

## ANALYTICAL OBSERVATIONS

You will submit 10 Analytical Observations by the end of the semester. Each one will consist of a numbered list of 3 to 5 specific observations about 15 (or fewer) consecutive lines of verse from one day's reading. Your observations should provide detailed, line-by-line, word-by-word analysis of Milton's language. They should present fine-grained analysis, not mushy generalizations.

For each Analytical Observations list, pick lines that strike you as interesting or unusual in some way. Read the lines slowly, carefully, and repeatedly in order to make worthwhile observations on them. Your list of observations can address many different aspects of Milton's verse: meter, wordplay, syntax, figures of speech, sound patterns, imagery, connotations of words, irony, word choice, allusions, and so on.

Remember that your assignment is to make observations about the lines themselves, not about their author, or the characters and situations that appear in them, or anything else. Every observation should relate directly to the actual words of the text. Don't get sidetracked; stick with the words.

Although your Analytical Observations need not be lengthy, they should be truthful, vivid, insightful, and focused on nuanced details from the text. Observations that merely repeat textual notes or class discussions will receive a zero. Observations that just paraphrase or summarize the text will receive a zero.

At the start of each Analytical Observations list, you should provide the title the work and quote the lines you will analyze. Remember to number your observations and to write in clear, complete, grammatical sentences.

Please use MLA Format. (See [drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/](http://drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/), especially "Document Format" and "How to Quote Verse.")

You must submit your observations *before* we discuss the lines in class. Turn in your Analytical Observations to me at the beginning of class on the day we discuss the passage you have analyzed.

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PLEASE NOTE: If your Analytical Observations run more than one page, you must **staple the pages together**. I will not accept, read, or grade any unstapled papers.

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Joe Student  
Dr. Womack  
English 3311  
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Analytical Observations 1:  
“On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”

The shepherds on the lawn,  
Or ere the point of dawn,  
    Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;  
Full little thought they then  
That the mighty Pan  
    Was kindly come to live with them below;  
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

(85–92)

1. **point of dawn** The phrase avoids the cliché “break of dawn.” The word “point” may emphasize the specific moment. Note that “point” can also mean “significance” or “larger meaning.”
2. **sat simply chatting** The adverb “simply” acts twice here. First it modifies “sat” (they were sitting in a *simple*, shepherd-like manner) and then it modifies “chatting” (they were *just* chatting).
3. **rustic row** The alliteration binds the words together. Presumably, the row is “rustic” because it’s composed of shepherds who are rustics: rough, unsophisticated country dwellers.
4. **Pan** Pan was the god of shepherds, often associated with music (the pan pipes), which all seems appropriate here. But Pan is otherwise a very odd analogy for Christ. Pan has the legs of a goat and, like the satyrs, is notorious for his sexual prowess. Perhaps the half goat / half man relates to Christ who is half god / half man.
5. **silly thoughts** The word “silly” has a complex set of relevant connotations. Here are some of the pertinent meanings of “silly” from the *OED*: (1) trifling, insignificant (2) weak, feeble (3) pitiable, provoking compassion (4) simple, unsophisticated (5) lowly, humble. The word “silly” was also conventionally associated with sheep.