

Introduction to World Literature
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Dr Faustus

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Hello everyone, today we are going to discuss the play Dr Faustus by the English playwright Christopher Marlowe, the play was a great hit on the stage when it is first appeared in 1594 and still remains relevant for its themes of knowledge and its application, personal ambition versus social limitations and the stance of atheism in a highly religious society to name a few.

The play is a tragedy in five acts that narrates the fall of a learned scholar called Dr Faustus who makes a deal with the devil to access cryptic knowledge in exchange for his soul. The play ends with him dying and being dragged to hell.

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Christopher Marlowe was one of the major figures in the Elizabethan theatre, he was part of a group of playwrights now called the University Wits, these are playwrights who had access to university education Marlowe also helped perfect the blank verse on the English stage this inspired Ben Jonson to refer to his writing as Marlowe is mighty line.

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Now let us start by looking at Christopher Marlowe is life and history.

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Christopher Marlowe

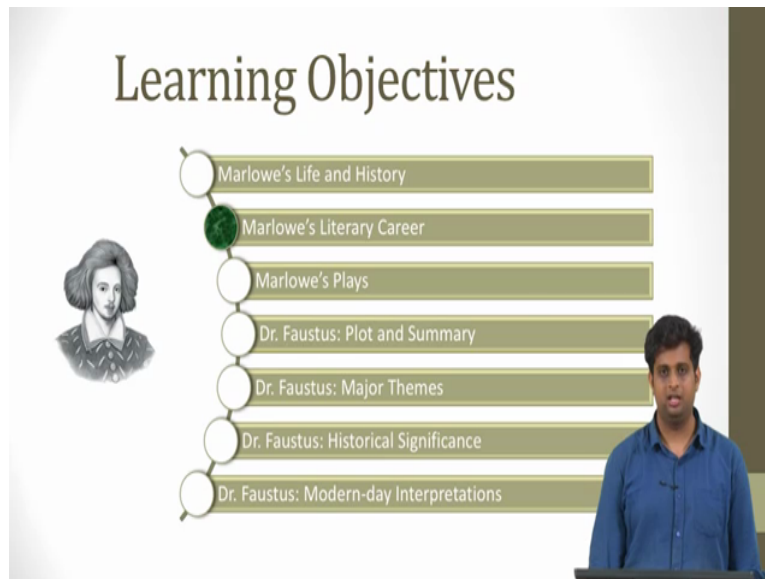
- Born in 1564, in Canterbury England
- Received the Archbishop Parker scholarship
- Graduated as Bachelor of Arts in 1584
- Died on 30th May, 1593.
- Stabbed in his head at a house in Deptford

Christopher Marlowe was born in 1564 in Canterbury England his parents were John and Katherine Marlowe, he came from a humble beginning as his father earned his livelihood as a shoemaker, he completed his early education at the King is School in Canterbury, he was then awarded the Archbishop Parker scholarship that got him a place at Corpus Christi College in the Cambridge University.

In 1584 he graduated as Bachelor of Arts, he received an extension of three more years to receive Holy Orders, throughout Marlowe is career he was rumoured to be a government spy his patron Thomas Walsingham was related to Sir Francis Walsingham the chief minister of Queen Elizabeth the first. Marlowe died at an early age of 29 on May 30th in 1593 when he was fatally stabbed through the eye by Ingram Frizer at a house in Deptford.

This has inspired the novel A Murder in Deptford by Anthony Burgess.

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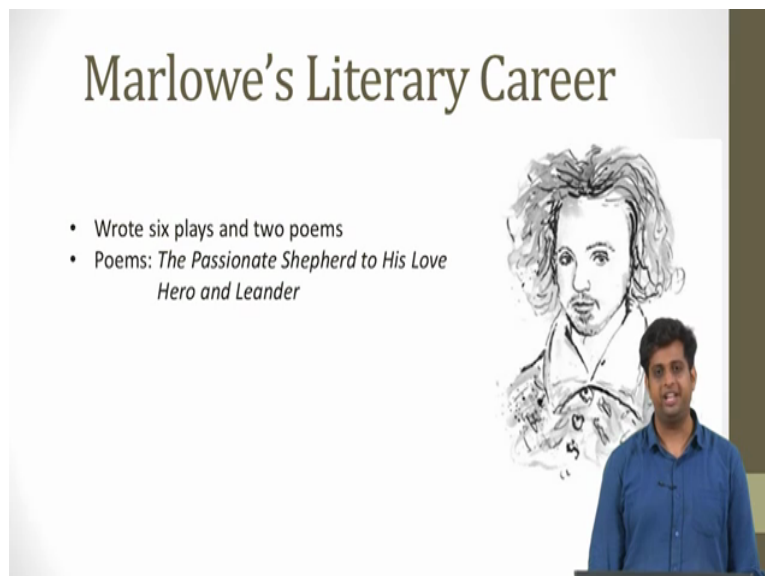
The slide is titled "Learning Objectives" in a large, dark serif font. On the left side, there is a small, circular portrait of Christopher Marlowe. To the right of the portrait is a vertical list of seven objectives, each preceded by a small circle. The second circle in the list is filled with a dark green color, while the others are white. The objectives are: Marlowe's Life and History, Marlowe's Literary Career, Marlowe's Plays, Dr. Faustus: Plot and Summary, Dr. Faustus: Major Themes, Dr. Faustus: Historical Significance, and Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations. A male presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Learning Objectives

- Marlowe's Life and History
- Marlowe's Literary Career
- Marlowe's Plays
- Dr. Faustus: Plot and Summary
- Dr. Faustus: Major Themes
- Dr. Faustus: Historical Significance
- Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations

Let us now take a look at Marlowe's literary career.

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The slide is titled "Marlowe's Literary Career" in a large, dark serif font. On the left side, there is a bulleted list of his works. On the right side, there is a large, detailed sketch of Christopher Marlowe's face and upper torso. A male presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Marlowe's Literary Career

- Wrote six plays and two poems
- Poems: *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*
Hero and Leander

Marlowe is considered to have written six plays translated poems to English and completed two long poems, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* and *Hero and Leander*.

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The slide is titled "Learning Objectives" in a large, serif font. On the left side, there is a small, circular portrait of Christopher Marlowe. To the right of the portrait is a vertical list of seven objectives, each in a light green box with a white circle to its left. The objectives are: "Marlowe's Life and History", "Marlowe's Literary Career", "Marlowe's Plays", "Dr. Faustus: Plot and Summary", "Dr. Faustus: Major Themes", "Dr. Faustus: Historical Significance", and "Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations". The third objective, "Marlowe's Plays", is highlighted with a dark green circle. A man in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, appearing to be presenting.

Now let us take a closer look at Marlowe's plays.

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The slide is titled "Marlowe's Plays" in a large, serif font. Below the title are four book covers. From left to right: 1. "The troublefome reign and lamentable death of Edward the first, King of England, with the tragical fall of poor Mortimer" by Christopher Marlowe. 2. "The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus" by Christopher Marlowe. 3. "The Jew of Malta" by Christopher Marlowe. 4. "Tamburlaine the Great" by Christopher Marlowe. A man in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, appearing to be presenting.

By the time of his death at the age of 29 Marlowe had already completed four major plays; these include the two parts of Tamburlaine, the Jew of Malta, Edward the II and Dr. Faustus. He is also credited as the author of two other minor plays Dido the Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris, his connection to the two minor plays can be partial and he may have co-authored them with other playwrights.

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Major Themes in the Plays

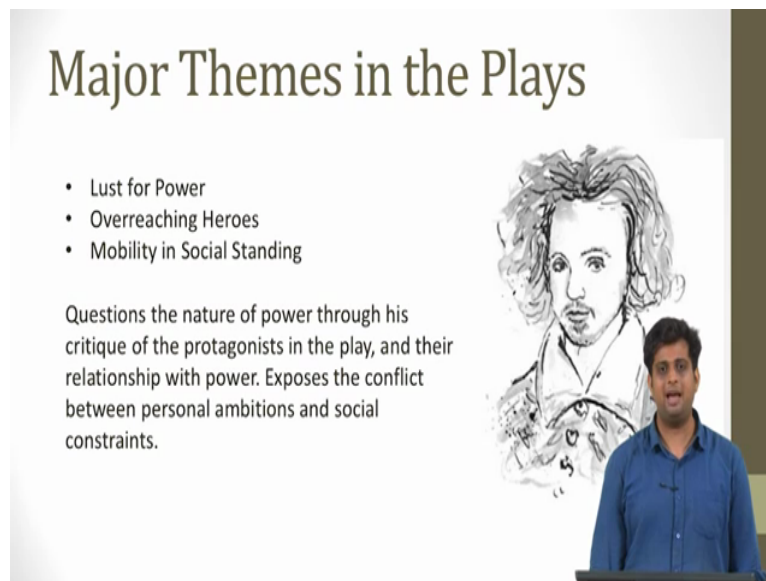
- Lust for Power
- Overreaching Heroes
- Mobility in Social Standing

*Nature that fram'd us of foure Elements,
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspyring minds:*
- Tamburlaine, II.vii

The slide features a sketch of Christopher Marlowe's face on the right side. A presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

We can broadly sort Marlowe's themes into three categories, the Lust for power, Overreaching heroes that are trapped because of their will to seize this power and constraints in social Mobility that ultimately rendered their mission futile.

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Major Themes in the Plays

- Lust for Power
- Overreaching Heroes
- Mobility in Social Standing

Questions the nature of power through his critique of the protagonists in the play, and their relationship with power. Exposes the conflict between personal ambitions and social constraints.

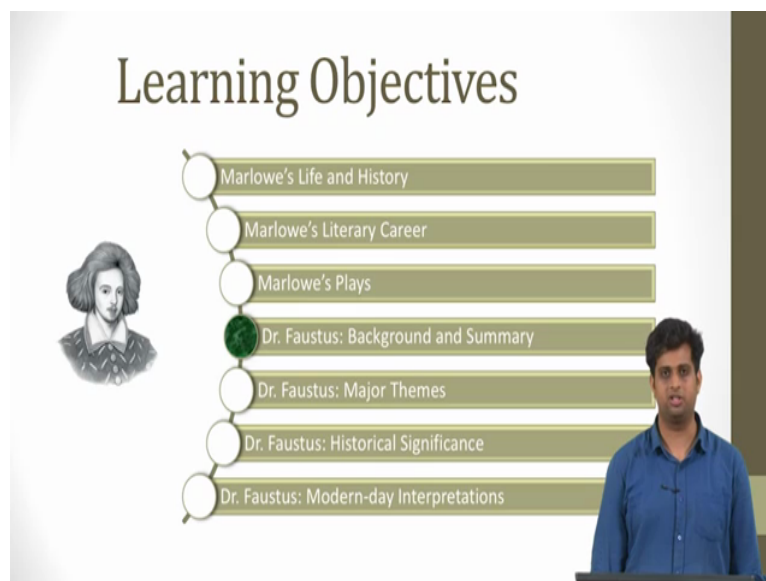
The slide features a sketch of Christopher Marlowe's face on the right side. A presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

One of the dominant themes in Marlowe's plays is a quest for power, Marlowe questions the nature of power itself through his critique of the protagonists in the play and their relationship with power, his heroes are often of humble origin who overreach their social standards by aiming higher than the position stipulated for them Edward II evidences how power can easily shift hands and the requirement for the restraint of power for betterment of a community.

Tamburlaine is about a warrior from low birth who ascends to power and in turn abuses that power. The Jew Barabbas similarly suffers a fall due to his misuse of power. Faustus starts out as a renowned scholar who develops imperial ambitions and gets into a contract with demonic forces to gain knowledge and a standard of living that was previously beyond his means.

Marlowe himself witnessed the constraints of social mobility as he made his way up in society having started from her humble origin.

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The slide is titled "Learning Objectives" in a large, serif font. To the left of the list is a small, circular portrait of Christopher Marlowe. The list consists of seven horizontal bars, each with a circular bullet point on the left. The fourth bar, "Dr. Faustus: Background and Summary", is highlighted in a darker green color. The presenter, a man in a blue shirt, is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

- Marlowe's Life and History
- Marlowe's Literary Career
- Marlowe's Plays
- Dr. Faustus: Background and Summary
- Dr. Faustus: Major Themes
- Dr. Faustus: Historical Significance
- Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations

Let us look at the background and summary of the play Dr Faustus.

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The slide is titled "Dr. Faustus" in a large, serif font. Below the title is a black and white woodcut illustration of Dr. Faustus. He is depicted as a scholar in a long, dark robe, standing on a globe. He holds a book in his left hand and a wand in his right. To his right is a cross, and below it is a small, dark, winged figure. The background of the illustration includes a window with a cross and a globe. The presenter, a man in a blue shirt, is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

Dr. Faustus



First performed by the Lord Admiral's men on 30th September, 1594. An instant hit.



The play Dr Faustus was first performed by the Lord Admirals men on 30th September 1594. This was exactly 16 months after Marlowe is death; the play was an instant hit on the English stage. The papers of Philip Henslowe who was the owner of the Rose Theatre shows that there were already 13 shows performed by the end of the year 1595. The source of the play was an (05:25) that made it is way to England through translations.

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Dr. Faustus

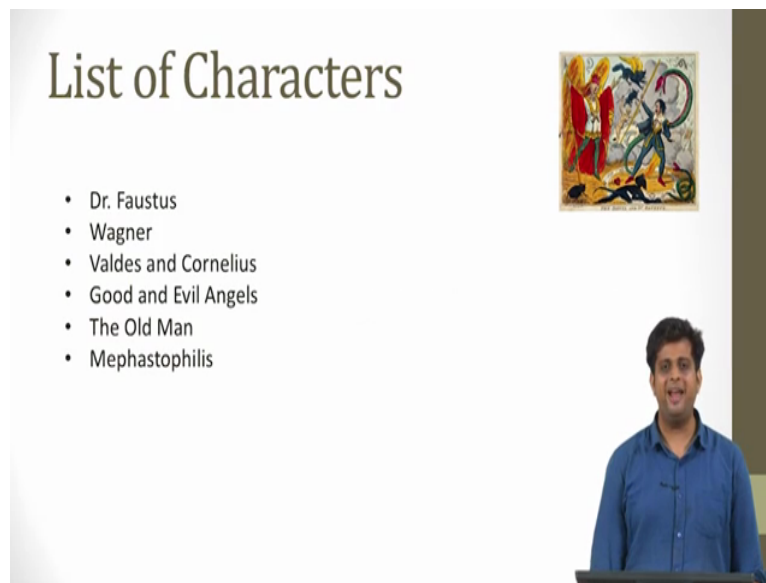


Two texts available of the play, the A-Text and the B-Text.



We currently have two different texts of the play available to us the A text that was published in 1604 and the B takes that was published in 1616, the B text is longer than the A takes by 676 lines as it contains later editions from William Bird and Samuel Rowley who were paid 4 pounds by Henslowe for these editions. The play is written in blank verse which means that the lines are unrhymed iambic pentameters.

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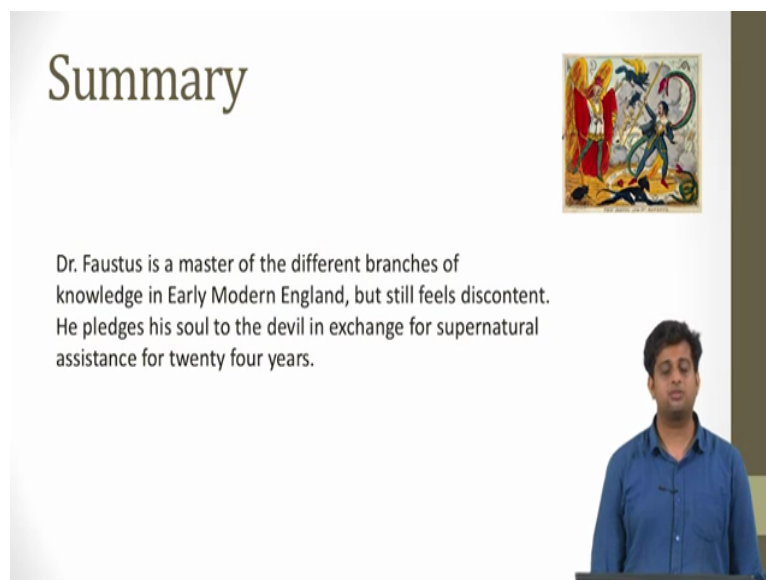
List of Characters

- Dr. Faustus
- Wagner
- Valdes and Cornelius
- Good and Evil Angels
- The Old Man
- Mephistophilis

The slide features a list of characters on the left and a painting of Faustus on the right. The painting depicts Faustus in a blue robe, surrounded by various figures and symbols, including a red figure and a black figure. A presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

The main characters in Dr Faustus are Faustus himself his servant Wagner, Faustus his friends Valdes and Cornelius who initiate him into the dark arts, the Good and the Evil Angels, the Old Man and Mephistophilis. The devil who attends on Faustus, we also have a host of minor characters such as scholars, Lucifer, Beelzebub, the clown, Robin, Rafe and some royal characters such as the Cardinal of Lorraine, the Emperor Charles five and the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt.

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Summary

Dr. Faustus is a master of the different branches of knowledge in Early Modern England, but still feels discontent. He pledges his soul to the devil in exchange for supernatural assistance for twenty four years.

The slide features a paragraph of text on the left and a painting of Faustus on the right. The painting is identical to the one in the previous slide. A presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

Dr. Faustus begins with a narration by the Chorus that makes us aware of the upcoming events in the play, he is compared to Icarus who flew too close to the Sun and consequently had a fall as the wax wings melted. Faustus at the forefront of (())(06:55)

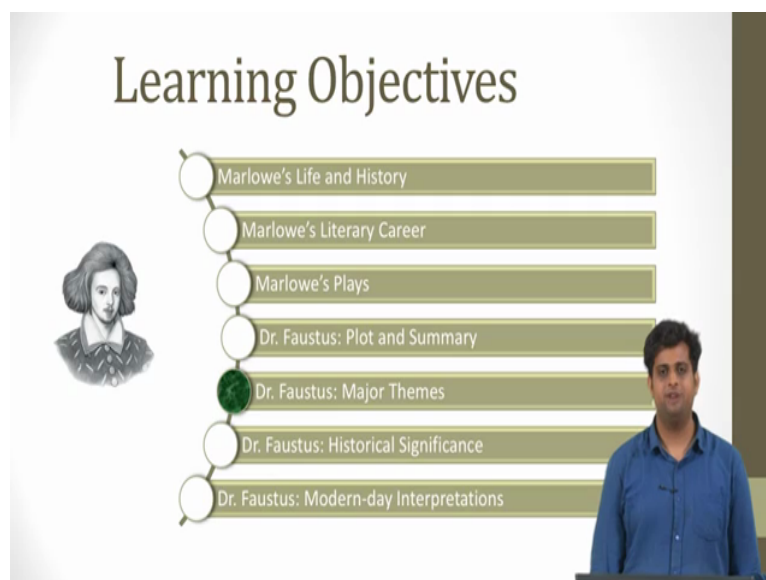
knowledge but he still feels discontent by the worldly laws they follow. Soon we find Faustus in his study where he is disillusioned by the limitations in various departments of knowledge such as logic, medicine, law and divinity.

He has mastered them all as he claims that he has read cities of pledge and his students say that his renunciation after defeating an opponent in debate always echoed in the university chambers but in hope of greater glory Faustus seeks to learn the art of necromancy. He then summons Cornelius and Valdes who as the text hints have already convinced Faustus of the benefit is of learning necromancy or black magic.

Faustus this conjures of Mephistopheles they get into a pact where Faustus pledges his soul to Lucifer, Mephistopheles is to serve Faustus for 24 years in exchange for his soul they are after. The Good angel and the Old Man (07:56) Faustus repeatedly to get out of this bargain but Faustus pays them no heed. He then uses the next 24 years performing petty magic such as making horns grow on the head of a knight, duping a horse salesman, playing tricks on the Pope and getting grapes out of season for a pregnant Duchess.

He forgets the lofty goals he had set for himself and as his days end Faustus indulges in graver sins like bestiality he finally gets dragged to hell and even in his last words he fails to invoke God his last words are Mephistopheles.

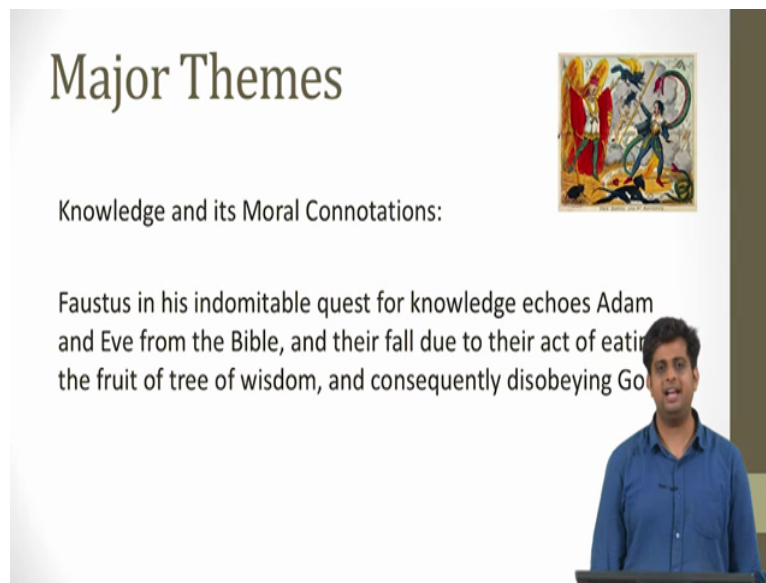
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The slide is titled "Learning Objectives" in a large, serif font. To the left of the list is a small portrait of Christopher Marlowe. The list consists of seven items, each preceded by a circular icon: a white circle with a dot, a white circle with a dot, a white circle with a dot, a white circle with a dot, a green circle with a white dot, a white circle with a dot, and a white circle with a dot. The items are: Marlowe's Life and History, Marlowe's Literary Career, Marlowe's Plays, Dr. Faustus: Plot and Summary, Dr. Faustus: Major Themes, Dr. Faustus: Historical Significance, and Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations. A man in a blue shirt is standing in front of the slide, partially visible on the right side.

Now let us talk about the major themes in the play.

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Major Themes

Knowledge and its Moral Connotations:

Faustus in his indomitable quest for knowledge echoes Adam and Eve from the Bible, and their fall due to their act of eating the fruit of tree of wisdom, and consequently disobeying God.

One of the key themes in *Dr Faustus* is knowledge and the boundaries society sets for such knowledge. The play starts with Faustus arguing for and then against the conventional forms of knowledge available in early modern England. Faustus is continuously discouraged by the moral authorities in the play namely the Good Angel and the Old Man to pursue his path in black magic.

The echoes the prohibition of God in the Bible to Adam and Eve that they should not eat the food from the tree of knowledge, this theme is also strengthened by the motif of books in the play. One of the primary features of the early modern period is the use of printing press that made bulk production of books possible thus we have Faustus in the first scene glancing through a private collection of his books an act that would not have been possible a few centuries earlier as books were very rare and were hardly owned by private individuals. The same motif recurs when Mephistopheles hands a book to Faustus that allegedly contained all subjects in one, this could possibly be a reference to the new Encyclopedia copies that were being printed around this time.

Faustus's final attempts to salvage himself is also a cry where he states that he will burn all his books, experience will eventually become an important aspect of knowledge in the play it can be considered that Marlowe's juxtaposition of serious scenes with buffoonery is an attempt to point out the ridiculousness of the greenway religion, treats and condemns something as fundamental as a will to know.

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Major Themes

- Knowledge and its Moral Connotations
- Hierarchies in Society



The early modern period was also a time of strict social hierarchies and we can see the same being reflected in the relations that exist between Faustus, Mephistopheles and Lucifer in the play.

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Major Themes

Hierarchies in Society:

The early modern society had strict stratifications, and Faustus breaches the status quo by aiming for a position that's not meant for him.



While Mephistopheles serves Faustus he is actually bound to Lucifer and serves Faustus only as Lucifer gives him the permission to do so. Faustus also overrated himself by aiming to be held in the same esteem as the royalty in society this the reason that Faustus is compared to Icarus in the play. Marlowe himself was witness to these constraints in society as he could only reach to a certain prestige in the community through his learning due to the laws that he breaks on earth Faustus is doomed forever to be the slave of Lucifer in Hell.

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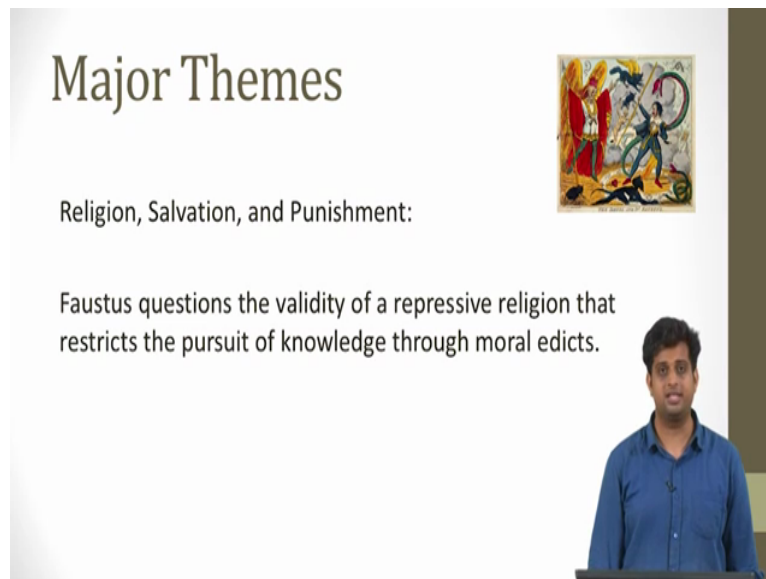
Major Themes

- Knowledge and its Moral Connotations
- Hierarchies in Society
- Religion, Salvation, and Punishment



Religion plays a critical role in Dr Faustus as the final authority that settles the moral imperatives in society.



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Major Themes

Religion, Salvation, and Punishment:

Faustus questions the validity of a repressive religion that restricts the pursuit of knowledge through moral edicts.



England by the time of the play had moved on to become a Protestant state by breaking away from Catholicism we continuously encounter multiple jabs at Catholicism throughout the play such as when Faustus asked Mephistopheles to appear as a friar as that guys he says suit a devil based. We also have the same where Faustus plays tricks on the Pope in room there are also delicately references to the Eucharist selling of indulgences and the purgatory as these Catholic features were dropped by the protestants.

However Faustus is still held accountable for breaking the core tenets of Protestantism as well. His denial of God, dismissal of Hell as mere story and the breaking of the sanctity of marriage by marrying a devil dressed as Helen of Troy make Faustus an ideal candidate for damnation Marlowe thus uses Faustus to ridicule the tenets of established religion as her morality is always shifting based on religious edicts and not the other way around.

Mephistopheles also plays a critical role here as the only character that can honestly tell Faustus his loss as he had seen both heaven and hell the narratives of the other moral guides thus become one sided.

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The slide features the title "Major Themes" in a large, dark font at the top left. Below the title is a bulleted list of four themes: "Knowledge and its Moral Connotations", "Hierarchies in Society", "Religion, Salvation, and Punishment", and "Hell as both Physical and Psychological". To the right of the text is a small, colorful illustration of a figure in a red robe, possibly representing a character from the play. In the bottom right corner of the slide, a man in a blue shirt is visible, standing behind a podium.

- Knowledge and its Moral Connotations
- Hierarchies in Society
- Religion, Salvation, and Punishment
- Hell as both Physical and Psychological



Corporeality of punishment and damnation is a recurring trope in Dr Faustus.

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Major Themes

Hell as both Physical and Psychological:

Mephistophilis:
*Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place; for where we are is hell,
And where hell is, must we ever be.*
- Dr. Faustus, II.V



We see that different omens work on the body of Faustus to dissuade himself from carrying out his bargain with the devil for example Faustus his blood congeals when he is about to sign the deed with Mephistopheles and the words home of (())(12:56) which means run man appear on his arm. Mephistopheles tells Faustus of a hell that is a mental condition, a psychological pain caused by the fact that the fallen Devils can never behold heaven again.

At the same time the devil is physically threatened him and at the end of the play we see him being torn asunder by the devil is before his spirit is dragged to hell, experience then comes to play a crucial role in the play as Faustus constantly remains in denial even after Mephistopheles tells him that hell and heaven are indeed real, knowledge is not adequate to convince Faustus of the mistakes he is making and he must experience directly the pains of hell before he can see the fault in his ways.

So when Faustus tells Mephistopheles that he does not believe in hell Mephistopheles tells him that he is free to think so till experience changes his mind and Faustus must experience the pain of hell both in his body and conscience till he can come to a proper conclusion regarding the outcome of his deeds.

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Major Themes

- Knowledge and its Moral Connotations
- Hierarchies in Society
- Religion, Salvation, and Punishment
- Hell as both Physical and Psychological
- Deal with the Devil as a Legal Contract
- The Free Will Debate



The play makes explicit references to the deal between Faustus and Lucifer or Mephistopheles as a legal contract the sacrilege of Faustus is deal with the devil has direct correlation with secular world of law making, Mephistopheles stresses that he cannot be of service to Faustus until or unless he signs the deed Faustus also reads out the clauses in the deed while signing it.

It is interesting to know that both Faustus and Mephistopheles hold a written contract in such high regard being supernatural entities their inclination to have a written bond is an indication of the codification and standardization of law that took place in the early modern period. With the advent of Protestantism the freewill debate started to rage among theological scholars in Europe.

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Major Themes



The Free Will Debate

Faustus' inability to repent can be attributed to the doctrine of predestination, which states that we can't alter our fates through our own will since our salvation or damnation is predetermined.



The exponent of Protestantism Martin Luther believed that humans were devoid of freewill that some were chosen to be saved whereas the others were meant to be doomed. The early modern scholar Erasmus however thought differently and had an argument with Luther that freewill indeed existed. The protestant disbelief towards freewill was further codified by Calvin and his doctrine of predestination in Europe thus Faustus' inability to repent can be viewed as a sign that he was meant to be doomed.

The moment Faustus signs the deal with Mephistopheles we get the impression that he has already become one of the Damned his constant inability to repent for his sins also hint towards the fact that Faustus indeed was irredeemable and he was predestined to be damned.

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Learning Objectives

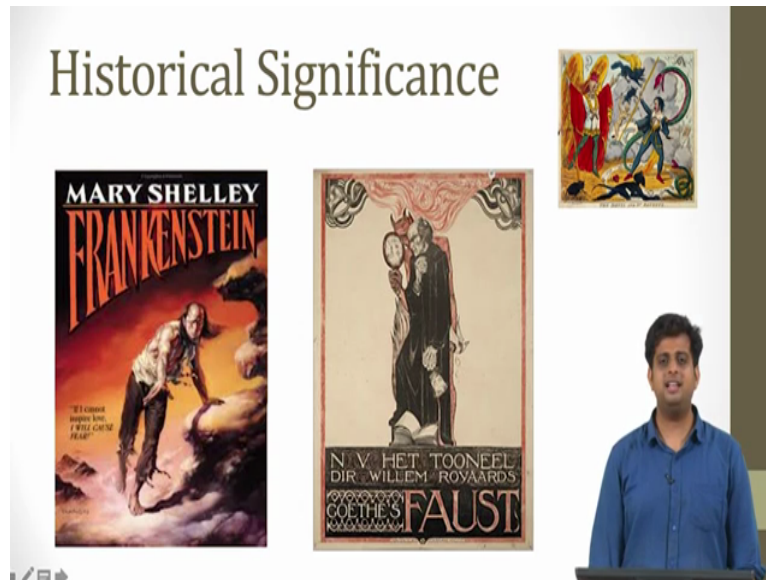


- Marlowe's Life and History
- Marlowe's Literary Career
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- Dr. Faustus: Plot and Summary
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- Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations



Let us now take a look at some of the historical texts inspired by Dr Faustus and the Faust myth.

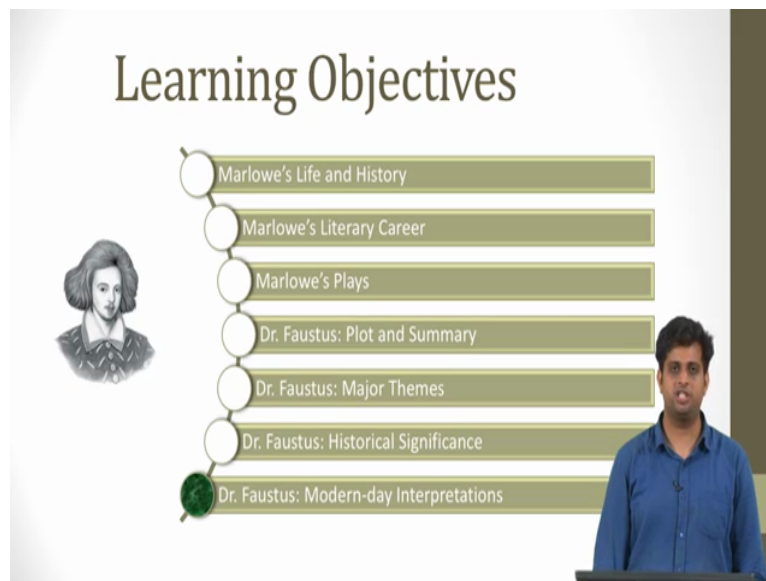
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The play Dr Faustus was based on the Faust myth from Germany which was in turn inspired by the real life of George of (16:08) who was an astrologer, physician and musician. Faustus is a scholar at Wittenberg the same University where Luther started his Protestant revolution. Wittenberg was a hot seat for religious debate and progressive thinking. We see that Shakespeare is protagonist Hamlet is also from the same University.

The Faust myth and the Faustian bargain as father created multiple literary and cultural adaptations of which Faust by Goethe and Frankenstein by Mary Shelley remain prominent. Frankenstein tells a story similar to Faustus where the scientist breaks the laws of nature by bringing back the dead to life. These figures are thus compared to the Greek archetypes of Aquarius and Prometheus these heroes tend to overreach themselves and in turn question the limitations set by society on knowledge and personal ambition.

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The slide is titled "Learning Objectives" in a large, dark green font. On the left side, there is a small, circular portrait of Christopher Marlowe. To the right of the portrait is a vertical list of seven objectives, each in a light green box with a white circle to its left. The objectives are: "Marlowe's Life and History", "Marlowe's Literary Career", "Marlowe's Plays", "Dr. Faustus: Plot and Summary", "Dr. Faustus: Major Themes", "Dr. Faustus: Historical Significance", and "Dr. Faustus: Modern-day Interpretations". The last objective is highlighted with a green circle. A presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Now let us look at some modern day interpretation of the Faustian myth.

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The slide is titled "Modern-day Interpretations" in a large, dark green font. Below the title are two movie posters. The first poster is for "Devil's Advocate" featuring Keanu Reeves and Al Pacino, with a red and black color scheme. The second poster is for "Black Museum" from the Black Mirror series, featuring a museum interior with a blue and green color scheme. A presenter in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Our contemporary times have reinvented the Faustian myth in relation to capitalism and the limit is of ambition it creates and makes available to the common man, capitalism and the free market have created the impression that there are no longer any boundaries to what a person can earn or gain in terms of social prestige. The predominance of money as a marker of status in society has made economic pursuit is more important than they should be.

So we encountered characters that sell their soul to the devil or in this case modern capitalism in exchange of a flourishing career and a comfortable material existence we can watch the

movies *The Devil is Advocate* and be dazzled in these terms. The black museums episode of the Netflix show *Black Mirror* also portrays such exchanges, the show gives us the character of Rollo Haynes a modern-day Mephistopheles who gets into legal contracts with people who have no hope of salvation or people who sadistically enjoy the pains of others in suffering to use them for scientific experiments, Haynes is himself grabbed by one of his own devices by the end of the show thus reasserting the Faustian idea of tormenting devils tormenting others that is the end of our course on *Dr Faustus*, thanks for watching.