

Faust Study Guide

Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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Plot Summary

Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is considered to be one of the finest works of prose in all of English literature. The book was introduced and annotated by Walter Kaufmann, a noted German translator and philosopher.

In addition to Kaufmann's lengthy introduction, the book is broken into five sections of the actual text. They are: Dedication, Prelude in the Theatre, Prologue in Heaven, The First Part of the Tragedy, and The Second Part of The Tragedy.

The Dedication serves as a type of strange epilogue during which Faust is very old and preparing to die.

The Prelude in the Theatre details a conversation between three men: The Director, a Clown, and a Dramatic Poet. The men discuss and argue over how to rejuvenate or create a play that will captivate their audience.

The Prologue in Heaven takes place between the Lord, Heavenly Hosts, Mephistopheles, and the Three Archangels - Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael.

The Lord asks Mephisto if he knows Faust. Mephisto says he does know Faust, the doctor. Mephisto comments that Faust serves the Lord in a peculiar way. The Lord says Faust is on the wrong path but He is convinced that Faust will come to Him in the end and be saved. Mephisto disagrees. The two entities make a bet as to whose path Faust will follow in the end.

The First Part of the Tragedy is the major portion of the text and crux of the entire tale of Faust.

Faust is a professor, doctor and Master of the Black Arts. Faust sits in his den lamenting the state of the world and his ongoing misery. Faust feels that his life of intellectual pursuits has taught him nothing, that it has all been a farce and is utterly useless. Faust conjures Mephisto, the devil. After a long discussion Faust makes a pact with Mephisto. Mephisto will act as Faust's servant, granting every wish, as long as Faust lives. When Faust dies, Mephisto will claim his soul and the roles will reverse.

Faust leaves the university and travels with Mephisto. Faust is granted the power he seeks. Faust sees a young maid in the town and immediately falls in love with her. Faust cannot understand what is happening to him because of this newfound power. Faust pursues the woman and wins her heart. Gretchen's brother learns of the affair and Gretchen's pregnancy. There is a duel between Faust and Valentine, during which Valentine is mortally wounded. Faust flees.

While Faust is away still seeking help from the earth spirit, Gretchen gives birth to Faust's child. Gretchen kills the child, is convicted of the crime and is sentenced to death. Faust visits Gretchen in prison to find that she has gone insane. Gretchen dies.



In Part Two of the Tragedy, Goethe presents Faust as an old man. Faust is wealthy beyond compare. Faust feels responsible for the death of an old couple on a nearby property and attempts to repent. There is a battle between Faust and the Heavenly Host. The Heavenly Host whisks Faust's soul to Heaven. The Virgin Mother intercedes on Faust's behalf and Faust's soul is saved.



Introduction

Introduction Summary

Walter Kaufmann is a noted German translator and philosopher. Kaufmann is most well known for his translations and insights into the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, a fellow German. As a philosopher, Kaufmann has written a great deal on the topics of religion, existentialism and related topics. Kaufmann's 1965 translation of Hegel's work was touted as one of his finest achievements to date. In addition to work on existentialism, Christianity, Judaism, death, morality and related topics, Kaufmann is also noted for his focus on philosophy and literature, which is where Faust comes into play.

Kaufmann is known for being painstaking and meticulous. The Introduction is sixty-two pages long, giving the reader an idea of Kaufmann's dedication. At times the information in the introduction, while important to the life of Goethe, is academic and often extraneous. It is important, however, to recognize that this particular work only encompasses Part One of Faust and excerpts from Part Two.

One of the most important things pointed out by Kaufmann in this section is that there are many renditions and adaptations of Goethe's Faust. Some people believe that Goethe's work is based on Gounod's opera when the opposite is true. There are also many renditions of Faust including famous plays by Marlowe, Rembrandt's etching, Thomas Mann's novel, and Berlioz's cantata.

Kaufmann speaks of Goethe's 200th birthday, during which Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary referred to Faust as "The title and hero of a drama by Goethe". Unfortunately, Webster's made a grave error by stating that the last scene in the work takes place in hell, which is not true. "After a sensual life he is carried off by the Devil, but in the final act he is regenerated and his soul is saved..." (Introduction, p. 7).

One thing many people overlook is the amount of humor in Goethe's work. Kaufmann asserts that Goethe's Faust is filled with humor "from the benign to the sardonic including in between the raw, the witty, the subtle and Olympian malice" (Introduction, p. 8).

Unfortunately, many translators have overused words like "thou" and "ye", which takes away from Goethe's sharp wit. Faust was also edited by certain religious figures and parties.

Chapter 2: Kaufmann details Goethe's life from his birth in 1749 through to his death in 1832 at the age of eighty-two. Goethe was a renaissance man before the term was even coined or recognized. In addition to his poetry and prose, Goethe was also a man of letters, composer, novelist, critic, and writer of scientific essays. Goethe also held many patents. It is not surprising that Kaufmann refers to Goethe as the most well known German in the world.



Chapter 3: Goethe's Faust went against German idolatry, which was noted as soon as the first volume was published. Nietzsche ridiculed Goethe's ideas, mocking the possibility of the story without supernatural intervention. It is also noted that while the story was completely Goethe's the man could not bear to allow the little seamstress to go unsaved.

Kaufmann gives a long discourse on Part Two, which is not included in this volume. Kaufmann discusses tragedy and comedy, neither of which resembles their current definitions. Kaufmann also compares Faust to other famous works, including Sophocles' "Oedipus Coloneus".

Goethe was amused by the scholars that took so much time and energy dissecting Faust. Goethe had a sort of pity for the men as each struggled to be profound. Kaufmann states that there are countless works regarding Faust, some of which are excellent and others that are brilliant.

Goethe finished the play in the year before he died at age eighty-two. Goethe told a friend that it seemed strange to finish a play that he had conceptualized in his twenties.

Chapter 4: The historical figure of Faust is examined. This chapter discusses the historical figure of Faust and points out that Goethe was not the first nor the last to immortalize Faust through works of literature.

The brief history of Faust is this: Faust was born in Knittlingen, Württemberg, around 1480. Faust enrolled in the University of Cracow in Poland, where he studied magic. Faust became obsessed with his studies and began to tell others that whatever Jesus could do, he could also do. People begged Faust to teach. Faust began to teach but soon took advantage of his position to molest the boys in his care. Faust is also tied to the city of Erfurt, where he supposedly lectured on Homer. Faust presented his students with earthly representations of Homer's heroes; an act that could be considered wicked. Faust was eventually approached Konrad Klinge, a Franciscan monk. Klinge begged Faust to return to God.

Faust replied: "My dear sir, I realize that you are well disposed toward me, and I know myself what you have been telling me. But I have gone further than you think and have pledged myself to the devil with my own blood, to be in his eternity, body and soul. How then, can I return? Or how could I be helped?" (Introduction, Chap. 4, pp.16-17).

The monk tried to convince Faust that he could be saved but Faust would hear none of it. The monk caused Faust to be expelled from the city.

There are other tales regarding Faust, including his abilities as a fortune teller and a trip during which he was accompanied by the devil in the shape of a dog. Faust died in 1540.

The first book on Dr. Johann Faust appeared in 1587. The title page reads: "Historia of Dr. Johann Faust, the widely acclaimed magician and black artist, how he pledged himself to the devil for a certain time, what strange adventures he saw meanwhile,



brought about and pursued, until he finally received his well deserved wages" (Introduction, Chap. 4, p. 17).

The theme of Faust was taken up shortly thereafter by the famed poet Christopher Marlowe. Kaufmann includes a portion of Marlowe's work.

Kaufmann also discusses other renditions of the legend of Faust and questions why Goethe's version constitutes world literature.

Chapter 5: Goethe's Character and Economy

Goethe strove to be like Shakespeare with his use of previously conceived ideas as well as history. Goethe, like Shakespeare, was much more interested in entertaining the audience on every level rather than giving in to the potential of underlying philosophy in the work.

Chapter 6: The Walpurgis Night and the Walpurgis Night's Dream

Kaufmann discusses the similarity between the two scenes and comments that the editing process, which was put into place to make the text more acceptable, actually caused some scenes in Faust to be obscene whereas they may have been considered to be distasteful in their original form.

Chapter 7: Part Two

Part Two was not finished until the end of Goethe's life. It never enjoyed the same popularity as Part One for many reasons. One reason was that Goethe found it necessary to write a synopsis of the last four scenes in Part One, which pleased some and annoyed others. It was also much less accepted on a critical level.

Chapter 8: Synopsis of Omitted Portions

Kaufmann presents a lengthy synopsis of omitted portions from Parts One and Two. Also included are summaries of each.

Chapter 9: Poetry in Faust and Inconsistencies

Kaufmann states that not all of Faust is poetic. In fact there are several sections that cannot be considered poetic at all and in fact these sections seem to be forced and contrived.

Chapter 10: Translations

Many scholars including Kaufmann believe that there exists no English translation of Faust that can come close to the brilliance of the original. Many translators take liberties with their translations, adding in things that have come from their own interpretation. Kaufmann uses Dante's "Commedia" as another example of inferior translations.



Chapter 11: Goethe Versus Faust

Although it is common for a writer and poet to project onto his characters aspects of his own personality, it must be said that there are marked differences between Goethe and Faust.

Chapter 12: Faust and Philosophy

Kaufmann addresses this topic as a fellow philosopher. Kaufmann states that Faust may be enjoyed purely for its entertainment value and does not suggest any underlying philosophy, although the theme of damnation and salvation is clearly present. It is thought that while Goethe's philosophy may be evident there is no proof that Goethe had any intention of sending a message to his audience.

Introduction Analysis

Non-fiction portion of the text.



Goethe's Faust: Contents and Comments, Dedication

Goethe's Faust: Contents and Comments, Dedication Summary

Goethe's Faust: Contents and Comments

Included with the standard table of contents are comments and explanations of the acts and scenes in Part One.

Dedication:

Faust is approached by the devil. Faust asks if he should hold the devil fast. Are the dreams of youth still important, or has wisdom showed Faust the error of his ways and the futility of his situation?

Faust laments the fact that his friends and family are gone. There is no one to applaud Faust now except for strangers. Faust weeps for his past.

Goethe's Faust: Contents and Comments, Dedication Analysis

The Dedication can be seen as an epilogue in that it details the end of Faust's life and the realization of what he has done to gain his earthly desires and treasures.

Faust is at the end of his life. The devil is coming to collect Faust's soul; the souls that Faust gave up freely as a young man. Faust weeps for what he has lost and realizes that the things he longed for in his youth cannot compare to the things he should have cherished. Faust grieves for his decisions but faces the devil with readiness.



Prelude in the Theatre

Prelude in the Theatre Summary

The Prelude in the Theatre takes place between a Director, a Clown, and a Dramatic Poet.

The Director addresses the Clown and the Poet. The Director declares that the Clown and the Poet have been with him through thick and thin. The Director asks the men if it is possible to take their play and make it new somehow so that it will be received well in Germany. The Director hopes the theatre going crowd will be so enamored of the play that they will flock to the theatre as if they were starving and the behind the door there is a bounty of food.

"They fight and push each other, coax and vex,

And, as in famine time, for bread at baker's door,

To get a ticket almost break their necks."

(The Prelude in the Theatre, p. 71)

The Poet says that producing a play for the crowds is sure to cause the spirit to flee and will most likely cause the Poet to lose inspiration and quality in his work. Although the Poet is able to do as the Director asks, the Poet says that the play will surely suffer, whereas the genuine masterpiece will survive from age to age.

The Clown tells the Poet that the people care more about being entertained and not about the masterpiece. The Clown also claims that the people want to laugh and engage in foolery.

The Director follows that Clown's lead and says that he wants to see a great deal of action along with the comedy. By producing a play that pleases all the masses and all the classes the Poet shall gain notoriety and everyone will go home contented. There is no point in creating a masterpiece that will only be picked apart by the public.

The Poet continues to object and insults the Director.

The Director says he takes no offense at the Poet's words. The Director insists that the play is nothing more than a diversion for everyone from the fairest ladies to the rabble. Each wants only to be entertained in some way that will not require much effort. The Director also reminds the Poet that he is the one who pays the Poet's salary.

The Poet tells the Director to find another slave that he cannot use his gift to produce something that is beneath the level of his gift. To do so would squander the gift and thereby do a disservice to himself and mankind.



The Clown presents a solution. It is suggested that the Poet create a long and in-depth romantic story into which can be inserted the action, drama, comedy and tragedy so desired by the public. All will be content.

The Poet asks for the return of his youth when he was flush with love and the feelings experienced by a young man.

The Clown tells the Poet that he still has the ability to write as if he were young. Age is a state of mind and should not matter when one is young at heart.

The Director believes the matter is settled and tells the Clown and the Poet to get to work. While they discuss what needs to be done, someone else is writing the play.

Prelude in the Theatre Analysis

The Dedication can be seen as an epilogue in that it details the end of Faust's life and the realization of what he has done to gain his earthly desires and treasures.

Faust is at the end of his life. The devil is coming to collect Faust's soul; the souls that Faust gave up freely as a young man. Faust weeps for what he has lost and realizes that the things he longed for in his youth cannot compare to the things he should have cherished. Faust grieves for his decisions but faces the devil with readiness.

The conversation held between the Director, Poet and Clown is one that has been held a million times before in theatres all over the world. The Director needs a hit play. The last one was relatively successful, but there needs to be a new one that can succeed in Germany. If the Clown and the Poet cannot revive the play to thrill the audience, then a new one must be created.

The Poet is eager to create a masterpiece but tells the Director that he cannot be rushed. It takes time to create poetry for the stage. If one is rushed, then the lack of time and effort will show in the end product which defeats the entire purpose.

The Clown mocks the Poet for being so haughty about the process. The Clown only wants to please, to make people laugh and enjoy entertainment. The Poet is offended that his work should be viewed as no more than a lighthearted and purposeless comedic sketch.

The Director agrees with the Clown that there must be comedy and action. The Director reminds the Poet that he pays the Poet's salary and therefore the Poet will do as he is ordered. The Poet becomes angry and says that he will not demean himself. If the Director insists on going that route then he should find another slave.

After some discussion, there is a compromise of sorts. The Poet can create the type of play he wants to create with deep meaning and beautiful words and ideas. Inside that story will be opportunities for comedy, tragedy and action. The problem is solved and the men prepare to get to work.



Prologue in Heaven

Prologue in Heaven Summary

The Prologue in Heaven takes place between the Lord, Heavenly Hosts, Mephistopheles, and the Three Archangels - Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael.

The Archangels, Gabriel, Michael and Raphael tell of a great battle between God and Mephisto during which the seas rage, Eden turns dark, and there is devastation. Yet the Lord prevails and all cherish the mild and glorious day.

Mephisto says that God likes to see him in such a way, and although God acts as if he is being friendly, he is clearly asserting his power over Mephisto. Mephisto believes that if God knew how to enjoy his pain he would do so.

"My pathos would be sure to make you laugh,
Were laughing not a habit you've unlearned,
Of suns and worlds I know nothing to say;
I only see how men live in dismay."

(Prologue in Heaven, p. 85)

There is an exchange between the Lord and Mephisto. The Lord sees only good, while Mephisto sees only the dark side of the world. The Lord wants to know if only wishes to complain. Is there anything on earth that pleases Mephisto? Mephisto says that there is nothing good to celebrate.

The Lord asks Mephisto if he knows Faust. Mephisto says he does know Faust, the doctor. Mephisto comments that Faust serves the Lord in a peculiar way. The Lord says Faust is on the wrong path, but He is convinced that Faust will come to Him in the end and be saved. Mephisto disagrees. The two entities make a bet as to whose path Faust will follow in the end.

If the Lord wins, then Faust will be released into His care and his soul will be saved. If Mephisto wins, Faust's soul will be whisked away to Hell and eternal sorrow.

Prologue in Heaven Analysis

It is important to know that in the Prologue in Heaven Mephisto is one of God's servants, not the antithesis of goodness. It is during the prologue that the separation between God and Mephisto occurs.



The Archangels tell of God's glory and rejoice in what has been created. Mephisto, on the other hand, can see no reason to rejoice. Mephisto sees only tragedy and dismay. The Lord and Mephisto have a conversation about Mephisto's inability to see the good in the Lord's work. The Lord laments that Mephisto can see nothing good in the world, that his servant sees only sorrow. Mephisto says he has no wish to add to man's plight.

The Lord and Mephisto discuss Faust. It is said that Faust serves the Lord in strange ways, but Faust's actions cannot be categorized as service. The Lord believes that Faust is on the wrong path. Mephisto and the Lord make a bet. The Lord believes that Faust will come to Him in the end with repentance and a desire to be saved. Mephisto disagrees. The Lord gives Mephisto the power to sway Faust to prove His point. The bet is arranged. If the Lord can cause Faust to repent, He gets Faust's soul. If Mephisto sways Faust toward the abyss, Mephisto may take Faust's soul to Hell.



The First Part of the Tragedy, Lines 355-2527

The First Part of the Tragedy, Lines 355-2527 Summary

The First Part of the Tragedy begins with Faust sitting in his den at night. The den is Gothic in style, dusty, moldy and filled with antiques passed down from Faust's father and ancestors. The room is gloomy and acts as a prison for Faust who rarely comes out save for holidays.

Faust discusses his extensive education including his studies in jurisprudence, medicine, philosophy and even theology. Although Faust has been named Doctor and Master of Arts, he feels that he has learned nothing. Nature still holds all of its secrets; secrets that are kept from Faust. Faust says it burns his heart to be so ignorant of all the world holds.

Faust talks to the moon as it shines in his window. Faust laments being inside steeped in misery when he might be outside in the moonlight.

The books in the den are discussed. Many of the books are old, covered in dust and mold. Many were inherited from ancestors and so many have been untouched for a long time.

Faust feels trapped in this world of his own making. Faust looks toward the heavens for knowledge but he sees no reason for celebration, only skulls and death.

Finally the doctor picks up a book written by Nostradamus, believing that it should supply ample company. Faust asks the spirits to respond to his need.

Faust opens the book and sees the symbol of macrocosm. At this sight, Faust becomes jubilant and lighthearted, filled with a mysterious potency. Faust wonders if he is a god. He wants to embrace nature and its undeniable power, yet he sees the knowledge as being elusive. There will be no epiphanies for Faust in this area.

Faust becomes renewed when he sees the symbol of the earth spirit. Instant recognition comes over him and at least something rings true. Faust feels able to face the world with all its joys and woes. Once again Faust attempts to summon the spirit.

The spirit appears and Faust is afraid. The spirit says it was summoned and wants to know the identity of the summoner. The spirit asks Faust if he summoned into to the room.

"Could it be you who at my breath's slight shiver

Are to the depths of life aquiver,



A miserably writhing worm?"

(The First Part of the Tragedy, p. 103)

Faust finally finds his tongue and says that he, the spirit's peer, was indeed the one that summoned it into the room. The spirit says that they are not peers but that Faust seeks another.

Wagner knocks on the door and enters. Wagner asks Faust if he is reading a Grecian tragedy. Wagner says he could benefit from Faust's vast knowledge but doubts that Faust can help him, considering his habit of confining himself to the den. Faust says that Wagner can read, learn and do all he wishes but there are some things that must come from within. Faust talks about art, how it must come from the heart and cannot be substituted.

Wagner says he wants to talk more, but Easter is the next day and he must go. Wagner says that perhaps he will have time to question Faust more. Wagner claims to know much but thinks that Faust can help him to learn all there is to know.

Faust is alone again and recites a lengthy monologue. Faust is in turmoil over the state of the universe and his role be it god or a lowly worm. During this monologue Faust observes his surroundings and is burdened by the unused treasures left to him by his ancestors. The doctor spies a crystal vase and remembers fondly parties during which people drank the brown liquid and became drunk. Faust takes the crystal vase off the shelf and drinks.

A choir of angels appears and sings about the resurrection. Faust asks if Easter has come, if the angels sing of the new covenant.

A choir of women also sing saying that when Jesus died they mourned. When Jesus was sought he could not be found. The choir of angels say Christ is risen.

Faust is moved by the songs and feels his heart overflowing. The faith of his youth returns in the first holy hour. The choir of angels tell Faust that Christ is there for him.

Before the City Gate

There are many different types of people wandering around, each with a different place to go. Each place has its benefits. There is always at least one person with a better idea.

Faust and Wagner walk about talking when they are approached by many townsfolk including an old peasant. The people are awed and happy to see Faust, a known hermit.

Faust and Wagner have a long conversation during which Faust returns to his dismay and view of the darkness of the world. Wagner tries to understand and counter Faust to no avail. Wagner states that he too studies in strange ways and yet he does not feel the



same as Faust. Faust says that he has two warring souls and hopes Wagner never has to suffer the same anguish.

The men spy dogs and speak of their habits and entertainment. Wagner utters the phrase, "He's poodlishly ridiculous" (Before the City Gate, p. 149).

Study

Faust enters the den with the poodle at his side. The poodle snarls and snuffles around the room, annoying Faust. Faust orders the poodle to settle down, but the dog does not obey. Faust wonders if, like man, the dog snarls at what he does not understand.

Faust turns to the New Testament to better comprehend the meaning of the Word. The fits line disturbs Faust, so he creates a new translation and then another.

Faust opens the door to let the poodle outside. Suddenly the poodle changes shape and Faust realizes it is not a dog after all. The dog is the devil in disguise. Faust attempts to banish the devil.

Mephisto appears in a traveling scholar's attire. Mephisto asks Faust what he desires. Faust questions Mephisto's identity.

Mephisto replies: "I am the spirit that negates.

And rightly so, for all that comes to be

Deserves to perish wretchedly;

'Twere better nothing would begin.

Thus everything that your terms, sin,

Destruction, evil represent -

That is my proper element."

(Study, p. 161)

Mephisto explains that he was once a part of the great Everything, a piece of the Lord's creation. Then Mephisto was separated from the Lord and became night to the Lord's day.

Faust challenges Mephisto by saying that he is too weak to create the type of destruction he desires so he must do so on a smaller scale.

Mephisto asks permission to leave. Faust is surprised and asks why such a powerful spirit would ask his permission. Mephisto explains that the pentagram on the threshold is not completely closed, trapping him in the room. Faust wants to make a pact in exchange for the devil's exit. The devil agrees but says he will return that he must go.



Faust says he has a hold on Mephisto and is not foolish enough to think that if pardoned Mephisto will return.

A group of spirits arrives in the hallway and sings. The song puts Faust to sleep, allowing Mephisto to escape. When Faust awakes he suspects that the whole thing was a dream.

Study: Faust, Mephistopheles

Mephisto returns. Faust invites the devil into his den. Faust and Mephisto talk of death. Faust says that although he feels the Lord inside him, there is no way to bear the pain and misery of the world. Faust says he would prefer to die than to live. Mephisto says when death comes it will not be welcomed.

Faust goes on to curse the things that he once desired but that were false or unattainable. A choir of spirits tells Faust that he has shattered everything that was once beautiful but it is not too late to rebuild from within his soul.

Mephisto tells Faust that he is human like all the rest but that Mephisto will agree to be his servant and to grant every wish that no mortal could resist. Faust wants to know what he must give in return. Mephisto does not want to answer but eventually tells Faust that in the hereafter their roles would be reversed.

The offer is accepted and made official with Faust's blood.

Faust says he has no hope or desire for joy, only excess. Mephisto promises Faust every thing he could possibly wish for and more. Mephisto also tells Faust that he must learn to see the world in a new way. Mephisto goes on to explain that while he will be bound to Faust and be required to serve him on earth, Faust's life is short and "art" is for eternity.

Faust asks Mephisto how to begin. Mephisto tells Faust to leave without a word. Faust says he cannot leave his students without warning or at least a goodbye. Mephisto insists and don't Faust's robe to speak to a student at the door. The student begs to be enrolled in the school and to learn from Faust. Mephisto, as Faust, gives the boy advice on where to start in his career.

Faust and Mephisto leave the den and the school.

Auerbach's Keller in Leipzig: Jolly Fellows' Drinking Bout

The first place Faust and Mephisto go is to a tavern where there is a group of men drinking, regaling one another with song and stories with some intermittent bickering.

The men question the arrival of Mephisto and Faust. The evening wears on and Mephisto plies the men with drink he has conjured. When the men realize what is happening, Mephisto and Faust depart.



Witch's Kitchen

Mephisto and Faust arrive at the witch's kitchen. There are monkeys tending the cauldron in the witch's absence. Faust is alarmed by the scene and wants to leave, saying he does not need a witch's spell. Mephisto corrects Faust and says that unless Faust expresses his wishes to the witch and drinks the potion, the desires will not come to fruition. Faust reluctantly agrees.

The witch returns home in a foul mood. The witch challenges Mephisto and is immediately horrified when she realizes that it is Satan himself in her kitchen. Mephisto says he will forgive the witch as he has appeared in an unusual way. The witch learns about Faust's desires and prepares a potion. A circle is cast and the witch performs the rite. Faust thinks the witch may be crazy. Faust drinks the potion, the circle is broken and the men leave.

The First Part of the Tragedy, Lines 355-2527 Analysis

The First Part of the Tragedy is most important because it shows the discontent of Faust in his current position and wish to break free of the bonds he has created. The den, once cherished, almost feels like a prison to Faust. Faust has responsibilities at the school and so he does not leave, yet he stays awake all night pondering his fate.

Wagner makes every attempt to help Faust. Although Wagner also studies magic and its eccentricities, he still carries the power of the Spirit inside him. Wagner tries to make sense of the things Faust says but cannot. Wagner confesses his lack of understanding to Faust saying that while he knows much, Faust knows all. Wagner is eager to learn.

Easter morning comes and Faust is still in the study. He has been up all night drinking and is stunned to realize Easter has arrived when he is approached by a group of spirits. The spirits appear often throughout the play usually carrying hope, warnings or opportunities for salvation. Faust begins to feel hope but it is short lived.

Faust makes an unusual appearance in the town. People are thrilled to see the old doctor. Faust and Wagner walk along. Wagner points out many beautiful things and reasons to be joyful. Faust cannot see those things and explains to Wagner that he sees nothing but pain and misery even after his encounter with the spirits from the night before.

The lengthy scene between Faust and Mephisto is the most important in the book. Faust is unaware that he has summoned Mephisto in the form of a dog. Mephisto questions Faust about his reasons for wanting to see him. Faust is confused and scared. Faust quickly learns that although he has the power to summon Mephisto he lacks the power to expel him. Mephisto explains his limits and the reason he cannot leave the den. Faust wants to make a deal with Mephisto. Mephisto will grant Faust's every wish and work as Faust's servant. Mephisto agrees if, upon Faust's death, the roles will reverse.



It is uncharacteristic for Mephisto to attempt to refuse such an offer. Faust jumps into the decision quickly and Mephisto urges him to rethink the decision since the pact will be permanent. Mephisto explains that he will serve Faust to the end of his life which is a relatively short time away but Faust must serve Mephisto throughout eternity. Faust insists and the deal is made with Faust's blood. The blood is the ultimate sacrifice and seals the irrevocable bond.

The spirits appear once more the tell Faust to reconsider - there is still time to repent and be forgiven by God's grace. Faust says that he cannot go back on the pact because it is not reversible. The spirits argue and say Faust is wrong, that one may repent until death and still be saved.

Mephisto shows his true character several times throughout the scene, including the interaction with the student. Mephisto grows tired of being an advisor and tells the boy whatever he wants to hear. Mephisto also plays tricks on the men in the bar, in part just to show off.

The scene in the Witch's Kitchen shows Faust's recurring hesitation and trepidation. Mephisto tells Faust that it is the only way. The part that is puzzling is that the witch is Mephisto's servant. Mephisto's power is called into question again when he says the witch is needed to perform the spell, telling Faust that Mephisto is unable to do so.



The First Part of the Tragedy, Lines 2528-4630

The First Part of the Tragedy, Lines 2528-4630 Summary

Street: Faust, Margaret Passing By

Faust and Mephisto are on the street as a beautiful young girl passes by. The girl is a maid, yet appears striking to Faust's eye. Faust tells Mephisto that he must have the girl. Mephisto says the girl has just returned from confession and is free of sin - Mephisto has no hold over her. Faust wants to go after the girl; Mephisto says Faust must be more cunning in his ways.

Evening: A Small Neat Room

Margaret sits in her room and thinks about the man she saw on the street. Mephisto and Faust enter the room, unseen. Faust leaves a box of jewels for Margaret, the girl also known as Gretchen.

Faust questions what has happened to him, why he has been overtaken by this extreme desire.

"Do magic smells surround me here?"

Immediate pleasure was my bent,

But now - in dreams of love I'm all but spent,

Are we mere puppets of the atmosphere?"

(Evening, p. 267)

Margaret finds the box of jewels and goggles.

Promenade: Faust Walking up and Down, Mephistopheles Enters.

Mephisto and Faust talk about Margaret and the jewels. Faust talks of his torment. Mephisto tells Faust that the priest has taken the jewels.

Margaret's mother sees the jewels and knows immediately that they are not pure. Such ill-gotten gain could bring nothing but sorrow. The mother gives the jewels to the priest.

Mephisto tells Faust to get more jewels for Margaret/Gretchen. Faust says this gift will make the last seem insignificant.



The Neighbor's House

Gretchen finds the second box of jewels. She takes them and rushes to see Martha, the woman next door. Martha says Gretchen should not show the jewels to her mother.

Mephisto arrives at Martha's house. Mephisto delivers the news of the death of Martha's husband. Martha is distraught. Mephisto promises to go to Padua to testify. Then Mephisto tells Gretchen she should marry. Martha should mourn for a year and then she should also marry again. The women agree to meet in the garden that night.

Street: Faust, Mephistopheles

Faust is worried that Mephisto has agreed to go to Padua and testify. How can Faust testify on behalf of a God that he no longer supports? Mephisto says it is not the first time Faust has uttered a lie.

Garden: Margaret on Faust's Arm, Martha with Mephistopheles, Walking Up and Down

Faust treats Gretchen like a lady when she is a lowly maid. Gretchen tries to convince Faust that she is unworthy. Gretchen tells her family story. Meanwhile, Martha and Mephisto talk about marriage.

Gretchen plays "He loves me, he loves me not" with a flower and finds that Faust does love her. Gretchen runs away.

A Garden Bower

Martha fetches Gretchen and says they must go, it is getting late. Gretchen confesses to loving Faust but does not understand the situation.

Wood and Cave

Faust gives a lengthy monologue about being grateful and content.

Mephisto arrives. The men fight. Mephisto tells Faust to go to Gretchen.

Gretchen's Room

Gretchen laments the situation with Faust.

Martha's Garden

Gretchen and Faust meet and speak of their loves together. Gretchen asks Faust about God. Faust is elusive.

At the Well



Lieschen and Gretchen are fetching water when Lieschen talks about a girl at school who is pregnant. Gretchen is shocked. Suddenly Gretchen realizes that she has no right to judge.

"How I once use to scold along

When some poor woman had done wrong.

How for another person's shame

I found not words enough for blame.

How black it seemed - I made it blacker still,

And yet not black enough to suit my will.

I blessed myself, would boast and grin -

And now myself am caught in sin."

(At the Well, p. 339)

City Wall

Gretchen prays to the image of the Mater Dolorosa. Gretchen begs for absolution.

Night

Street: In Front of Gretchen's House

Gretchen's brother, Valentine, stands on the street in front of Gretchen's door. Valentine was in a pub when he overheard men talking about his sister. Valentine is devastated and goes to confront the man that stole pure Gretchen's virtue.

Valentine meets Faust and Mephisto. There is a confrontation and Valentine is mortally wounded. Valentine curses Gretchen for throwing away her honor, saying that she did more than cause the death of his body, she pierced his soul.

Cathedral

There are many people in the cathedral. An evil spirit sits behind Gretchen and speaks into her ear. Gretchen laments her situation. The evil spirit tells Gretchen that she cannot hide her sin, that all will be discovered eventually.

Walpurgis Night

Faust and Mephisto are in the Harz Mountains in the Schierke and Elend region. The men are climbing a steep and narrow road. Mephisto offers a broomstick to Faust but Faust says he will walk. Mephisto asks for direction from the will-o-the-wisp.



Mephisto and Faust arrive at the gathering of witches, wizards and all manner of other celebrants at the spring rite. Faust still thinks about the confrontation with Valentine and how Gretchen is left alone. Walpurgis Night serves as an entertainment and a way to distract Faust from his problems. There are many strange occurrences during the festival, most notably Faust's sighting of Lilith and the almost disastrous encounter with Medusa.

Walpurgis Night's Dream or the Golden Wedding of Oberon and Titania

The Dream portrays a play in which Oberon, Shakespeare's King of the Faeries, marries his Queen, Titania.

Dismal Day

Faust has escaped to be at one with nature. Mephisto informs Faust that Gretchen is in prison. Gretchen has been tried and convicted of killing her baby. Gretchen is sentenced to die for her crime. Faust is devastated at the news and begs Mephisto to save her. Mephisto refuses and says he will stand guard but it must be Faust that saves the girl.

Night: Open Field

Faust and Mephisto ride black steeds to the prison where Gretchen is being held.

Dungeon

Faust arrives at Gretchen's door with a large ring of keys. Faust enters and sees Gretchen in chains. Gretchen does not recognize Faust and believes he is the hangman. Faust tries hard to get through to Gretchen while she talks about her imprisonment and the death of her baby. Gretchen has gone mad from the guilt of killing the baby and convinces herself that someone else has committed the crime. Faust finally gets through to Gretchen but is unable to help her. Gretchen prays and is saved. Faust leaves in misery.

The First Part of the Tragedy, Lines 2528-4630 Analysis

Faust sees Margaret for the first time and is immediately taken by her beauty. Mephisto tries unsuccessfully to dissuade Faust. Faust argues that the girl is old enough. It is clear that Faust is under some strange power because of his insistence to meet and have the girl who is no more than a lowly maid in rags.

Mephisto tells Faust that he cannot go after Margaret—that he must be clever in the way he approaches the girl or else Faust will scare her. Mephisto suggests giving a rare gift to Margaret as a token of affection.



In this section the reader is introduced to Margaret. It can become quite confusing when the author refers to Margaret by her proper name while Faust often refers to her as Gretchen. Faust prefers to use the affectionate terms. For this summary and analysis of the work, the two names are more or less interchangeable.

Gretchen cannot understand why a noble man like Faust would be interested in her, a girl who is obviously lower class and far beneath his station. Faust becomes so obsessed that he cannot think of anything else, much to Mephisto's dismay.

Gretchen eventually admits to being in love with Faust. Gretchen's brother Valentine learns about Gretchen's dalliance with Faust and becomes enraged. Valentine challenges Faust and spews hatred over the loss of Gretchen's innocence. Faust ends up killing Valentine and then flees.

Faust is torn by his actions and his relationship with Mephisto. Once again Faust tries to break the pact with help from the earth spirit but is unable to complete the task. The trip to the spring rite on Walpurgis Night helps to distract Faust for a while. The appearance of Medusa in the guise of Gretchen vexes Faust. Mephisto is able to distract Faust just before he is turned to stone.

The Walpurgis Night Dream may seem out of place in this part of the story. However, Goethe wanted to remind the reader that Faust is a learned man and has appreciation for art. It is also a way for Goethe to pay homage to Shakespeare and "A Midsummer Night's Dream". It also causes Faust to remember what his life was like before, how intellectual pursuits ruled him.

Faust loses what restraint he has when he learns about Gretchen's imprisonment. Faust rages at Mephisto for Gretchen's condition and the death of his child. Mephisto simply states that Gretchen is not the only one to have gone through such an ordeal. Faust insists on rescuing Gretchen from prison.

At the prison, Faust realizes that Gretchen has gone insane. Gretchen does not recognize Faust at first and thinks he is the hangman. Faust tries hard to get Gretchen to leave the dungeon, but Gretchen will not stop talking about her fall from grace, her guilt, and how her torn veil should have been her wedding veil. Gretchen asks for forgiveness from the Lord and is saved.



The Second Part of the Tragedy

The Second Part of the Tragedy Summary

The Second Part of the Tragedy contains omitted acts and portions.

FIRST ACT: Charming Landscape

Faust is seen in a field of flowers. Faust is restless and tired, wanting nothing more than to sleep. A group of spirits gathers around and sing while Faust sleeps.

Ariel chants: "You who surround his head in airy beauty

Prepare to do the elfins' noblest duty:

Relieve the bitter conflict in his heart,

Remove the burning arrows of remorse,

And cleanse his mine of memories that smart."

(Act One, p. 423)

FIFTH ACT: Open Country

A wanderer approaches a small cottage on a hilltop. The wanderer is surprised at the beauty he sees where there was once nothing but water and swampy land. The wanderer recalls staying at the cottage many years ago when he was saved by an elderly couple. The wanderer decides to approach the house. The door is opened by an old woman named Baucis. Baucis confirms that she and her husband were the ones to save the wanderer. Philemon awakes and enters the room.

The trio adjourns to a table in the garden where Baucis talks about the renovation of the property.

Palace

Faust, now very old, paces around the garden. Faust is angered by the fact that the old couple lives on the land, the one small piece that he does not own. Faust wants to own the land, not for its value but because it eludes him.

Mephisto returns and hears Faust's lament. Mephisto says Faust should be satisfied with what he has and not let his life turn to bitterness. Faust orders that the people be removed from the land.

Deep Night



Lynceus, the Tower Warden, makes his rounds and talks about the small cottage that is on fire. Faust learns about the fire. Mephisto arrives to tell Faust that the old couple has been murdered, their cottage burned down. Faust says he told Mephisto to offer trade for the property; no one was supposed to die.

Midnight

Four women enter. They are Want, Need, Care and Guilt. The women enter Faust's chamber and speak to him. Faust talks about his life:

"Through all the world I only raced:

Whatever I might crave, I laid my hand on,

What would not do, I would abandon,

And what escaped I would let go.

I would only desire and attain,

And wish for more, and thus with might and main

I stormed through life, first powerful and great,

But now with calmer wisdom and sedate..."

(Midnight, p. 459)

Care speaks to Faust about never being satisfied with anything he has ever received.

Care breathes in Faust's face and the old man goes blind. Faust becomes enraged and orders the "wretched specters" to leave.

Large Outer Court of the Palace

Mephisto addresses the lemures and gives them orders. Faust begins to make plans to give back to the townspeople, opening his land for free and granting the folks what they need to live a good life. Faust begins to feel hope and wants to hold on the feeling forever. Faust dies. Mephisto is angry that the clock has stopped.

Entombment

The lemures have built a tomb for Faust. The Heavenly Host and a chorus of angels bearing harps arrive at Faust's tomb. Mephisto becomes angry.

"Discords I hear; a most revolting strumming

Come from above with the unwelcome dawn;



It is the boyish-girlish bungle-humming

On which the sanctimonious like to fawn."

(Entombment, page 477)

The Heavenly Host intends to take Faust's soul. Mephisto claims the soul for his own and orders his devils to protect it. The angels release a torrent of rose petals that burn the devils save for Mephisto. Mephisto rages at the scurrying devils.

The Heavenly Host takes Faust's soul up to Heaven.

The angels sing:

"Turn toward clarity,

Flames of love, speed!

Those damned by deed

Are healed by verity -

Joyous retrieval

From earthly evil -

They find impunity

In cosmic unity."

(Entombment, page 485)

Mountain Gorges, Forest, Rock and Desert

Holy Anchorites gather in groups between clefts up the side of a mountain. Pater Ecstaticus sings first while standing next to a fire. Pater Profundus pays homage to nature. Pater Seraphicus sings of infant souls entering Heaven. As the priests and choirs sing Faust's soul is lifted up to Heaven.

The angels sing:

"Saved is the spirit kingdom's flower

From evil and the grave;

'Who ever strives with all his power,

We are allowed to save.'"



(Mountain Gorges, Forest, Rock and Desert, page 493)

There are many angels and choirs that surround Faust's soul. The angels beg for Faust's salvation. Penitent women sing on Faust's behalf. Gretchen is one of the penitent women. The Virgin Mary and two other significant women of the Bible are present to testify on Faust's behalf. The Virgin Mary grants Faust's entry into Heaven.

The Second Part of the Tragedy Analysis

Faust has become an old man with great wealth. While surveying his estate he comes across the cottage and church located on a portion of land he does not own. Faust remembers the cottage and church from many years before when he was taken in by the old couple that own the cottage. Faust approaches the old couple and hears the tale of how they claimed the land from the ocean.

Faust returns to his palace, angry that he does not own the property. The property itself is not valuable; Faust is simply greedy and wants everything for himself. Faust tells Mephisto to offer the couple a sum of money or trade in exchange for the property. Mephisto disobeys Faust and murders the old couple, further angering Faust.

Faust is overwhelmed with guilt over what happened to the old couple that was once so kind toward him in an hour of need. Faust's visit with the four women - Care, Guilt, Need and Want ends with Faust being blinded by Care's breath upon his face.

Mephisto is angry that Faust has turned himself around and wants to give back to the people. This is not the Faust he has created. This is not the Faust that has shown nothing but greed and selfishness.

Faust dies suddenly. Mephisto is eager to guard Faust until he can take the man's soul as they had agreed. There is a confrontation between Mephisto and the Heavenly Host. Mephisto feels cheated and enraged but there is nothing he can do to stop the angels from taking Faust's soul.

Faust had promised his soul to the devil and therefore should not be allowed into Heaven. There are many that rally on Faust's behalf. One of the penitent women was once Gretchen, showing that the girl was able to be saved despite her sins.

The angels and penitent women go to the Virgin Mother to accept Faust into Heaven. Several biblical females support Faust and the Virgin Mother accepts Faust's soul. This can be seen as Goethe's homage to the Eternal Feminine.



Characters

Dr. Heinrich Faust

Dr. Heinrich Faust is Master of Arts as well as a doctor. Faust has spent ten years studying nearly every facet of the sciences, from medicine to law to philosophy and theology. Faust has also been called upon to teach his skills including his proficiency in the black arts. Faust rises up through his field and gains respect from some, fear from others. Still, nothing appeases Faust's need for a broader understanding of the world and all that is in it. Faust is willing to give up everything he has to gain this understanding and finds that the desire for it pervades everything he does. Faust becomes a hermit in his house, rarely talking to anyone or going out.

Faust is on a desperate quest to find answers; to discover where he belongs in the larger scheme of things. Faust has a messiah complex which only gets larger as the story goes on. Faust is unaware that he had become an entertainment for the Lord and Mephisto, that he is the subject of their bet. Faust can be easily swayed by Mephisto, who recognizes that Faust is already on a path leading away from God. Mephisto will use every tool available to him to take Faust to the other side. The task will not be difficult once Faust realizes what kind of power he can get in return for his soul.

Faust pledges himself to Mephisto and reaps the payment for his sacrifice. It is only on his deathbed that Faust realizes the gravity of what he has done.

Mephisto

Mephisto is another name for Mephistopheles, which is in turn another name for the Devil, Satan, Beelzebub, Lucifer, and many other incarnations.

In the beginning of the tale, Mephisto is a servant of the Lord. The Lord is saddened because Mephisto is unable to rejoice with the archangels. While the archangels celebrate the creation, the earth, the sea and the light, Mephisto can only see pain, sorrow, misery and the misdeeds men do to one another. No matter how hard the Lord and the archangels try to tell Mephisto of all the good things the Lord has created, Mephisto simply cannot see.

Mephisto is glad to take the bet with the Lord just as long as he has the ability to use his powers to sway Faust. The Lord grants this wish. If Mephisto should win, then he can take Faust's soul to hell. Mephisto has no desire to work with men's souls, he would rather have the living.

Mephisto tells Faust that will be granted anything he desires if only he will dedicate his soul to Mephisto instead of the Lord. Mephisto is a clever and tricky spirit and makes the offer to good to resist. Even when Faust begins to reconsider, he believes that his



ties to Mephisto are eternal and no one, not even the Lord, can help him be freed of the bondage.

The Lord

The Lord is the Lord God, Creator of Heaven and Earth. The basis of the story revolves around the Lord as Creator of the world. Everything that exists does so because it was created by the all mighty spirit. Mephisto accuses the Lord of turning a blind eye to parts of His creation while the Lord accuses Mephisto of not being able to see past the misery in men's hearts.

Gretchen aka Margaret

Gretchen, also referred to as Margaret, is Faust's lady love. Gretchen is from a poor troubled family and is seen as a peasant by the townspeople. Faust falls in love with Gretchen at first sight. At first Gretchen resists Faust's advances, but eventually falls in love with Faust and bears his child. Because Faust had fled after killing Valentine, Gretchen killed the baby and was convicted and sentenced to death. When Faust finds Gretchen, she has lost her mind and dies moments after being saved.

Virgin Mary aka Mater Gloriosa

The Virgin Mary is the supreme example of the Eternal Feminine. The Virgin is the mother of Jesus and therefore a powerful Biblical figure. The Virgin Mary is referred to by many different names, including the Virgin Mother, or the German equivalent of Mater Gloriosa. It is the Virgin Mary that intercedes on Faust's behalf and accepts his soul into Heaven.

The Trio at the Theatre

The trio at the theatre includes the Director, the Clown and the Dramatic Poet.

The Director appears in the Prelude to the Theatre. It is the Director who is responsible for producing a play that will please the audience. In this way the Director is also the producer. The Director is a strict man who cares most about money and less about art, which offends the Poet.

The Clown is a jester, who wants to ensure that there is ample comedy in the play, as none of the theater goers want to spend the evening watching a drama when it could be a comedy.

The Dramatic Poet works for the Director. While the Poet wants to have a hit play as much as the Director, he balks at producing something commercial, as it will insult his muse and undermine his talent.



The Three Archangels

The Three Archangels are Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. These are the angels most high, ones that serve the Lord directly and often intervene on the Lord's behalf.

Valentine

Valentine is Gretchen's brother. Valentine becomes enraged and distraught when he learns of Gretchen's affair with Faust. There is a battle and Valentine dies by Faust's hand.

Medusa

Medusa is the mythic woman with snakes for hair. If someone looks into Medusa's face he will turn into stone. Medusa almost succeeds in tricking Faust by appearing as Gretchen.

Choir of Angels

Throughout the play a choir of angels routinely appears to bring the word of the Lord. The angels usually appear to Faust and try to convince him to come back to God. The angels also appear at Faust's death and accompany the Heavenly Host as Faust's soul is taken away.

Wagner

Wagner is a colleague of Faust's and a fellow scholar. Wagner desires to learn everything from Faust yet is hesitant to follow precisely in Faust's footsteps because it would mean he would have to renounce God.



Objects/Places

Heaven/Hell

Heaven and Hell are the final resting places for souls that have left their human forms after death. Unlike many famous pieces of literature, the existence of Heaven and Hell is never questioned.

Heaven is painted as being the ultimate paradise. There is no suffering, pain or misery. This is the home of God the Creator, a place where the streets are paved with gold and angels sing while playing harps. It is the ideal concept of Utopia. Hell, on the other hand, is often depicted as being a fiery pit where tormented souls must relive their tortured lives throughout eternity while being forced to do Mephisto's will.

The Prelude in Heaven details the deal made between the Lord and Mephistopheles. At the time, Heaven is the home of the Heavenly Host and all related entities including the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and the archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. At this point, Mephistopheles is still one of the Lord's servants - he has not yet been cast out of Heaven. However, if Mephisto succeeds in capturing the souls then he will take them to a place where they will wallow in misery for eternity. This place will be Hell.

Soul

The soul is the ultimate prize for both the Lord and Mephisto. Early in the story, during Prelude in Heaven, the Lord and Mephisto make a bet regarding Faust's soul. The Lord believes that Faust can be saved until his dying breath but worries that Faust has corrupted his soul with his fascination and practice with the black arts. Mephisto says it will be easy to sway Faust and turn him away from the Lord. If Mephisto is right, he will take possession of Faust's soul and take it to Hell where Faust will serve as an eternal slave.

In the story it is possible to interchange "soul" with "spirit." The soul is the part of a person that continues to exist after death and the nature of the soul determines if the person's soul will ascend into Heaven to enjoy the Kingdom of the Lord or if it will be cast into Hell to bear the tortures rendered by Mephistopheles.

There is a question regarding salvation at hand. Is it possible for a soul to be corrupt and still make it into Heaven? The Lord says repentance before death can save a soul. Mephistopheles believes that a soul once corrupted will not repent and cannot be so easily cleansed.



Faust's Palace

Faust's Palace becomes his domain as well as his prison. Faust has become the wealthiest man in Germany and takes pride in his ownership of the land as well as his tremendous wealth.

Germany

Goethe's Faust takes place in Germany. The original text was written in German, which was Goethe's native language. There are few specific references to landmarks and places aside from the Harz Mountains, Leipzig, Elend, and Schierke.

Dungeon

The dungeon is the place Gretchen is held after killing her baby. Gretchen must wait in the dungeon until it is time for her to face the hangman. It is also the location where Faust finds and attempts to reclaim Gretchen. However, Gretchen dies before Faust can take her away.

Nature

Nature is the place where Faust attempts to seek solace. Faust believes that he is most connected to the earth spirit and that it can be found in nature.

Faust's Den

Faust's den is the place where Faust spent nearly every waking hour before meeting Mephisto. The Gothic den was Faust's prison as well as his place of solace. It is located in the school where Faust taught.

Walpurgis Night

Walpurgis Night is the annual festival and spring rite. In the story it is held in the Harz Mountains. Faust and Mephisto attend the ritual as a means of distraction and to mingle with other creatures of the night.

Elend and Schierke

This is the region in which Walpurgis Night is held. It is located in the Harz Mountains of Germany. It is a rural region which may have been chosen by Goethe because the translation for Elend is "misery".

Harz Mountains

Harz Mountains are the location of the Walpurgis Night activities attended by Faust and Mephisto.



Themes

Soul

One of the main themes in Goethe's Faust is the soul. Faust trades his soul to have all of his wishes granted by Mephisto.

The soul is the ultimate prize for both the Lord and Mephisto. Early in the story, during Prelude in Heaven, the Lord and Mephisto make a bet regarding Faust's soul. The Lord believes that Faust can be saved until his dying breath but worries that Faust has corrupted his soul with his fascination and practice with the black arts. Mephisto says it will be easy to sway Faust and turn him away from the Lord. If Mephisto is right, he will take possession of Faust's soul and take it to Hell, where Faust will serve as an eternal slave.

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Heaven and Hell

One of the main themes in Goethe's Faust is Heaven and Hell. Goethe paints a clear picture of the concept of each but touches only lightly on the creation of Hell after Mephisto is cast out of Heaven.

Heaven and Hell are the final resting places for souls that have left their human forms after death. Unlike many famous pieces of literature, the existence of Heaven and Hell is never questioned.

Heaven is painted as being the ultimate paradise. There is no suffering, pain or misery. This is the home of God the Creator, a place where the streets are paved with gold and angels sing while playing harps. It is the ideal concept of Utopia. Hell, on the other hand, is often depicted as being a fiery pit where tormented souls must relive their tortured lives throughout eternity while being forced to do Mephisto's will.

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Heaven. However, if Mephisto succeeds in capturing the souls then he will take them to a place where they will wallow in misery for eternity. This place will be Hell.

Magic

Faust has spent many years studying various intellectual pursuits from jurisprudence to science, medicine, philosophy and theology. Faust is also a master of the Black Arts. The Black Arts is a collective name for various types of magic that are not acceptable by the Holy Church or its tenets. It is thought to be wicked to perform any kind of magic from divination to spell casting, both of which are skills Faust possesses. Faust is also skilled at alchemy.

At the beginning of the story Faust is teaching the Black Arts at a university for boys. There are other subjects taught at the school as well but Faust is seen as being one of the most talented and revered professors at the school and in all of Germany if not the world.

Despite Faust's gift with magic there are many things that he cannot create or manifest. For example, Faust does not have the power to summon Mephisto who is technically his master. However, Faust lacks the power to force Mephisto to stay or do his will. Faust does believe that he has godlike qualities and has more powers than Mephisto, something that is clearly not true.

In addition to Faust's use of magic, Goethe introduces a witch that will give Faust a necessary potion to make his desires become a reality.



Style

Point of View

The point of view used in *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is third person omniscient. This is particularly accurate when setting and religious views and discourse are of great importance to the story. Third person allows Goethe to give the reader great insight into the sights and sounds encountered by each character.

Goethe's descriptions of Germany, its people and the living conditions of the area are expressed well and allow the reader to see and understand the vast difference in the classes, religious values and varied personalities in the story. For example, a first person point of view could not equally represent Faust and Gretchen as their backgrounds are worlds apart and often completely foreign to each other.

It is also important to be able to observe the actions of those unseen, such as the Lord, Mater Gloriosa, the angels, and the disembodied spirits. It would not be possible to experience and understand the action behind the scenes from any other point of view.

Additionally, it allows the reader to get insight into things that may not have been seen and heard by Faust or Mephisto, to learn about the story through an omniscient set of eyes and to experience the journeys of the characters like Faust, Wagner, Gretchen, Mephisto, and others.

Setting

There are several settings used throughout Goethe's *Faust*.

The first settings include Heaven and Hell, which are the final resting places for souls that have left their human forms after death. Unlike many famous pieces of literature, the existence of Heaven and Hell is never questioned.

Heaven is painted as being the ultimate paradise. There is no suffering, pain or misery. This is the home of God the Creator, a place where the streets are paved with gold and angels sing while playing harps. It is the ideal concept of Utopia. Hell, on the other hand, is often depicted as being a fiery pit where tormented souls must relive their tortured lives throughout eternity while being forced to do Mephisto's will.

Another setting used is Faust's den. The room is described as being Gothic and dark, filled with relics and furniture handed down from Faust's ancestors. It serves as Faust's office and study at the university.

The main part of the story takes place in various parts of Germany. However, there are few specific references to landmarks and places aside from the Harz Mountains, Leipzig, Elend, and Schierke.



Language and Meaning

The original version of Faust was written in Goethe's native German. In the introduction, Kaufmann discusses the issues that have come about due to faulty translations or through the editorializing of the translators. Also, the translations from German into English and other languages have often wrecked the beauty of the prose, creating a loss of context, syntax, and meter.

To be true to the original work, Kaufmann has paired the English version with the original prose written in German. In the eyes of most scholars it is almost pointless to read Faust in any other language but German. The translators often tend to insert unnecessary words into the prose which causes damage to the flow and meter of the work. The addition of words like "thee" and "thou" also makes the text sound archaic in places, and the addition of the unnecessary words makes the text harder to read for the average person.

There are some places in which the translations are notably faulty. For example, the text seems to be modernized by the use of contractions, something which were not and are not used in most languages aside from English.

Another thing that may confuse readers is the use of multiple names for one character. The most notable example of this is Goethe's use of the name Margaret for the peasant girl while Faust calls the same girl Gretchen.

Over all, the language can be a bit daunting for those unaccustomed to reading prose, particularly that written in the sixteenth century.

Structure

Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is a book of fiction written in prose. Faust is considered to be one of the best books in English literature.

The book is comprised of 503 pages in total. However less than half contain the English translation of Goethe's prose.

The first sixty-two pages of the book are notes and important information written by noted German scholar and translator Walter Kaufmann. Kaufmann had a long and illustrious career of translating German texts, particularly those written by Friedrich Nietzsche. Kaufmann compares Goethe's work to Nietzsche as well as to other famous works in literature, such as Oedipus. The background on Goethe, the historical Faust, and the format and history of the tragedy are crucial to understanding the work. It is also valuable to know which acts and scenes have been edited or omitted entirely.

Kaufmann has included the original German text side by side with the English translation, which doubles the number of pages in the book. Only sections of The



Second Part of The Tragedy are included and the book does not present Goethe's synopsis of the previous work written many years earlier.

The balance of the book is broken into 5 sections. They are: Dedication, Prelude in the Theatre, Prologue in Heaven, The First Part of the Tragedy, and The Second Part of The Tragedy.

The Dedication is written in English only and is comprised of three pages.

Prelude in the Theatre appears in German and English. The total number of pages including both languages is thirteen pages in length.

Prologue in Heaven appears in German and English. The total number of pages including both languages is nine pages in length.

The First Part of the Tragedy appears in German and English. The total number of pages including both languages is 328 pages in length.

The Second Part of The Tragedy appears in German and English. The total number of pages including both languages is eighty-one pages in length.

The average length of the sections is eighty-four pages.



Quotes

"After a sensual life he is carried off by the Devil, but in the final act he is regenerated and his soul is saved..."

Introduction, p. 7

"My dear sir, I realize that you are well disposed toward me, and I know myself what you have been telling me. But I have gone further than you think and have pledged myself to the devil with my own blood, to be in his eternity, body and soul. How then, can I return? Or how could I be helped?"

Introduction, Chap. 4, pp. 16-17

"They fight and push each other, coax and vex,
And, as in famine time, for bread at baker's door,
To get a ticket almost break their necks."

The Prelude in the Theatre, p. 71

"My pathos would be sure to make you laugh,
Were laughing not a habit you've unlearned,
Of suns and worlds I know nothing to say;
I only see how men live in dismay."

Prologue in Heaven, p. 85

"I am the spirit that negates.
And rightly so, for all that comes to be
Deserves to perish wretchedly;
'Twere better nothing would begin.
Thus everything that your terms, sin,
Destruction, evil represent -
That is my proper element."

Study, p. 161

"Do magic smells surround me here?
Immediate pleasure was my bent,
But now - in dreams of love I'm all but spent,
Are we mere puppets of the atmosphere?"

Evening, p. 267

"How I once use to scold along
When some poor woman had done wrong.
How for another person's shame
I found not words enough for blame.
How black it seemed - I made it blacker still,



And yet not black enough to suit my will.
I blessed myself, would boast and grin -
And now myself am caught in sin."
At the Well, p. 339

"You who surround his head in airy beauty
Prepare to do the elfins' noblest duty:
Relieve the bitter conflict in his heart,
Remove the burning arrows of remorse,
And cleanse his mine of memories that smart."
Act One, p. 423

"Through all the world I only raced:
Whatever I might crave, I laid my hand on,
What would not do, I would abandon,
And what escaped I would let go.
I would only desire and attain,
And wish for more, and thus with might and main
I stormed through life, first powerful and great,
But now with calmer wisdom and sedate..."
Midnight, p. 459

"Discords I hear; a most revolting strumming
Come from above with the unwelcome dawn;
It is the boyish-girlish bungle-humming
On which the sanctimonious like to fawn."
Entombment, p. 477

"Turn toward clarity,
Flames of love, speed!
Those damned by deed
Are healed by verity -
Joyous retrieval
From earthly evil -
They find impunity
In cosmic unity."
Entombment, p. 485

"Saved is the spirit kingdom's flower
From evil and the grave;
'Who ever strives with all his power,
We are allowed to save.'"
Mountain Gorges, Forest, Rock and Desert, p. 493



Topics for Discussion

The original version of *Faust* was written in Goethe's native German. In the introduction, Kaufmann discusses the issues that have come about due to faulty translations or through the editorializing of the translators. Also, the translations from German into English and other languages have often wrecked the beauty of the prose, creating a loss of context, syntax, and meter. Discuss Kaufmann's opinion on the translations of Goethe's work. Do you agree or disagree? Translate a passage from the original German to see if it matches the text in the book. Was it changed to create a different context or meter? Explain.

Discuss the history of *Faust*. Who was Dr. Johann Faust? When was he born? Did he live in Germany? What are the similarities between the actual person and the character created by Goethe? Did Faust dabble in the black arts? Is there any proof that Faust made a pact with the devil? When and how did Faust leave the university? What is Faust's legacy? Explain.

Faust becomes mad with grief when he learns about the death of his baby and Gretchen's imprisonment. Mephisto says that Gretchen is not the only one. What does Mephisto mean by that comment? Were there other mothers that killed their illegitimate children? What happened to the others? How does this fact help or hinder Gretchen's case? What does Faust say in response to Mephisto's uncaring comment? What happens to Gretchen?

Why does the great Dr. Faust make a pact with the devil? How does the offer come about? Whose idea was it? What is the basis of the pact? Is Faust able to change his mind after the pact is made? Why is it important that the pact be sealed with Faust's blood? What does Faust expect to receive from the pact?

Goethe pays homage to the Eternal Feminine at the end of *Faust's* tale. Examine in detail the concept of the Eternal Feminine and why Goethe felt it was important for it to save Faust. Also examine Faust's use of Mater Gloriosa, Magna Peccatrix, Mulier Samaritana, and Maria Aegyptica. Also discuss why Goethe thought it was necessary to add biblical citations to the names of the women.

Discuss Mephisto. Who is Mephisto? Why does Goethe refer to Mephisto by this more familiar name in the dialogue but refers to him as Mephistopheles elsewhere? What other names are used in the text to refer to Mephisto? What other names are commonly used to describe the demon? What human characteristics does Mephisto exhibit? What elements of Mephisto's behavior may seem to be inferior to the all powerful deity Mephisto was destined to become? Explain.

Discuss the concept of souls. What is a soul? How, why and where does it exist? What substance makes up a soul? Is a soul a purely religious concept? How is a soul defined



in the text? Why is it important for a person's soul to be claimed or saved after death? What happens if a soul is not claimed? Discuss the nature of Faust's soul and what happens to it in the end.