekeeper's house, two men stop the group. They threaten to sexually assault the women. Reliever happens to meet the group and save them from their attackers. He tells them that they should have asked for a conductor to protect them on their journey. The group continues on to the Interpreter's house, where they are shown the same images that were shown to Christian.

The Interpreter shows them additional scenes, including a man who refuses a celestial crown. They also see a beautiful room with a spider. Other images include a family of chickens, a garden full of flowers, a field of wheat, a robin eating a spider, and a rotten tree. Christina and Mercy interpret all of these images as showing different lessons about religious faith and the false paths of worldly concerns.

The next morning, the group is ceremonially bathed and clothed in white. The interpreter seals a mark on their foreheads. He sends them off on the journey to the house called Beautiful with Great Heart as their conductor. When they reach the spot where Christian was relieved of his burden of sin, they pause to think about Christ's suffering and the removal of their sins. The group passes the spot where Christian had



met Simple, Sloth, and Presumption. Now, however, these three men have been hanged as a warning for future pilgrims not to repeat their sins.

Part 2: Through Page 30 Analysis

The journey of Christian's family is intended to show how women and children also reach salvation. The main difference in their pilgrimage is that they are attacked because of their perceived weakness and are cautioned to rely on a guide to protect them on their journey. The female pilgrims require a guide and protector, something that the male pilgrims did not require. Similarly, the female pilgrims find the path changed from when Christian walked it. The first set of bad characters, Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, are not there to tempt the pilgrims. Instead, they have been punished and made into a warning. Again, the female pilgrims do not have a chance to decide for themselves in this temptation, but are guided and told of the clear wrongs of those characters.

Mercy's personal decision to join the family is also an ongoing source of religious doctrine. She was not personally invited and did not have a revelation or vision to cause her to seek out the path. She is worried that she will not be allowed to attempt the pilgrimage. However, her true faith is recognized and she is allowed to enter at the Wicket Gate.



Part 2: Pages 30-60

Part 2: Pages 30-60 Summary

The group begins the climb up the Hill of Difficulty. They are shown all the places where other pilgrims faced difficulties or had taken the wrong path. There is a platform erected to commemorate the two men who had tried to warn Christian not to proceed for fear of the lions. These two men have had their tongues burned with an iron for their false advice.

The group approaches the house called Beautiful. Since Christian's pilgrimage, an additional obstacle has appeared. It is a giant called Grim, or Bloody Man. Great Heart attacks the giant and defeats him using his holy sword. The group reaches Beautiful House and asks Great Heart to stay with them the rest of the way. Great Heart replies that they should have asked the Interpreter for a conductor for the whole journey and that he must return to his master's house.

The group is welcomed into the house. That night, Mercy has a dream that she is welcomed into Heaven. The group stays at the house for over a month, learning from the sisters who live there. Prudence becomes a religious teacher for the four boys, Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James. During their visit, Matthew becomes sick from the fruit he ate from the Devil's garden. A doctor arrives and gives Matthew a potion to make him vomit up the bad food. The doctor gives Christiana a box of pills that will cure any illness that the pilgrims have along the way.

As the group prepares to leave, they send a message to the Interpreter, asking if Great Heart will accompany them the rest of the journey. Great Heart arrives to go with them and protect them from danger. The group goes forth on their pilgrimage, passing through the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Great Heart points out the spots where Christian had his adventures. He also protects them from the various dangers that occur along the way. His protection includes killing a giant.

They meet Honest, another pilgrim who tells them the story of Fearing. Fearing was a pilgrim who was frightened at every step along the journey but was ultimately received into the Celestial City for his faith. This story reassures the women and children that they are not alone in feeling frightened along the journey, and that they will still be able to achieve their ultimate reward. Honest also tells them the story of Self-Will, who used the actions of people in the Bible to justify his own sins.

Part 2: Pages 30-60 Analysis

The female pilgrimage continues along the same lines. They are warned again of their need for a guide, and are admonished for not thinking of this precaution earlier. Great Heart leads them through all the dangers while showing them the highlights of Christian's pilgrimage. The group does not have to rely on itself the way that Christian



did, and most of their journey is taken up with admiring the deeds committed by Christian on his pilgrimage. Similarly, the men who had tried to dissuade Christian have been punished and their crimes used as a warning. The female pilgrimage has not had the opportunity to be tempted, but instead is given a clear black-and-white explanation for why things are wrong.



Part 2: Pages 60-90

Part 2: Pages 60-90 Summary

The group stops for the night at the inn of a man named Gaius. Gaius lectures the group on the virtues of women identified throughout the Bible and praised for their devotion to Jesus Christ during his death and resurrection. The men of the group discuss an evil giant named Slay Good, who encourages thieves to rob the pilgrims. When they go to fight him, they find that he has a prisoner named Feeble Minded. After slaying Slay Good, the group stays at the inn for another month. During this time, Mercy marries Matthew, and Gaius gives permission for his daughter Phoebe to marry James.

When the group prepares to resume its journey, they ask Feeble Minded to join them. He is worried about being a burden on the group because of his weakness. The arrival of Ready to Halt, a crippled pilgrim, reassures Feeble Minded that the two weak men can work together to complete the pilgrimage. The expanded group sets out on the next stage of their journey, while Great Heart again points out all of the places where Christian had adventures on his pilgrimage.

They approach the town of Vanity. They lodge with Mr. Mnason, a friend of Great Heart's, who is one of the few good people in the town. Mnason's two daughters, Grace and Martha, marry the remaining sons, Samuel and Joseph. The men learn of a monster that lives outside the town. They go off and fight the monster until it dies of its many wounds. This earns the groups the thanks of the townspeople in Vanity, who let the pilgrims continue on their way. During this time, the married couples have all produced children, as they will continue to do in order to keep the bloodlines of Christian's family alive.

After leaving Vanity, they are all imprisoned in Doubting Castle. The men engage in a bloody battle to kill the Giant Despair and destroy his castle. In the course of doing so, they release two prisoners, who accompany them on their journey. The group celebrates their victory before continuing on to the Delectable Mountain.

At the Delectable Mountain, the shepherds show the group Mount Marvel, Mount Innocent, and Mount Charity. The shepherds shower the group in gifts and jewels. When the group resumes their journey, they meet Valiant For The Truth, who has just killed the robbers that have been plaguing other pilgrims. He explains that Christian's pilgrimage inspired him to take one of his own, despite the objections of his family.

The group enters the Enchanted Ground, where they are warned not to fall asleep. They see two pilgrims who have fallen asleep. They try to wake them, but the enchantment has forced them to sleep forever without ever making it to the Celestial City. As they successfully exit the Enchanted Ground, they meet Standfast. They are welcomed into the Land of Beulah. Christiana receives a letter stating her expected



entrance to the Celestial City. She says goodbye to her children and friends and crosses the River of Death.

The rest of the group waits for their own letters to come. First is Ready to Halt, then Feeble Minded, the prisoners rescued from Doubting Castle, Honest, Valiant For The Truth, and Standfast. The four sons and their wives stay on the living side in order to have more children to continue Christian's family line.

Part 2: Pages 60-90 Analysis

Unlike Christian, his children are all encouraged to marry and procreate in order to maintain his family line among the living. The marriages arranged for the four sons are all extremely fruitful and produce many children to continue Christian's legacy.

Throughout the last section of the second part, there are monsters to be killed and evil characters to be punished. Unlike Christian's pilgrimage, the actions taken here are meant to seal the pilgrimages for the future against temptation and misguided choices. The defeat of Doubting Castle, as well as the killing of the robbers who have stolen from other pilgrimages, conclude these problems for future pilgrims. The several random monsters introduced at various points allow Great Heart and the other men to prove their bravery while clearing the path for the presumably weaker women and children.

At the conclusion of the novel, the dream framework breaks down completely as the characters assume a level of reality. The author explains that the children of Christian have continued to live and breed after the conclusion of the story, making them appear more like real people than the visions of a dream. This concern with the real world consequences of the pilgrimage is very different from the first part of the story. The second part has been largely repetitive of Christian's adventures and has focused more on the slaying of monsters and the procreating of children than on the spiritual quest of individual characters or the lessons to be learned from false pilgrims.



Characters

Christian

Christian is the common man, who suddenly fears for his soul after having a revelation about Hell. He leaves his family to make a Pilgrimage to Celestial City. Along the way he meets various characters that try to lead him off the path, usually by suggesting he take an easier path, which turn out to be false. Evangelist, who appears at various times to act as his guide, assists Christian. He also forms strong friendships with Faithful, who is martyred in Vanity, and Hopeful, who helps him overcome doubt and remain strong in his faith.

After Christian reaches Celestial City, his family sets out to join him. Along their journey, their guide points out all of the places where Christian had adventures. Those who respected Christian on his pilgrimage welcome the family. These circumstances make it significantly easier for the family to complete their pilgrimage.

The Interpreter

The Interpreter lives at a halfway point between the Wicket Gate and the House Beautiful. Pilgrims stop at his home and view images that give moral messages for them to interpret. Christian and his family both stop and rest here, seeking to learn all that they can about the ways to avoid Hell and how to recognize good religious attitudes.

The Daughters of Beautiful

The four sisters that live at the House Beautiful are active in helping pilgrims find their way on the path. They show Christian their large library full of ancient heroic acts as well as their armory full of weapons to help pilgrims complete the journey. When Christian's family arrives at the house, one of the sisters, Prudence, becomes a religious instructor for the boys and tests their religious knowledge.

Faithful

Faithful is an old friend of Christian's from the City of Destruction. He sets out on his own pilgrimage and meets up with Christian at the bottom of the Hill of Difficulty. The two travel together until they reach Vanity. The two are put on trial by the evil residents of the town and Faithful is tortured to death. His soul passes immediately to Heaven without having to risk the rest of the obstacles on the path.



Hopeful

After Faithful is killed, Hopeful becomes Christian's partner. Hopeful and Christian are imprisoned in Doubting Castle, and are beaten and starved by the Giant Despair. The two prisoners keep each other from committing suicide. When the two of them attempt to cross the River of Death in order to enter the Celestial City, Christian almost goes under because of his doubt. Hopeful saves him and keeps him from drowning so that they both can make it to the other side and enter the gates of Heaven.

Ignorance

Ignorance takes a shortcut onto the path without entering through the Wicket Gate. He feels that his own moral awareness is enough to gain entrance into the Celestial City, and that he does not need the Biblical revelation and visions that came to Christian and Hopeful. When he arrives at the gates of Heaven, he is ignored and told to go away because he was never invited to take the pilgrimage.

Christiana

Christian's wife initially thinks her husband's revelations are crazy but over time she begins to worry about herself and her children. She has a vision that tells her to go on the pilgrimage to meet her husband. She takes her four sons, Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James, with her. Her neighbor, Mercy, also agrees to come. A guide, Great Heart, leads the group. Great Heart protects the group from all the dangers on the path. When the group finally reaches the River of Death, Christiana receives the first letter welcoming her into the Celestial City.

Mercy

Mercy is the neighbor of Christiana who chooses to go on the pilgrimage with the family. At first Mercy is very worried that she will be denied entry because she was not expressly invited. However, she is allowed entrance at the Wicket Gate and later has her own visions of the Celestial City. Along the way, she marries Matthew, the oldest son of Christian and Christiana, in order to continue the family line. Mercy and Matthew have many children, both during the journey and after the group arrives in the Land of Beulah.

Great Heart

Great Heart lives with the Interpreter. He is sent to act as a guide for Christian's family on their pilgrimage. Along the way, he points out all the places where Christian met important people or accomplished important things. He also protects the family from dangers, including the slaying of various monsters, including the Giant Despair.



Evangelist

Evangelist is Christian's spiritual guide, who first encourages him to go on the pilgrimage. Along the way, Evangelist appears to offer guidance to Christian and encourage him to continue on the path.

Honest

Honest meets Christian's family and accompanies them for the rest of the journey. He helps protect the family and works with the other men in the group to slay the dangerous beasts that threaten them.

Valiant for the Truth

Valiant For The Truth slays the robbers who had been stealing from other pilgrims. He was inspired to take the pilgrimage by Christian's story and is honored to help guard the family as it completes the journey to the Celestial City.



Objects/Places

City of Destruction

The City of Destruction is the hometown of Christian and his family. Christian has a vision that the city will be destroyed in fire and punishment. This leads him to set out on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City.

Slough of Despair

The first obstacle in the path to the Celestial City is this mire, which sits right before the Wicket Gate. The Slough was created by the doubt and worry of other pilgrims who gave up the search for salvation. No one has been able to fix this place, but people have managed to put a set of steps in it for those who look for them.

Wicket Gate

The Wicket Gate is the official entrance to the pilgrim path. Only those that are officially invited to enter here have a chance of being accepted at the Celestial City. Many people try to shortcut this route and sneak in at other points along the path, but they are not able to enter the Celestial City.

House of the Interpreter

The house of the Interpreter is the half-way point between the Wicket Gate and the House Beautiful. The Interpreter shows the pilgrims many metaphorical images in order to spur them to religious thinking.

Hill of Difficulty

The Hill of Difficulty is a very high hill that must be climbed in order to reach the House Beautiful. At the bottom of the hill is the cross and tomb of Christ which relieves the burden of sin from the pilgrims. Along the way, there is an arbor where Christian takes a nap and loses his sacred papers. The House Beautiful sits at the top of the hill. On the other side of the hill are the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

House Beautiful

The House Beautiful sits at the top of the Hill of Difficulty and many pilgrims stop there to rest. The house contains a large library full of the records of ancient heroes. It also contains an armory full of magical weapons and supplies for pilgrims. Christian stays



there for several days, learning from the sisters that live there. Christian's family remains there for over a month, as one of the sisters, Prudence, gives religious lessons to the four sons.

Valley of Humiliation

The Valley of Humiliation is described as very beautiful for those who are humble in spirit. Here Christian fights against Apollyon, a reptilian monster.

Valley of the Shadow of Death

The Valley of the Shadow of Death has very different prospects in the day and the night. Christian enters during the night and is protected by constant prayer. His family arrives in the daylight and has to defend itself against many animals and monsters.

Gaius's Inn

When Christian's family arrives in Vanity, they are taken to the inn of one of the few good men in the town, Gaius. Here they rest for a while. Also, the four sons each get married in order to carry on the family line.

Vanity/Vanity Fair

Vanity is a town set up to delay pilgrims on their journey by appealing to their vanity. A year-long carnival, Vanity Fair, is erected to appeal to the tastes of travelers and persuade them to give up their pilgrimage. Christian and Faithful face imprisonment and death for speaking out against the practices of the town. When Christian's family arrives, however, they are allowed free travel because the men of the group kill a monster that had bothered the town.

Doubting Castle

The Doubting Castle is located along one of the false paths. Christian and Hopeful are imprisoned here by the Giant Despair. They manage to escape with a magic key. When Christian's family is also imprisoned here, the men of the group battle against the Giant and destroy the castle forever.

Delectable Mountains

The shepherds on the Delectable Mountains show the pilgrims visions of various good and evil things. They give Christian a map for the journey and advise him about the dangers along the way. They give Christian's family jewels and gifts.



Enchanted Ground

The Enchanted Ground is one of the last obstacles for pilgrims. If a pilgrim falls asleep here, they never wake up to complete the pilgrimage.

Land of Beulah

The Land of Beulah is always sunny. Across the river are the gates of the Celestial City.

The River of Death

The River of Death is the last obstacle for the pilgrims. If the pilgrim is faithful, the river is shallow. If the pilgrim is doubtful, the river is deep. Once someone has crossed the river, they reach the gates of the Celestial City.

The Celestial City

The Celestial City, or Heaven, is the final destination of all the pilgrims. Only pilgrims who have been invited are offered admission here. The Shining Ones, or angels meet the pilgrims.

Setting

The Pilgrim's Progress is written in the "similitude of a dream"; Bunyan recounts a dream in which he views the progress or journey of Christian (and later Christian's wife Christiana) from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Along the way, Christian passes through places bearing names like Vanity, Beulah, Doubting Castle, and Beautiful. He also encounters physical obstacles like the Slough of Despond, the Hill Difficulty, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the river before the gate to the Celestial City. As the names suggest, the setting of *The Pilgrim's Progress* consists of places that represent different spiritual and mental states and temptations. The Hill Difficulty may appear as a real hill to be climbed on Christian's journey; just as surely it represents the spiritual obstacles that must be overcome if Christian is to make progress on his journey to the Celestial City. The keeper of the Doubting Castle, Giant Despair, may appear to be a fairy tale monster who keeps his captives under lock and key.

He also represents the particular psychological condition one will fall prey to when one's faith begins to slip.

One may read *The Pilgrim's Progress* knowing nothing of seventeenth-century rural England, responding only to its vivid pictures and characters. Places like the Valley of the Shadow of Death or the Delectable Mountains are physically described (the valley is a narrow pathway between "a very deep ditch" and "a very dangerous mire"; the mountains comprise gardens, orchards, vineyards, and fountains), but the characteristics are so general that each reader may create his own image of them. It is interesting to look at the popular illustrated editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* that have appeared in translation throughout the world. So universal is the appeal of *The Pilgrim's Progress* that artists recreate Bunyan's famous scenes in a manner appropriate to their own time and culture. Elements of *The Pilgrim's Progress* illuminate specific aspects of seventeenth-century England. When Christian and Faithful arrive at Vanity Fair, it could be any large commercial center where people from different social classes and walks of life jostle each other.

Here we are told one will find for sale temptations and lures that have been operating for five thousand years. However, when Faithful is brought up on charges before the citizens of Vanity for placing his "principles of faith and holiness" before prince, people, law, and custom, we are very much in the world of seventeenth-century England where religious differences were a cause of civil strife, and where a man like Bunyan could be imprisoned for long periods of time for unlicensed preaching.

Social Sensitivity

Readers should be aware that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a specifically Christian work. At times the doctrines proclaimed here may lead to what some modern readers might think of as antisocial behavior. For example, Christian leaves his wife and four children to pursue the lonely path to salvation since their hearts have become hardened to him and they think his enterprise is a waste of time. Modern readers might question whether people should follow so uncompromisingly what they believe is right.

The Christianity presented may seem very severe by modern standards, but it is not arbitrarily Puritanical. One will not find this a disputatious or overly doctrinal work. Even though the Calvinist doctrine of the universal depravity of humanity may provide a basic underpinning for most of what occurs in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, it is never stated as such. What gives the work its life is Bunyan's vivid depiction of people struggling with (or avoiding) the obstacles they encounter, both within themselves and in the world about them.

The very thing that may be a drawback to some readers, the total commitment by the leading character to a strict and seemingly rigid theology, is also one of its principal strengths. Few works in literature present so effectively what it means to be committed to a cause or belief. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the world is filled with snares and diversions which may keep Christian from realizing his purpose. Only intense concentration and constant questioning and evaluation keep him on the right path. In an age like our own, when distractions and temptations keep many young people from realizing their potential, *The Pilgrim's Progress* stands apart, celebrating the courage and resolve needed for a person to do what he believes is right and good.



Literary Qualities

The Pilgrim's Progress is a work which looks backward to earlier traditions and ahead to the work of later writers. The specific traditions it exemplifies are those of the allegory and the homily (sermon). Placing allegorical action within a dream is a standard device, dating from the Middle Ages. The long tradition of the homily was a part of Bunyan's experience, both through the popular homily books that were widely available and in his own sermons.

Bunyan also anticipates the techniques of later English novelists, such as Daniel Defoe and Charles Dickens, in his use of satire, domestic humor, and caricature.

Bunyan's allegorical characters live for the reader through the same emphasis on a single quality that establishes many of the humorous and eccentric characters in eighteenth and nineteenth century fiction.

Although there are elements of the fairy tale and romance in The Pilgrim's Progress, the heart of the work is the dialogues that Christian and Christiana engage in on their journeys. These dialogues, which possess the easy give-and-take of conversation, are unique among the prose narratives of Bunyan's day. Most of the conversations are intended to teach a lesson. Characters test each other about religious doctrine and the religious significance of common human experiences.

Some dialogues are less obviously instructive. Christian and his family may be ready for enlightenment, but others resist it. Many of the dialogues are discussions between the proponents of two different viewpoints, who either are unable to hear what the other is saying or simply reject it out of hand. Christian engages in debate with Formalist and Hypocrisy about the role of custom in determining the legitimacy of any practice. Christian distrusts custom as a standard; Formalist and Hypocrisy argue that once something has been done for upwards of a thousand years it will be considered legal by any "impartial judge." The wisdom of their conflicting viewpoints is then dramatically illustrated as Formalist and Hypocrisy disappear into the bypaths of Danger and Destruction while Christian heads straight up the Hill Difficulty. In such an episode, all the literary qualities of The Pilgrim's Progress come together. The dialogue is easy and colloquial: the characters appear to be acquaintances or neighbors who differ on what is the most appropriate thing to do. The action is allegorical: what happens to them vividly illustrates the consequences of particular beliefs and attitudes. And the overall effect of the episode is instructive: if we are believers, we apply the lesson of the episode to our own lives in the same way we respond to the message of the sermon.



Themes

Faith Alone

The pilgrims seeking salvation follow a strict Calvinist religious philosophy. This philosophy argues that no one reaches Heaven through the systematic practice of religion or the general good nature of his or her character. Instead, people are specifically chosen by God and are marked by him in order to gain admission to Heaven. All other paths are useless in attaining salvation and God must bless one personally, usually with visions or revelations, in order to receive entry, according to this philosophy.

Christian and his family are given clear signs that they should go on a pilgrimage. This includes an actual certificate of admission given to Christiana by a Heavenly messenger. Mercy, who chooses to accompany them, is unsure if she will be allowed to go on the pilgrimage because she has not been invited. She is very worried because she has not had any personal revelations or visions and doubts that she will be allowed to follow through on her wish. Eventually, she does have a vision of Heaven that assures her of salvation. The Interpreter marks the whole group with a seal on their foreheads in order for them to be recognized by God.

Christian and Hopeful both relate their stories of visions after long prayer and study of the Bible. Ignorance, however, has not had such visions and assumes he is worthy to enter Heaven because his own heart tells him so. Christian and Hopeful explain to him that God must choose him or he will not be accepted into the Celestial City. When he does approach the gates, he is ignored and sent away because he was not invited to take the pilgrimage.

Appearance versus Reality

Throughout the story, false pilgrims appear who try to argue that the appearance of faith and the reliance on legal and moral rules are adequate for entrance to Heaven. Most of these characters argue that the traditions that make one successful in the material world are the same that guarantee admission into the spiritual one. In each case, Christian argues that these are not enough to gain admission into Heaven and that the true faith and religious belief are absolutely necessary for salvation.

Many of the false pilgrims enter the path by sneaking in from some hidden entrance. They assume that they can take shortcuts through the difficulty in order to attain the end reward. Each character expresses his own belief that the rules that govern his community are the same ones that govern Heaven, and that the following of these outward signs of faith are equal to real feelings of faith. In particular, many characters express the opinion that a person can do bad things, or take advantage of circumstances for personal gain, and yet still be an honest and righteous person. These



characters use religion as a showpiece; they are only interested in expressing religious views when they think it will result in their own gain. In general, these characters take the wrong path and die instead of completing the pilgrimage.

Difficulty of Salvation

The difficulty of salvation is another theme that recurs throughout the story. It is made clear that there is only one path to the Celestial City and that all attempts to evade that path or try for an easier route meet in failure and often in death. Any time that a character tries to take a shortcut around a difficulty, they are met with some greater obstacle or punishment.

The Hill of Difficulty is the best example of this principle. Many pilgrims meet Christian along the way; pilgrims who choose to give up on the way up this Hill. Christian's own adventures show how difficult the journey up the Hill can be. On the way up he was foolish and took a nap. The nap complicated his overall journey and lost him his roll of religious writing given to him by angels. On the way down, he passed through the Valley of Humiliation where he had to battle a monster, as well as the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where only prayer saved him from danger.

Another instance where the difficulty of reaching salvation is addressed is when Hopeful and Christian are imprisoned in the Doubting Castle. They are encouraged to commit suicide to end their suffering. Both men consider this as an option and have to work together to overcome their weaknesses through prayer. The Doubting Castle is one of many locations along the path that are eventually destroyed by Great Heart in order to protect pilgrims from these pitfalls.



Themes/Characters

The characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress* fall into different categories, suggestive of the themes in the work.

The first category is the pilgrim. Christian is not the only character who is travelling to the Celestial City. Faithful and Hopeful also find a way to the city, and in the second part, Christiana is accompanied by her four sons and maid Mercy. By the time they reach the gates of the Celestial City, they have encountered Feeble-mind, Valiant-for-truth, Despondency, Honest, and Stead-fast, all of whom gain admittance. As their names suggest, the traits of these pilgrims vary, and their paths to the Celestial City differ. Significantly, there is more than one way to the kingdom of God, and the human qualities needed for the journey are not limited to one personality type.

For all the characters who successfully complete the journey, far more do not make it. Some are obviously opposed to the idea of pilgrimage and have set themselves on courses which keep them trapped in the affairs of this world. Characters with names like Obstinate, Atheist, Prejudice, and Ill-will are committed to the earthly world. But there is a third category of character: people whose errors are not as immediately obvious as those of the enemies of pilgrimage, but whose failings nonetheless condemn them to perdition. Perhaps the most poignant figure in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is Ignorance, who arrives at the gate to the Celestial City only to be bound hand and foot and put in a doorway that leads to hell. In his earlier scenes, Ignorance seems possessed of an engaging good will, as do Talkative, Pliable, and others. However, all these characters lack the requisite knowledge, understanding, or commitment to make a pilgrimage that requires complete devotion to the teachings of Christ.

In this modern, pluralistic age, the uncompromising nature of Bunyan's work may be partially responsible for its loss in popularity. Indeed, many critics see the damnation of Ignorance as an artistic flaw in Bunyan's scheme. Not only is his punishment cruel, it also seems an anticlimax to end the work with the damnation of a relatively minor character rather than the triumphant entry of Christian into the Celestial City.

Other critics have come to the defense of Bunyan's presentation of Ignorance, pointing out that Bunyan's art enables readers to see the poignance of Ignorance's situation. Bunyan does not condemn Ignorance; rather it is Ignorance's own failure to fully come to grips with his human limitations which leads to his damnation.

In addition to the characters who represent different human types, there are two other categories of characters. The first consists of monsters and giants who would keep Christian from reaching his destination. The most celebrated of these is the "foul fiend" Apollyon, who is "clothed with scales like a fish" and has "wings like a dragon, feet like a bear," "the mouth of a lion," and smoke coming "out of his belly." It takes Christian nearly half a day before he vanquishes this monster; he then proceeds with drawn sword, ready for any enemy he might encounter. The second consists of guides who stand ready to help Christian and Christiana on their journeys. It is Evangelist who



points Christian in the direction of the Wicket Gate. Once on his way, he encounters figures like the three sisters Piety, Prudence, and Charity, who serve as religious instructors. In the second part, Christiana is shielded from the worst temptations and snares that Christian passed through on his journey. The implication is that most men need help and guidance. Christian is unusual since he makes the journey more or less on his own. In long sections he appears isolated from and alien to the rest of humanity, whereas Christiana always has about her people who think and act as she does. Christian's humility is balanced by his courage and daring in setting out on his own; part of his appeal to the general reader is the heroism inherent in his act of pilgrimage.



Style

Points of View

Pilgrim's Progress is told by the author, who is pretending to describe a series of dreams that he had. It is told in the third person, with a limited omniscient view that allows the reader to hear the thoughts of some characters as well as learn the background and personal opinions of many of the minor characters that are met along the way. At times, the author directly addresses the reader in order to explain some points of the book, particularly at the introduction and conclusion of each part.

In these instances, the author apologizes for his book and explains his purpose in writing it. In the first part, the author takes great pains to stress that the book is a pretend dream written out for the religious instruction of the readers. In the second part, however, the author almost abandons the premise that this is a dream, and instead relates the narrative much more like a story without the framework of the dream.

Setting

The story is set in the dreams of the author. These dreams provide an allegorical landscape that includes a variety of small towns with names that describe the personality of the people in them. Pilgrims arriving from these towns enter on a series of interlocking paths that eventually lead to the Celestial City. All of these paths contain some element of magic to them and either help or hinder the pilgrims as they make their way to the Celestial City. Along the way, there are many opportunities for pilgrims to stop and view religious images that show them various Biblical truths.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in seventeenth century English, and can, therefore, be difficult for many readers. In addition, verses from the Bible are also included, often with difficult vocabulary and grammatical structures that are not often seen in modern English. Allusions to characters from the Bible occur throughout the story. In particular, Jesus Christ is often alluded to without his name actually being mentioned.

Characters often express their feelings in poems or songs, usually incorporating Biblical images and meaning. The author also uses poetry to open each part of the story. In the first part, the author creates an elaborate explanation of why he has chosen to write this book, reflecting the custom of his time period in regard to religious subjects as being too lofty to be written about in stories. In the second part, the author's tone changes significantly. He has a mock conversation with the book itself, and explains why he has chosen to write about the things he has.

Structure

The story is divided into two parts. The first part describes Christian's pilgrimage to Celestial City. The second part describes the pilgrimage of Christian's family. Within each section, there are no dividing markers and the narrative flows from one event to the next. The two parts were written six years apart and reflect the popularity of the first part when setting out the events of the second.

Each part begins with a long introduction, written in a poetic form, that explains the contents of the book. In the first part, this is a letter to the reader in which the author explains why he chose to write the book and what merits he thinks the book has. He also explains that the story will be presented as a dream. In the second part, this introduction is a poetic conversation between the author and the book itself, explaining why the story has been continued as well as stating how popular the first part turned out to be.



Quotes

"I thought so; and it is happened unto thee as to other weak men, who, meddling with things too high for them, do suddenly fall into thy distractions; which distractions do not only unman men, as thine, I perceive, have done thee, but they run them upon desperate ventures to obtain they know not what." (Part 1)

"Then said Evangelist to him, Thy sin is very great, for by it thou hast committed two evils: thou hast forsaken the way that is good, to tread in forbidden paths; yet will the man at the gate receive thee, for he has goodwill for men; only, said he, take heed that thou turn not aside again." (Part 1)

"Then said the Interpreter, Come in; I will show that which will be profitable to thee. So he commanded his man to light the candle, and bid Christian follow him: so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head." (Part 1)

"They said, That to go to the gate for entrance was, by all their countrymen, counted too far about; and that, therefore, their usual way was to make a short cut of it, and to climb over the wall, as they had done." (Part 1)

"That man that overtook you was Moses. He spareth none, neither knoweth he how to show mercy to those that transgress his law." (Part 1)

"Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair: it is kept all the year long. It beareth the name of Vanity Fair because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity; and, also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is vanity." (Part 1)

"I, for my part, have been in the fray before now; and though, through the goodness of him that is best, I am, as you see, alive, yet I cannot boast of my manhood. Glad shall I be, if I meet with no more such brunts; though I fear we are not got beyond all danger. However, since the lion and the bear have not as yet devoured me, I hope God will also deliver us from the next uncircumcised Philistine." (Part 1)

"Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance come up to the river side; but he soon got over, and that without half that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place, one Vain-hope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement." (Part 1)



"Mrs. Bat's-eyes. 'Oh, this blind and foolish woman,' said she; 'will she not take warning by her husband's afflictions? For my part, I see, if he were here again, he would rest him content in a whole skin, and never run so many hazards for nothing.'" (Part 2)

"Then he called for the seal wherewith they used to be sealed that were washed in his bath. So the seal was brought, and he set his mark upon them, that they might be known in the places whither they were yet to go. Now the seal was the contents and sum of the Passover which the children of Israel did eat when they came out from the land of Egypt," (Part 2)

"By the going up of the fire we are taught to ascend to heaven by fervent and hot desires. And by the sun, his sending his heat, beams, and sweet influences downwards, we are taught that the Saviour of the world, though high, reaches down with his grace and love to us below." (Part 2)

"That is it that I said, wherefore CHRISTIAN'S family is like still to spread abroad upon the face of the ground, and yet to be numerous upon the face of the earth. Wherefore let CHRISTIANA look out some damsels for her sons, to whom they may be betrothed; that the name of their father, and the house of his progenitors, may never be forgotten in the world." (Part 2)

"The time, as I said, that they lay here was long (for it was not now as in former times). Wherefore the pilgrims grew acquainted with many of the good people of the town, and did them what service they could. MERCY, as she was wont, laboured much for the poor; wherefore their bellies and backs blessed her, and she was there an ornament to her profession. And to say the truth for GRACE, PHOEBE, and MARTHA, they were all of a very good nature, and did much good in their place. They were also all of them very fruitful; so that CHRISTIAN'S name, as was said before, was like to live in the world." (Part 2)

"As for CHRISTIAN'S children, the four boys that CHRISTIANA brought with her, with their wives and children, I did not stay where I was till they were gone over. Also, since I came away, I heard one say, that they were yet alive; and so would be for the increase of the Church in that place where they were for a time." (Part 2)



Topics for Discussion

1. It is often said that Bunyan's characters are universal; that is, they are human types that can be found in all times and places. Can you find any modern analogues to figures like Talkative, Ignorance, Valiant-for-truth, and Feeble-mind?
2. Given that Christian and Christiana must journey over essentially the same terrain in the two parts, how does Bunyan avoid simply repeating himself in the second part?
3. In what sense is *The Pilgrim's Progress* dreamlike? Why is a dream a suitable medium for an allegory?
4. Why do you think Bunyan chose to end the first part with the damnation of Ignorance, a relatively minor character, rather than the arrival of Christian in the Celestial City?
5. *The Pilgrim's Progress* consists of a series of dialogues. Which ones seem more like conversations to you? Which seem less like conversations? Why?
6. Heroic and humble are two adjectives that may be applied to Christian.

How does Bunyan reconcile these apparently contradictory characteristics in his pilgrim?



Essay Topics

Why does Christian decide to leave the City of Destruction? How is Christiana's decision similar? How is it different?

Ignorance is one of many who attempt to enter Celestial City without being invited or entering through the gate. Why are these characters included in the story?

Compare and contrast three characters that show that the appearance of faith is not the same as genuine religious faith.

Bunyan takes many stabs at the Catholic faith. Identify these instances and discuss how they affect the overall message about Christian faith.

How do the allegorical names contribute to the plot? If the characters had real names, would it change the story?

The second part of the story shows women seeking salvation. How does this compare to Christian's pilgrimage? What challenges do the women face that Christian did not? What assistance are they given that Christian did not have?

How does the level of violence change in the second part as compared to the first part? Find instances of violence in the second part and compare them to the same encounter in the first part.

How do the Bible verses contribute to the narrative? Would the verses have had more meaning in the time period the book was written in than they do for modern readers?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. The word "progress" in *The Pilgrim's Progress* means a journey, specifically Christian's and Christiana's. How do they differ? Which character seems to have the harder time? Why?
2. The narrative of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is interspersed with poems and hymns that may be sung. How do these songs relate to the narrative episodes that precede and follow them?
3. Choose one episode from *The Pilgrim's Progress* that in some way appears satirical to you. Explain what is being satirized, and then discuss how it is being satirized.
4. A knowledge of the Bible contributes to an appreciation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Look up the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-14), choose two or three points made by Christ in this famous passage, and then write a paper showing how Bunyan develops them in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
5. During his lifetime, Bunyan spent many years in prison because he would not compromise his commitment to speaking the word of God as he understood it. Look up the life of Bunyan in an encyclopedia that contains a detailed discussion of his life and character. Do you find any of his personality traits in the character of Christian?

Further Study

Kaufman, U. Milo. "The Pilgrim's Progress" and Traditions in Puritan Meditation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966. Kaufman presents an important full-length discussion of Bunyan's masterpiece.

Kelman, John. The Road: A Study of Paul Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." 1912.

Reprint. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1970. This work is based on lecture notes. Kelman gives a detailed commentary on particular passages and episodes as they occur in sequence. It is best used in conjunction with a close reading of The Pilgrim's Progress.

MacNeice, Louis. Varieties of Parable.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. The chapter on Spenser and Bunyan provides an excellent introduction to The Pilgrim's Progress.

Newey, Vincent, ed. "The Pilgrim's Progress": Critical and Historical Views. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1980. This collection of original essays is intended to rectify the neglect of The Pilgrim's Progress by modern critics.

Sadler, Lynn Veach. John Bunyan. Boston: Twayne, 1979. This work provides an overview of Bunyan's life and writings.

Sharrock, Roger, ed. Bunyan: "The Pilgrim's Progress": A Casebook. London: Macmillan, 1976. This collection contains thirty selections that range from contemporary prefaces through criticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Sharrock, John. John Bunyan. 1954.

Reprint. New York: St. Martin's, 1968.

This is a discussion of Bunyan's major works by the leading Bunyan scholar of our time.

Tindall, William York. John Bunyan: Mechanick Preacher. 1934. Reprint.

New York: Russell and Russell, 1964.

Tindall's historical study emphasizes Bunyan's resemblance to other preachers of his day.

Related Titles

Three other works by Bunyan that may interest the general reader are *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, *The Holy War*, allegories written in the same form as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Bunyan's spiritual autobiography. In *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, Bunyan presents the progress of the title character to hell just as he traced Christian's progress to heaven. In *The Holy War* he portrays the conflict between good and evil in the soul of man. Most critics agree that, after *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is Bunyan's finest work.



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