

Doctor Faustus Study Guide

Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe

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Plot Summary

Dr. Faustus is the classic play by Christopher Marlowe. In this play, Dr. Faustus makes a deal with the devil to receive great knowledge in exchange for his soul. Dr. Faustus lives an amazing life with a devil by his side to help him learn and conjure up anything he could possibly want. At the end of the contract he made with the devil, however, Dr. Faustus begins to have second thoughts about giving his soul to the devil. Dr. Faustus is based on a German legend that is taken to a new level by the brilliant playwright, Christopher Marlowe.

Dr. Faustus cannot decide what subject he would like to become an expert in. Eventually, he decides magic. This chosen profession leads Dr. Faustus to meet a couple of shady characters who encourage his decision. As part of his work in magic, Dr. Faustus conjures a devil. Dr. Faustus wants this devil, Mephistophilis, to be his servant, but Mephistophilis insists he is the servant of the devil, Lucifer, only. For this reason, Dr. Faustus tells Mephistophilis that he will enter into a deal with Lucifer in which he will give him his soul in twenty-four years if he will let Mephistophilis be his servant. Lucifer immediately accepts this deal with a contract written in Dr. Faustus's blood.

Dr. Faustus begins to have second thoughts about his contract. However, Mephistophilis puts on a show for him that includes the Seven Deadly Sins, making Dr. Faustus realize that choosing Lucifer over God is the more entertaining choice. Mephistophilis then takes Dr. Faustus on a tour of the world, ending in Rome. Faustus teases the Pope by stealing items from his banquet.

Dr. Faustus is welcomed into the home of the Emperor of Germany where he is asked to conjure some of the Emperor's historical heroes. Dr. Faustus does as he is asked, but a naysayer in the crowd annoys him. For this reason, Dr. Faustus puts horns on the man's head until the Emperor asks him to remove them.

As time passes, other men in his employ begin turning to dark magic. This includes Robin and Ralph who use the magic to steal drinks from a local vintner. When they are caught by a devil, they are turned into animals. Dr. Faustus also uses his magic to trick people. A horse-courser buys a horse from Dr. Faustus, but when he rides it in water, the horse turns into a pile of hay.

When the time indicated in the contract comes to an end, Dr. Faustus begins to rethink the deal he has made. An old man comes to Dr. Faustus and tells him to repent and save his soul, but Dr. Faustus knows it is already too late. For this reason, Dr. Faustus allows Mephistophilis to torture the man. In the final moments of his life, Dr. Faustus asks a group of students to pray for him. Dr. Faustus himself repents his actions, but only as far as it affects the end of his life. When midnight strikes, Dr. Faustus is taken away by Lucifer and a few of his devils. The students later find Dr. Faustus body torn to pieces.



Prologue: Dr. Faustus and Scenes I-III

Summary

Prologue

A chorus sings about Faustus. Faustus is a German man born in Rhodes. He is raised in Wittenberg by relatives. Faustus is a very successful student of theology, but he is unhappy with this profession. Faustus has a big ego and wants to be world renowned, which is what leads to his downfall.

Scene I

Dr. Faustus is in his office trying to decide what new subject he would like to study. Dr. Faustus is not pleased with most of his choices, so he settles on magic. To learn more, Dr. Faustus calls for two well-known students of magic, Valdes and Cornelius. As he waits for the gentlemen to arrive, he is visited by a good angel and an evil angel. The good angel tries to talk Faustus out of his choice, while the evil angel tells Faustus how famous he could become as a student of magic. When Valdes and Cornelius arrive, they assure Faustus that not only can they teach him about magic, they can make him exceedingly successful.

Scene II

A couple of scholars come looking for Faustus because he has not been to the school recently. Wagner tells them that he is having dinner with Valdes and Cornelius. The scholars decide to go to the rector and ask for help in saving Faustus.

Scene III

Faustus goes into a grove to practice his conjuring skills. Faustus conjures a devil called Mephistophilis. When Mephistophilis arrives, Faustus sends him away to return in the appearance of an old Franciscan friar. Mephistophilis immediately returns as asked. Faustus asks Mephistophilis to become his servant. However, Mephistophilis insists that he is the servant of Lucifer only. Faustus suggests that he will offer his soul, if Lucifer will let Mephistophilis become his servant. Mephistophilis agrees to ask.

Analysis

The story of Dr. Faustus begins with a song from the chorus. The chorus claims that Dr. Faustus, a trained theologian is a brilliant scholar, but he is unhappy with his training. Dr. Faustus has too much pride to live an obscure life. Dr. Faustus wants to be famous, to be well-known and welcome anywhere. For this reason, he decides to study magic. Dr. Faustus believes with this knowledge, he will rub elbows with politicians and religious leaders.



Dr. Faustus asks two famous magicians to help him learn magic. When he has learned enough to conjure a devil, Dr. Faustus asks the devil to be his servant. The devil claims he cannot without Lucifer's permission, so Dr. Faustus gives him permission to offer Faustus's soul in exchange for the servant. This is a risky proposition that will leave Dr. Faustus damned to hell after the time allotted ends. Dr. Faustus, however, is too prideful to be concerned about that fact.

Discussion Question 1

Who is Dr. Faustus? What kind of doctor is he? Why is he unhappy with his current profession?

Discussion Question 2

Why does the chorus suggest that it is pride that will ruin Dr. Faustus? What does this mean?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Dr. Faustus want to make a deal with the devil? What will Dr. Faustus get in return in this deal?

Vocabulary

Speculation, potentate, contributory, continent, demand, enemies, resolve, eternal, desperate, surrenders, frivolous, fainting, tormented, soul, eternal, insolence, aspiring, commander, regent, against, conjuring, glorious, philosophers, trifles, mutton.



Scenes IV-VI

Summary

Scene IV

Wagner calls to a clown in the street. Wagner tells the clown that he will give him a great amount of money if he will become his servant. The clown does not want to work for Wagner, but Wagner conjures two devils to scare him. The clown finally agrees, but only if Wagner will teach him to conjure.

Scene V

The good and evil angels try again to talk Faustus out of his deal with Lucifer. Faustus refuses to listen. Mephistophilis comes to Faustus and tells him that Lucifer has enthusiastically agreed to the deal. Mephistophilis tries to talk Faustus out of it, telling him that hell is anywhere outside of heaven and he might think twice before choosing it. Faustus blows off Mephistophilis' arguments. Faustus stabs his own arm and writes out a contract in his own blood that binds Mephistophilis to him as a servant for twenty-four years. At the end of those twenty-four years, Faustus's soul belongs to Lucifer. When the deal is done, Faustus asks for a wife. Mephistophilis brings him a devil dressed as a woman, but Faustus is not happy with this. Instead, Mephistophilis promises to bring him a new woman for his bed every day. Mephistophilis then begins to help Faustus learn everything he desires to know.

Scene VI

Faustus and Mephistophilis discuss the universe and all the planets. Faustus wants to know how they were created, but this requires a discussion of God, the one thing Mephistophilis refuses to discuss. The good and evil angels appear again, one to try to talk Faustus into repenting and the other to encourage him to continue down the road he has chosen. Faustus begins to call upon God, suddenly repenting. Lucifer shows up with Belzebub, telling Faustus he cannot save his soul and repenting is not part of their deal. To encourage Faustus to stay with the program, Belzebub puts on a show with the Seven Deadly Sins, showing Faustus how much fun hell can be. Lucifer then gives Faustus a book that allows him to change himself into any shape he desires to be. Wagner, left behind, is envious of Faustus.

Analysis

As Faustus prepares to make a deal with the devil, the reader discovers that Wagner, his serving boy, can also use magic. Wagner convinces a young, starving youth to become his servant by threatening him with two conjured devils. This suggests to the reader that these deals are not as isolated to Faustus as they might seem. It also suggests trouble for some of the townspeople.



Faustus makes his deal with Lucifer and is excited about it. However, he learns almost immediately that things will not be quite as he had imagined. Faustus wanted a wife, but Mephistophilis tells him that it would be better to have many lovers than a single wife. Faustus then wants to know about the universe, a discussion that leaves him thinking about God and his creation of the heavens. This causes Faustus to call on God in repentance. Lucifer becomes angry, telling Faustus it is too late to save his soul. Instead, Lucifer has his devils, led by Belzebub, show Faustus the glory of hell through a show starring the Seven Deadly Sins. Faustus is won over, asking to see hell for himself.

Not only has pride caused Faustus to get into trouble, but the lure of evil is also pulling him down. Faustus was once a very successful theology student, someone who has studied religion quite deeply. For this reason, Faustus finds himself looking for God even after he has made a deal with the devil. There is still something basically good about Faustus. However, the lure of the Seven Deadly Sins destroys this final bit of holiness inside Faustus.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Wagner want to hire a servant? How does he threaten this servant to make him agree?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Faustus write a contract in blood with Lucifer? What does he get out of the contract? What is written on his arm after he cuts it? What does this mean?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Lucifer become angry with Faustus? How does Lucifer convince Faustus to remain a part of their contract?

Vocabulary

Cosmography, solemn, astronomy, firmament, chariot, deadly, gluttony, lechery, glutton, victuals, parentage, vengeance, envy, covetous, wrath, rapiers, arras, creation, pride, gratify, pleasing, disdain, companion, injure, contrary, henceforth, pardon, ministers.



Scenes VII-IX

Summary

Scene VII

Faustus and Mephistophilis have gone a trip around the world after touring hell. They end up in Rome. Mephistophilis takes Faustus into the chambers of the Pope where they are preparing a feast. When the Pope comes into the room, Faustus makes himself invisible, but he can be heard. Faustus speaks to the Pope as he steals several items of food from him. When the Pope crosses himself, Faustus hits him on the head. This causes a group of friars to sing in prayer for the Pope. The chorus then sings about Faustus' growing pride and how it will be his downfall.

Scene VIII

Robin and Ralph are stable boys at a local stable. Robin has a book, and he tells Ralph that he has learned to conjure with that book. Robin suggests that he and Ralph use this skill to steal drinks from local inns and vintners. Ralph quickly agrees.

Scene IX

Robin and Ralph are confronted by a vintner who accuses them of theft. Robin is able to hide the truth by conjuring Mephistophilis. However, Mephistophilis is not pleased with their behavior and punishes them by turning them into animals. Robin is now an ape, and Ralph is a dog.

Analysis

Faustus has begun to embrace his new role as a lost soul. Faustus goes to Rome and humiliates the Pope, leaving in his wake a great deal of chaos. The chorus sings of how Faustus' pride will be his ruin, and the reader can clearly see that is true. Faustus is having fun, but he has yet to consider the price he will pay for this fun.

As Faustus embraces his new life style, Robin and Ralph are also playing with magic. However, these two young boys are clearly in over their head. Robin and Ralph try to trick a vintner into believing they did not steal wine from him by conjuring Mephistophilis. This causes Mephistophilis to become angry with them. Soon the two boys find themselves turned into animals, a consequence that leaves them powerless to do much of anything for themselves, let alone dabble in magic. This brings to mind the punishment Faustus will soon face. However, Faustus's punishment will be much worse.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Faustus go to Rome? What does he do there? For what reason?

Discussion Question 2

Who are Robin and Ralph? How did they come by a magic book? What do they do with it?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Mephistophlis turn Robin and Ralph into animals? What does this prove?

Vocabulary

Hither, brave, begone, presumption, villains, transform, goblet, forgive, vintner, impeach, ashamed, burden, honesty, favor, somewhat, fellow, purchase, keepers, supernaturally, condition, invented, intolerable, brimstone, hippocras, mistress, dismembered.



Scenes X-XII

Summary

Scene X

Faustus is in the court of the German Emperor. The Emperor asks him to conjure his historical heroes, Alexander the Great and his paramour, Diana. There is a knight in the crowd who openly doubts Faustus, so Faustus asks him to leave. Mephistophilis arrives with devils who resemble Alexander and Diana. The Emperor is pleased. Faustus then asks for the knight to return. When he does, he has horns. Faustus finds it amusing, but the Emperor asks him to remove them, stating that the man has been punished enough. Faustus agrees. When Faustus leaves, the Emperor promises him a generous reward.

Scene XI

Faustus tells Mephistophilis that he would like to return to Wittenburg now that his time is beginning to run out. He also tells Mephistophilis that he would like to walk and he plans to sell his horse. A horse-courser offers to buy the horse for forty dollars. Faustus would rather have fifty, but he agrees to the forty. Dr. Faustus warns the horse-courser to never ride the horse in water. The horse-courser is confused by this and does not listen to the advice. The horse-courser comes back while Faustus is napping and says that the horse turned into a pile of hay when he rode him in water. The horse-courser pulls on Faustus's leg to wake him, causing Faustus to call out to Mephistophilis to get rid of the man. Mephistophilis takes him to the constable. Wagner enters the room and tells Faustus that the Duke of Vanholt wants to see him.

Scene XII

The Duchess of Vanholt asks Faustus to conjure up ripe grapes for her. When he does, the Duke wants to know how he got ripe grapes in the middle of winter. Faustus tells him that even when it is winter in Germany, it is summer on other continents. The Duke then offers to reward Faustus for his intelligence and kindness.

Analysis

Faustus visits many royals in these scenes. First, Faustus is able to entertain the Emperor of Germany by showing him devils who resemble his historic heroes, Alexander the Great and his paramour, Diana. Then, Faustus is able to give ripe grapes to the Duchess of Vanholt in the middle of winter. Both these acts result in great rewards for Faustus, suggesting that he has achieved his goal by becoming well known and wealthy. At the same time, however, Faustus can be quite cruel. Faustus sells a horse to a horse-courser that turns out to be an enchanted bale of hay. Faustus also gives a naysayer horns. This shows the reader that what was once good in Faustus' soul is no longer there.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Faustus visit the Emperor of Germany? What does this suggest about Faustus's reputation in Germany?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Faustus sell his horse? What is wrong with the horse? What does Faustus do about it?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Faustus conjure grapes for the Duchess of Vanholt? How does she respond to such a gift?

Vocabulary

Courtesy, content, beholding, contrary, countries, wilt, greeted, pleased, desires, dainties, gracious, cunning, honorable, villain, constable, labor, farewell, master, dearest, conceit, vanished, drowning, purgation.



Scenes XIII-XIV

Summary

Scene XII

Some scholars come to visit Faustus and ask him to conjure Helen of Troy for them. Faustus does. As the scholars stare at the beauty, an old man comes into the room and asks Faustus to repent once more. Faustus asks the old man to give him a moment to think about it. Faustus and Mephistophilis discuss the situation. Mephistophilis convinces Faustus it is too late to repent, something Faustus claims to already know. Faustus tells the man he has made his choice. Devils come to view the scene and celebrate.

Scene XIV

Faustus asks the scholars to pray for him. Faustus sees that time is short and begins to regret his decision. As the time counts down on his clock, Faustus looks back on his life, lamenting his choices, beginning God to show him mercy sometime in the far future. Faustus accepts he must go to hell, but prays that he will not have to remain there for eternity. The devils come and take Faustus away. The chorus tells the audience that to learn the lesson of Faustus's choices.

Analysis

Faustus is given one more chance when an old man comes and asks him to repent. Faustus considers it for a second, but then turns his back on the opportunity. The man is sent away and the devils celebrate. However, as the moment approaches, Faustus begins to regret his choices. It is not until it is too late that Faustus finally realizes the full impact of what he has agreed to do. It is a dark moment for Faustus as he asks students to pray for him. There is no getting out of the deal, however, and Faustus goes to hell.

Discussion Question 1

Who do the scholars ask to be shown? What does this suggest about the scholars?

Discussion Question 2

Who is the old man? Who does he metaphorically represent?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Faustus call out to God as the moment of his damnation approaches? What does this say about Faustus's character?

Vocabulary

Entice, unlawful, regard, laurel, psychosis, brutish, dissolved, elements, engendered, creature, incessant, impose, ascend, laboring, entrails, harbor, nativity, reigned, influence, hath, allotted, mercy, firmament, repent.



Characters

Dr. Faustus

Dr. Faustus is a very intelligent and talented student of theology. However, Faustus is not happy with the lack of fame or riches that this pursuit has brought to him. For this reason, Faustus makes the choice to study magic. In doing this, Faustus conjures a devil and makes a deal that will allow him to have all the benefit of a devil for a servant. In return, Faustus must give his soul to Lucifer at the end of twenty-four years.

Faustus gets most of what he wanted from his deal with Lucifer. He becomes well-known, visiting the court of the Emperor of Germany as well as the courts of other wealthy courtesans. At the end of the contract, however, Faustus finds himself begging God to save him. Faustus has had multiple chances to save himself, but does not try until that last moment.

Faustus is a prideful man who wants to be rich and famous. This does not work out for him, however, because to become rich and famous he sells his soul to the devil. Pride is one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and Faustus finds out first hand why that is.

Mephistophilis

Mephistophilis is the devil Faustus first conjures in his garden. Faustus asks Mephistophilis to be his servant, but Mephistophilis says he needs Lucifer's permission. Faustus tells Mephistophilis that he would give his soul for the deal, and Mephistophilis says that he will ask. Lucifer agrees to the deal. Mephistophilis spends twenty-four years as Faustus's servant. He grants all of Faustus's wishes.

When Mephistophilis first comes to Faustus, they have a discussion of what heaven and hell are. Mephistophilis makes it clear that he is not happy having been thrown out of heaven and would very much prefer to be there. Faustus glosses over this conversation, hearing instead how cool it would be to have a devil for a servant. Mephistophilis tries again to stop Faustus as he goes to sign the contract, but again Faustus refuses to listen. This is one of many opportunities Faustus has to change his mind and one of many he ignores.

Lucifer

Lucifer is the devil in charge of hell. When Faustus learns how to conjure, he conjures one of Lucifer's devils. Faustus wants the devil to be his servant, but Lucifer will not allow it. For this reason, Faustus offers his soul in exchange. Lucifer likes this idea and agrees to it immediately. However, when Faustus begins to repent almost immediately after signing the contract, Lucifer becomes angry and uses his devils to show Faustus



what a wonderful place hell can be. In the end, Lucifer wins his reward, taking Faustus's soul after the twenty-four years stipulated in the contract.

Wagner

Wagner is the boy who works in Dr. Faustus's home. Wagner learns about magic by watching Faustus in his studies. Wagner uses this magic to force a young boy in town to become his servant. This shows how Faustus's pride is not only limited to him, but it includes others in the town. It also shows how magic is used to hurt, rather than help.

Robin and Ralph

Robin and Ralph are stable boys who work at a local inn. Robin has stolen a book of magic from Faustus because of his job with Wagner. Robin uses this book to help him and Ralph steal drinks from a local vintner. However, when they conjure Mephistophilis to help them escape accusations by the vintner, Mephistophilis punishes them by turning them into an ape and a dog. This illustrates that the use of magic only leads to bad things.

Valdes and Cornelius

Valdes and Cornelius are masters of magic. When Faustus decides he wants to learn magic in order to become rich and famous, he calls on Valdes and Cornelius to teach him. The two men quickly agree, and soon Faustus is knowledgeable about conjuring Mephistophilis to appear.

Scholars

On several occasions Faustus is visited by scholars with whom he once studied theology. These scholars want to help Faustus and protect him from his choices. However, they do not succeed. At the end of the play, these scholars pray for Faustus's soul, but it is too late to save him from his deal with Lucifer.

Emperor of Germany

The Emperor of Germany asks to see Faustus so that Faustus might conjure the spirits of Alexander the Great and his paramour, Diana. Faustus does this for the Emperor despite a naysayer in the crowd. The Emperor is so impressed that he gives Faustus a large reward. This illustrates how Faustus's deal with Lucifer has given him the fame and riches he wanted.



Good Angel and Evil Angel

On multiple occasions throughout the novel, Faustus is visited by a good angel and an evil angel. These angels try to convince Faustus which road to choose in his life. The good angel asks him to follow God and to avoid the path magic will take him on. The evil angel tells Faustus that life will be so much better if he embraces magic and a relationship with Lucifer. Faustus chooses the side of the evil angel each time they appear.

Seven Deadly Sins

The Seven Deadly Sins are seven devils who represent the seven sins that are most likely to cause a person to go to hell. The Seven Deadly Sins are wrath, pride, gluttony, greed, lust, sloth, and envy. Belzebub has the Seven Deadly Sins put on a show for Faustus so he can see how much fun hell can be. This convinces Faustus early in his deal with Lucifer not to try to ask for forgiveness from God. It also makes Faustus want to see all of hell.



Symbols and Symbolism

Books

Many books of magic are referenced in this play. Faustus is given a book by Lucifer himself. Robin later uses one of these books to get himself into trouble with his friend Ralph.

Goblet

Robin and Ralph get in trouble over a silver goblet while visiting one vintner.

Dagger

Faustus uses a dagger on several occasions to cut himself in order to write in his own blood.

Pope's Food and Drink

Faustus makes himself invisible and tortures the Pope by stealing food and drink from his banquet table.

Faustus's Horse

Faustus sells a horse that turns out to be an enchanted bale of hay.

Contract

Faustus writes a contract with the devil in his own blood that promises his soul to Lucifer in twenty-four years in exchange for Mephistophilis being his private servant.

Ripe Grapes

Faustus has Mephistophilis bring him a bowl of ripe grapes for the Duchess of Vanholt. It is winter in Germany, so this feat is especially remarkable.

Rewards

Faustus is offered multiple rewards for showing off his magic. One comes from the Emperor of Germany for Faustus showing him spirits that resemble Alexander the Great and his paramour.

Tattoo

After Faustus cuts his arm to write out the contract with Lucifer, he is left with writing on his arm that says, "Homo, fuge!" This translates to Human, flee! It is another warning Faustus does not heed.

Spirits

Faustus conjures spirits on several occasions. He conjures the spirits of Alexander the Great and his paramour for the Emperor and Helen of Troy for the scholars.



Settings

Wittenburg

Faustus is raised in Wittenburg and this is where he calls home at the beginning of the novel. Toward the end of his twenty-four years, Faustus goes back to Wittenburg to be around the things that are familiar to him in his final days of life.

Emperor's Court

At one point in the play, Faustus visits the court of the Emperor of Germany. While there, Faustus entertains the Emperor with spirits who resemble Alexander the Great and his paramour. For this, Faustus is greatly rewarded.

Duke's Court

Toward the end of the play, Faustus is called to the court of the Duke of Vanholt. Here, Faustus conjures ripe grapes for the Duchess during the dead of winter. Again, he is richly rewarded.

Pope's Chambers

Faustus and Mephistophilis visit the Pope's chambers, but they make themselves invisible so the Pope cannot see them. In this way, Faustus and Mephistophilis are able to tease the Pope by stealing things right out from under his nose.

Hell

Faustus visits hell shortly after signing the contract that gives Lucifer his soul. This visit is designed to show Faustus how wonderful hell is. However, by the end of the play Faustus is ready to repent and ask for God's mercy to prevent spending eternity in hell.



Themes and Motifs

Religion

Religion is a basic theme of this play because the plot focuses on a struggle between God and the devil. Faustus is a prideful man who wants more out of life than the study of God can provide for him. For this reason, Faustus turns to magic, the one way that he feels he can make a real name for himself. Faustus turns from God to the devil in this study, actually making a deal with the devil so that he might have power and money.

As the play develops, Faustus finds himself playing with many devils, conjuring things, teasing other humans, and torturing the people of his little village. This shows the evil side of religion, what it is like when someone chooses hell over heaven. Toward the end, however, Faustus is given one last chance to turn back to God and save his soul. This chance comes in the form of an old man. The reader might see this as a metaphor for God, or for salvation. Unfortunately, Faustus does not see what a gift this final chance is and he turns to evil.

The basic element of any religion is good versus evil. Faustus finds himself dumped right in the middle of these elements, making choices that most preachers warn their congregation against. Faustus is the embodiment of sin, of everything most religion preaches against, making religion a theme of the play.

Greed and Pride

As the play opens, the chorus tells the story of Faustus' life to that point. Faustus has had a pretty normal life, growing up the same way others of his time did. However, Faustus has the advantage of being a brilliant scholar who can debate anyone under the table. Faustus is not happy with this little bit of success. He wants to be world renowned. He wants to be rich.

Faustus's pride will not allow him to be happy with mediocrity. So, he begins studying magic and conjures a devil, leading to a deal over his soul with Lucifer. Faustus cannot be content with what God wants for him, and he turns to the devil for more. For these reasons, greed and pride are themes of the play.

Supernatural

There are many supernatural elements in this play. Faustus turns to magic to make his life bigger and better. This allows him to conjure up devils, creatures of another dimension. Due to this, Faustus is able to do things that one might think would be impossible.



The supernatural elements of this story come in again when Robin and Ralph are almost caught stealing from a vintner. Robin uses magic to protect them from getting caught. Without the supernatural, Robin and Ralph might have gone to jail. Then again, jail might have been preferable to being turned into animals. At any rate, these elements make the supernatural a theme of the novel.

Styles

Point of View

There is no point of view because Dr. Faustus is a play.

Language and Meaning

The language of this play is Old English. The play was written in the sixteenth century, therefore the language of the play reflects the time period and education level of the playwright. There is quite a bit of slang common to that time period in the play as well as words that some modern readers might not fully understand. However, the language is lyrical, an old language that brings a certain elegance to the play.

Structure

The play is divided into a prologue and fourteen scenes. The play is written mostly in dialogue with some stage directions to alert the reader to what the characters might be doing if they were watching the play rather than reading it.

The play has one main plot and several subplots. The main plot centers on Faustus as he makes and lives a deal with the devil. One subplot shows how Faustus's choices affect those around him. Another subplot follows the struggle of some around Faustus in trying to change his mind about his choices. All the plots come to a satisfactory conclusion at the end of the play.



Quotes

For, falling to a devilish exercise, And glutted with learning's golden gifts, He surfeits upon cursed necromancy.

-- Chorus (Prologue paragraph lines 23-25)

Importance: This quote describes how pride causes Faustus to make a deal with the devil.

Affords this art no greater miracle?

-- Faustus (Scene I paragraph line 9)

Importance: Faustus is expressing his frustration with the lack of fame his chosen profession has given him.

I wonder what's become of Faustus that was wont to make our schools ring with sic probo?

-- Scholar 1 (Scene II paragraph line 1)

Importance: Two scholars are searching for Faustus. This statement shows that Faustus had some recognition from his work at school, but it clearly is not the kind Faustus wants.

I see there's virtue in my heavenly words; Who would not be proficient in this art?

-- Faustus (Scene III paragraph lines 33-34)

Importance: This is Faustus's reaction to his first successful conjuring of a devil. This shows that Faustus thinks that magic is simple. Faustus is a little naive to the dangers of playing with magic.

I am a servant to great Lucifer, And may not follow thee without his leave; No more than he commands must we perform.

-- Mephistophilis (Scene III paragraph lines 46-48)

Importance: This is Mephistophilis's response to Faustus's request that he become Faustus's servant. It is for this reason that Faustus decides to offer his soul for Mephistophilis.

How? My soul to the Devil for a shoulder of mutton, though 'twere blood-raw! Not so, good friend. By'r sted and good sauce to it, if I pay so dear.

-- Clown (Scene IV paragraph Line 8)

Importance: This is the clown's response to Wagner's offer to give him the things he needs if the Clown will agree to be his servant for seven years.



Away with such vain fancies, and despair: Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub. Now go not backward: no, Faustus, be resolute.

-- Faustus (Scene V paragraph lines 3-5)

Importance: This is Faustus talking himself into sticking with the deal he has asked to strike with Lucifer.

Marriage is but a ceremonial toy;

-- Mephistophilis (Scene V paragraph line 148)

Importance: This is Mephistophilis' response to Faustus's request for a wife.

Come, Ralph, did not I tell thee we were for ever made by this Doctor Faustus' book?

-- Robin (Scene IX paragraph line 1)

Importance: This is Robin bragging about the great idea he had to use magic to steal drinks from local vintners.

That time doth run with calm and silent foot, Short'ning my days and threat of vital life,
Calls for the payment of my latest years;

-- Faustus (Scene XI paragraph lines 1-3)

Importance: This is Faustus's recognition that his time is coming to a close. Soon Faustus's soul will be taken to hell by Lucifer and his devils as Faustus agreed in the contract.

But Faustus' offenses can never be pardoned: the serpent that tempted Eve may be sav'd, but not Faustus.

-- Faustus (Scene XIV paragraph line 9)

Importance: This is Faustus's words to the scholars on the day his contract is up with Lucifer.

All beasts are happy, For, when they die, Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements; But mine must live, still to be plagu'd in hell.

-- Faustus (Scene XIV paragraph lines 65-67)

Importance: This is Faustus's lament in the moments before his contract with Lucifer comes to an end.