

## John Bunyan

(1628–1688)

Unlike most of the other writers represented in this anthology, John Bunyan came from England's lowest social class. He worked with his hands, as a brazier, or tinker—a maker and mender of cooking pots and pans. He was not an ordinary tinker, however, but the author of a book that, next to the Bible, has been the most widely read of all English books: *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678), commonly called *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

What we know about Bunyan comes mainly from his autobiographical work *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), the Chief of Sinners being himself. In this book he describes his childhood poverty, his service in the army fighting King Charles I, and his marriage. He and his wife, he tells us, were “as poor as poor might be, with not so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both.” Aside from a very few details like these, *Grace Abounding* is concerned entirely with the state of Bunyan's soul and his relationship with God. To Bunyan these were the only important matters in life.

Although he had never been formally educated or ordained as a minister, Bunyan felt called upon to preach to his fellow Baptists. He began holding services in private houses and then, as his eloquence and piety attracted many people, in the woods outside his hometown of Elstow. Such Puritan sects as the Baptists flourished during the years when England was without a king (1649–1660), but with the restoration of Charles II, the government soon reestablished the Church of England and outlawed all other forms of religion. Inevitably Bunyan found it impossible to obey the law requiring attendance at the Church of England



John Bunyan (17th century) by Robert White.  
British Library, London, UK/The Bridgeman Art Library.

and forbidding all other religious gatherings. In 1660, he was arrested and jailed for preaching without a license. For twelve years he remained imprisoned, preaching to other inmates and writing religious books. A short period of freedom followed this imprisonment—a time when the authorities were lax in enforcing the laws. Then, in 1675, Bunyan was locked up again.

During his second confinement he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which was such a great success that, like the producers of popular movie sequels today, he published a second part. When the laws against Dissenters were eventually relaxed, Bunyan also became famous as a preacher—even in London, where an audience of several thousand would go to hear him on a Sunday. When told about Bunyan, King Charles expressed astonishment that a tinker could draw such crowds.

# Before You Read

## from *The Pilgrim's Progress*

### Make the Connection

How many times have you heard life referred to as a journey? This familiar metaphor has formed the basis for many literary works—from Homer's *Odyssey* to the latest science fiction book or movie. The journey is a fitting metaphor for life, because beyond having a beginning and an end, journeys usually confront the traveler with unexpected challenges and tests. Such challenges can be physical, mental, or moral, but the most compelling combine all three.

### Literary Focus

#### Allegory

In the literary form known as **allegory**, two stories are told at once. The characters, settings, and events stand not only for themselves but also for abstract, or intangible, ideas. An allegorical story operates on two levels of meaning: one literal and one symbolic. Since the purpose of most allegories is to teach, the **literal**, or surface, story is a means of conveying the **symbolic**, or submerged, story, which is concerned with mental, emotional, and moral developments. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, these dual levels of storytelling are reflected in the names of the people, places, and events in the story.

An **allegory** is a story in which the characters, settings, and events stand for abstract ideas.

For more on Allegory, see the Handbook of Literary and Historical Terms.

### Background

The narrator of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a dreamer. Asleep, he dreams about a man named Christian who lives with his family in a city called Destruction. Besides living in a city with this appalling name, Christian has another problem: On his back he bears a burden that he cannot get rid of. It is like a part of himself. And so he decides to leave home and go on a *progress*, or journey, to a wonderful place he has heard of, called the Celestial City. On this trip (which takes up most of the first part of the book), Christian has a few pleasant experiences, but most of his adventures are unpleasant, even dangerous. He falls into the Slough of Despond (a *slough* is a mudhole; the word rhymes with *cow*), climbs the Hill Difficulty, fights a dragonlike monster called Apollyon, and is arrested and unjustly punished in a worldly town called Vanity, with its outdoor market, Vanity Fair. He also encounters numerous sly characters who try to distract him from his goal: Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Little-Faith, and Ignorance, for example. Finally, after he has overcome all these obstacles, Christian enters the Celestial City.

### Vocabulary Development

**allure** (ə·loor') v.: tempt; attract.

**reproachfully** (ri·prōch'fəl·ē) adv.: accusingly.

**confounded** (kən·foun'did) adj.: confused.

**implacable** (im·plək'ə·bəl) adj.: unchangeable; fixed.

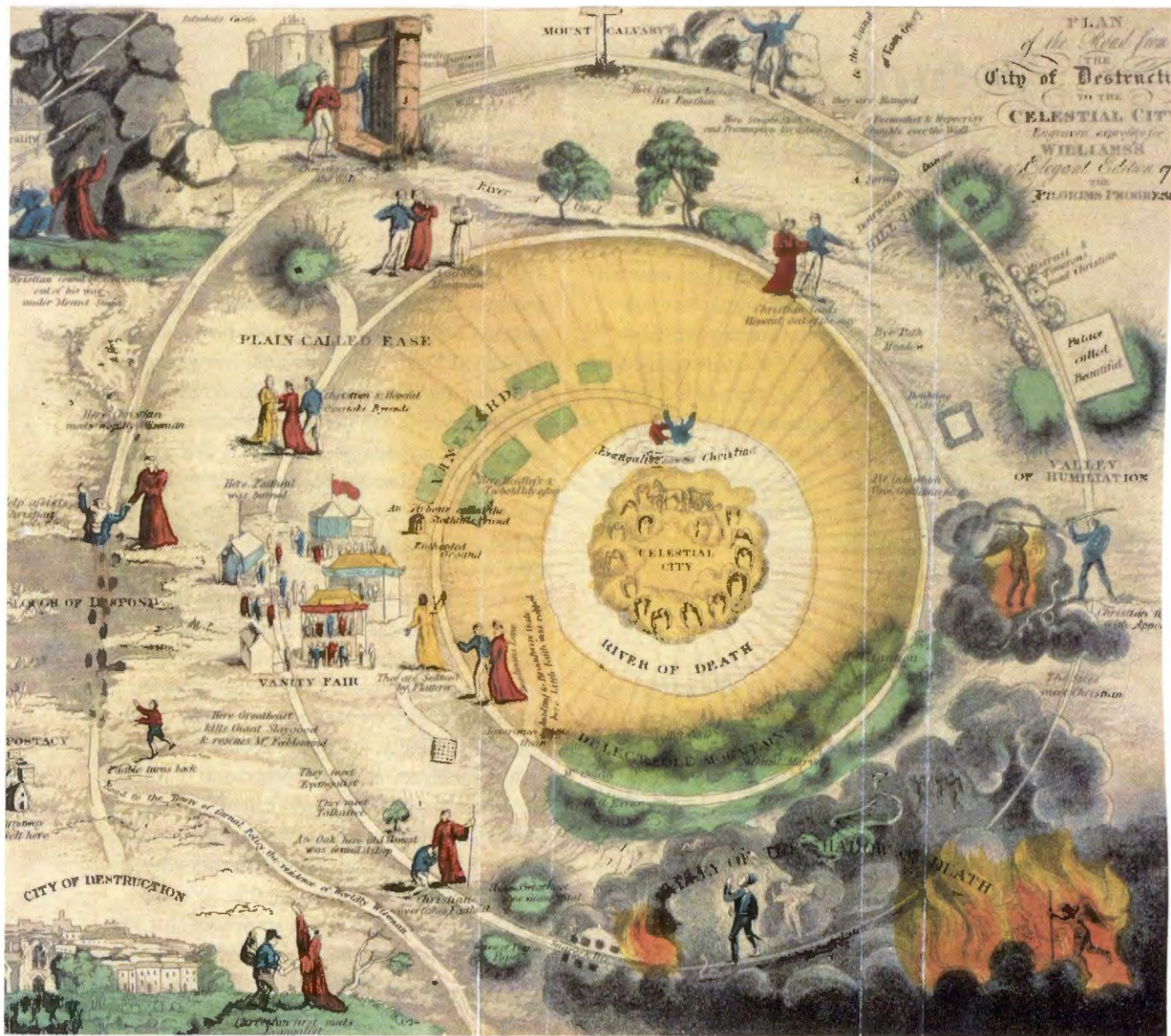
**respite** (res'pit) n.: postponement; reprieve.

**transfigured** (trans·fig'yərd) v.: changed the form of.



#### Reading Standard 3.1

Analyze characteristics of subgenres (e.g. allegory) that are used in prose.



Plan of the road from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, from *The Pilgrim's Progress* (19th century). Engraving.

Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library.

# from *The Pilgrim's Progress*

John Bunyan

Bunyan tells the story of Christian's journey as if he, the narrator, were recounting his own dream. At this point in the story, Christian and his traveling companion, Faithful, enter a town called Vanity in which the local fair, or outdoor market, is in full swing. In Bunyan's day, merchants from all over Europe would sell their wares at such events, and the buying and selling would be accompanied by eating, drinking, sport, and general merriment.

**T**hen 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 'tis kept is lighter than vanity; and also, because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is Vanity. As is the saying of the wise, *All that cometh is vanity*.

This Fair is no new erected business, but a thing of ancient standing; I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years ago, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are; and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion,<sup>1</sup> with their companions, perceiving by the path that the Pilgrims made that their way to the City lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold of all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore at this Fair are all such merchandise sold, as houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments,<sup>2</sup> titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.

And moreover, at this Fair there is at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of all sorts.

Here are to be seen too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false-swearers, and that of a blood-red colour.

And as in other fairs of less moment there are the several rows and streets under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended: so here likewise, you have the proper places, rows, streets (*viz.*<sup>3</sup> countries and kingdoms), where the wares of this Fair are soonest to be found: here is the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row,

the Spanish Row, the German Row, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But as in other fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair, so the ware of Rome and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this Fair: only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where this lusty Fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this town, must needs go out of the world. The Prince of Princes himself, when here, went through this Town<sup>4</sup> to his own country, and that upon a fair-day too. Yea, and as I think it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this Fair, that invited him to buy of his vanities; yea, would have made him lord of the Fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town. Yea, because he was such a person of honour, Beelzebub had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might if possible allure that Blessed One, to cheapen<sup>5</sup> and buy some of his vanities. But he had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities. This Fair therefore is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great Fair.

Now these pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this Fair: well, so they did; but behold, even as they entered into the Fair, all the people in the Fair were moved, and the town itself as it were in a hubbub about them; and that for several reasons: for,

First, the pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that Fair. The people therefore of the Fair made a great gazing upon them: Some

1. **Beelzebub** (bē-el'zə-bub'): here, Satan. **Apollyon** (ə-pāl'yon): in the book of Revelation, the angel of the bottomless pit. **Legion**: unclean spirits or devils.
2. **preferments** *n. pl.*: appointments to political or religious positions.
3. *viz. adv.*: namely.

4. **The Prince of Princes . . . Town**: reference to the temptation of Christ (Matthew 4:1–11).
5. **cheapen** *v.*: ask the price of.

### Vocabulary

**allure** (ə-loor') *v.*: tempt; attract.

said they were fools, some they were bedlams,<sup>6</sup> and some 'They are outlandish-men.'<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, and as they wondered at their apparel so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said; they naturally spoke the language of Canaan;<sup>8</sup> but they that kept the Fair, were the men of this world: so that from one end of the Fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other.

Thirdly, but that which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares, they cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity*; and look upwards, signifying that their trade and traffic was in Heaven.

One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriages of the men, to say unto them, 'What will ye buy?' but they, looking gravely upon him, said, 'We buy the truth.' At that there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more; some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully, and some calling upon others to smite them. At last things came to a hubbub and great stir in the Fair; insomuch that all order was confounded. Now was word presently brought to the great one of the Fair, who quickly came down and deputed some of his most trusty friends to take these men into examination about whom the Fair was almost overturned. . . .

*The townspeople at Vanity Fair are immediately suspicious of Christian and Faithful, and they arrest the two pilgrims and bring them to trial. Three witnesses, Envy, Superstition, and Pick-thank, a favor-seeker, testify against Faithful. His fate is turned over to a jury of townspeople.*

Then went the jury out, whose names were Mr. Blind-man, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-

6. **bedlams** *n. pl.*: mental patients from Bethlehem Hospital, the notorious hospital for the insane in London.

7. **outlandish-men**: foreigners.

8. **Canaan**: Promised Land. The "language of Canaan" is the language of the Bible.



lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, and Mr. Implacable, who every one gave in his private verdict against him among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in guilty before the Judge. And first Mr. Blind-man, the foreman, said, "I see clearly that this man is an heretic." Then said Mr. No-good, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." "Ay," said Mr. Malice, "for I hate the very looks of him." Then said Mr. Love-lust, "I could never endure him."

### Vocabulary

**reproachfully** (ri • prōch'fəl • ē) *adv.*: accusingly.

**confounded** (kən • foun'did) *adj.*: confused.

**implacable** (im • plak'ə • bəl) *adj.*: unchangeable; fixed.

# Pilgrim's Progress

FROM  
THIS WORLD,

TO

That which is to come

Delivered under the Similitude of a

# DREAM

Wherein is Discovered,

The Manner of his setting out,  
His Dangerous JOURNEY,

AND

Safe Arrival at the Desired Countrey.

By JOHN BUNYAN.

The Fourth Edition, with Additions.

I have used Similitudes. *Hosea*, 12. 10.

Licensed and Entered according to Order.

LONDON,

Printed for Nath. Ponder, at the Peacock  
in the Poultry near the Church, 1680.

Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library

Frontispiece of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1680) by John Bunyan. English School. Engraving.

"Nor I," said Mr. Live-loose, "for he would always be condemning my way." "Hang him, hang him," said Mr. Heady. "A sorry scrub," said Mr. High-mind. "My heart riseth against him," said Mr. Enmity. "He is a rogue," said Mr. Liar. "Hanging is too good for him," said Mr. Cruelty. "Let's dispatch him out of the way," said Mr. Hate-light. Then said Mr. Implacable, "Might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him, therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death." And so they did, therefore he was presently condemned to be had from the place where he was, to the place from whence he came, and there to be put to the most cruel death that could be invented.

They therefore brought him out to do with him according to their law; and first they scourged him, then they buffeted him, then they

lanced his flesh with knives; after that they stoned him with stones, then pricked him with their swords; and last of all they burned him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end. Now, I saw that there stood behind the multitude a chariot and a couple of horses, waiting for Faithful, who (so soon as his adversaries had dispatched him) was taken up into it, and straightway was carried up through the clouds, with sound of trumpet, the nearest way to the Celestial Gate. But as for Christian, he had some respite, and was remanded back to prison; so he there remained for a space: but he that over-rules all things, having the power of their rage in his own hand, so wrought it about that Christian for that time escaped them, and went his way. . . .

*Christian continues on his journey and finds another companion, the convert Hopeful. After more trials and tests of faith, the two reach their long-awaited destination: the Gates of the Celestial City.*

Now I saw in my dream, that these two men went in at the Gate; and lo, as they entered they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There was also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them, the harp to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream, that all the bells in the City rang again for joy; and that it was said unto them, "*Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*" I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, "*Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*"

Now just as the Gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them; and behold, the City shone like the sun, the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. ■

## Vocabulary

**respite** (res'pit) *n.*: postponement; reprieve.

**transfigured** (trans·fig'yərd) *v.*: changed the form of.

# Literary Response and Analysis

## Reading Check

1. What is offered at Vanity Fair?
2. What characteristics of the two pilgrims disturb the people at Vanity Fair?
3. What happens to Faithful after he is arrested and tried?
4. What becomes of Christian after his imprisonment?

## Interpretations

5. True to the spirit of **allegory**, Vanity Fair is both a **literal** and a **symbolic** place. What are some of the concrete details that give Bunyan's creation the feel of an actual English marketplace?
6. What is the **allegorical**, or symbolic, significance of the town of Vanity Fair in Christian's spiritual journey?
7. What do you think is the main reason the townspeople arrest Christian and Faithful? What really upsets them?
8. What attitude toward Faithful do all the members of the jury have in common? How do their names and their words reveal their **characters**?
9. Who or what are the modern counterparts to the allegorical characters on Faithful's jury and to the challenges that the two pilgrims face in Vanity Fair?
10. What does Bunyan wish to teach by means of the Vanity Fair episode? Do you think this lesson still has meaning in the modern world? Explain your response.

## Evaluation

11. Is **allegory** an effective way of getting a moral message across today? Why or why not?

## Literary Criticism

12. Biblical characters, cosmology, and quotations abound in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, yet the work has been translated widely and read by people of many cultures and religions. In fact, next to the Bible

itself, it has been the most widely read of all English books. Discuss how Bunyan's narrative transcends its Christian framework to achieve universal appeal.

## Writing

### The Jury Is In

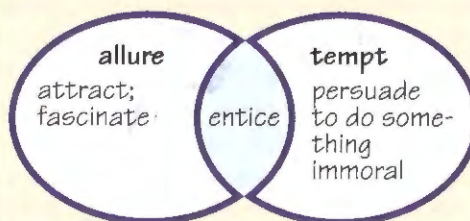
One of the most enjoyable parts of the Vanity Fair episode is the commentary of the delightfully named jurors. Try writing your own **allegory** by expanding this scene. Invent other allegorical characters that might have appeared in the courtroom that day. Give your characters names, and write dialogue for them that reflects their names. Like Bunyan, you may want to use humor and satire.

## Vocabulary Development

### Venn Diagrams

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| allure        | implacable   |
| reproachfully | respite      |
| confounded    | transfigured |

Using a dictionary or the definitions on page 383, find a synonym for each Vocabulary word listed above. Then, explore the similarities among and the differences between the two synonymous words by making a Venn diagram like the one below. In the overlapping area, write the meanings that apply to both words.



### Reading Standard 3.1

Analyze characteristics of subgenres (e.g. allegory) that are used in prose.