

Intertextuality and the context of reception: Dr Faustus – Scene 13 by Christopher Marlowe

Lesson plan

Resources

- ❖ Copies of *Dr Faustus* texts
- ❖ (optional) *Dr Faustus* DVD
- ❖ Highlighters
- ❖ Sugar paper
- ❖ **Resource A** – Film Clip of *Dr Faustus* Scene 13
- ❖ **Resource B** – Extract from *Dr Faustus* Scene 13 with corresponding Bible passages
- ❖ **Resource C** – The qualities of a tragic hero

Learning objectives

- ❖ To consider the themes of damnation and repentance
- ❖ To analyse how Marlowe creates and maintains tension
- ❖ To weigh up why Faustus does not repent
- ❖ To consider Faustus as a tragic protagonist.

Starter activity – applying terminology

- ❖ Write on the board: 'sin', 'damnation', 'forgiveness' and 'repentance'. Ask students to offer definitions of each of these words. For example:
 - Sin = disobedience to the known will of God
 - Damnation = punishment or destruction, the [fate](#) of those who are found on the [Day of Judgement](#) to have rejected [Jesus Christ](#)
 - Forgiveness =
 - The action of forgiving; pardon of a fault, remission of a debt
 - 2. Being freed from the burden of guilt, after committing a sin or crime, through being pardoned by the one hurt or offended. The New Testament states that [Christ's death](#) on the [Cross](#) made it

possible for human sin to be forgiven

- Repentance = The act of turning away, or turning around from, one's [sins](#), which includes feeling genuinely sorry for them, asking for the [forgiveness](#) of [God](#) and being willing to live in a different way in the future
- Allocate a word to small groups and students contribute examples of how this theme is used in the play (extension = find quotations). (This is also a good way to recap the events of the play.)
 - Feed back to class.

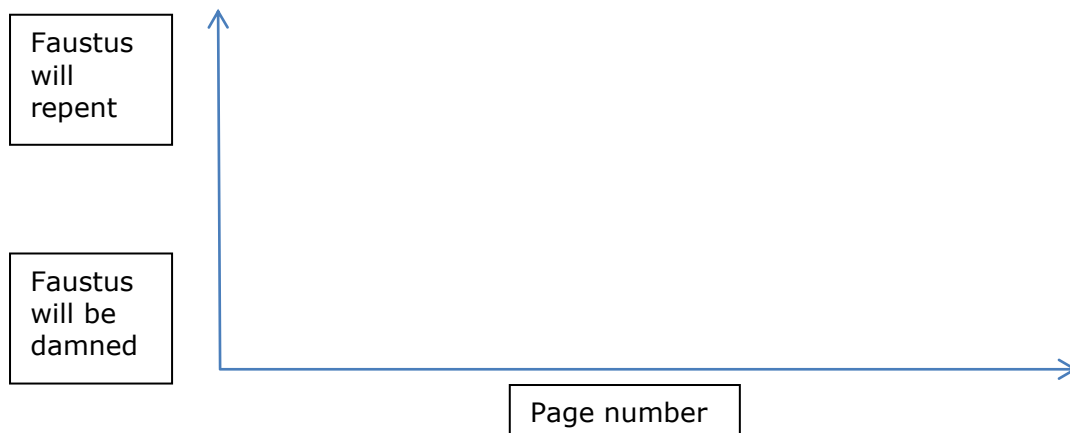
Intro – reading and understanding the scene

- ❖ Read the scene OR watch the scene on DVD and follow along in texts.
- ❖ Discuss events of the scene to establish understanding of what happens.
 - You could break it down into sections – Faustus' discussion with the scholars who urge him to repent; Faustus' soliloquy; devils arrive to take Faustus' soul.
- Highlight all the times the clock strikes or when Faustus refers to the time he has left.
 - What effects are created? (countdown effect, urgency, tension).
- Briefly consider: Why doesn't Faustus repent?

Main activity 1 – group work on tracking Faustus' decision

- ❖ Draw a graph on the board for the students to copy onto sugar paper. The x-axis should be the page numbers of the scene. The y-axis should have 'Faustus will be damned' at the bottom and 'Faustus will repent' at the top:

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- ❖ Students look back through the scene and establish when the audience is led to believe that Faustus might repent and be saved, or when we think he will be damned, and plot this on the graph.
 - Add notes or quotations to show what prompts these shifts eg. the encouragement of the scholars, Faustus' own confused train of thought during his soliloquy.
- Hold up and compare graphs and check there is a zig-zag pattern which ends at the bottom right corner of the graph, when devils take his soul.
- Discuss: What effects are created through this period of uncertainty?
 - What impact does Marlowe want to have upon the audience? (tension, suspense, 'emotional rollercoaster' effect, etc.).
- Highlight in a different colour all the biblical allusions which warn of God's judgement / punishment / wrath (anger)
- Highlight in a third colour the biblical allusions which refer to hell or the devil
- Add notes and Bible verses onto graphs
 - Why, do we think, does Faustus/Marlowe choose to focus on the more frightening Bible references, and on the themes of judgement and damnation rather than forgiveness?
 - Does understanding the biblical allusions help us to make sense of Faustus' decision not to repent?

Main activity 2 – using the Bible to make sense of Faustus' decision

- ❖ Watch the film clip [**Resource A**] and follow along on the handout [**Resource B**]:
 - In one colour highlight all the biblical allusions which speak of God's mercy and Jesus' death / sacrifice
- ❖ Look again at the lines 'See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament! / One drop would save my soul—half a drop: ah, my Christ!'. Faustus appears to be genuinely appealing to God for help, and recognising that he can be forgiven and saved through Jesus' death (in Christian belief, 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Romans 10:13). Therefore Marlowe must have a reason other than theology for the play to end with Faustus' being damned
 - Look again at the line 'O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?' What is stopping Faustus?

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Main activity 3 – using tragic conventions to make sense of Faustus' decision

- ❖ Discuss: Would this play be a tragedy if Faustus repented and went to heaven at the end?
 - Can there be such a thing as a 'Christian tragedy' if for Christians death means going to be with God in heaven – a happy ending?
- ❖ Explain: According to Aristotle, a tragic figure should:
 - Be of noble stature
 - Make an error of judgement (hamartia) which may be due to his pride or over-reaching (hubris)
 - Suffer a downfall (peripeteia)
 - May reach a point of understanding about his misfortunes (anagnorisis)
 - Then die, inspiring fear and pity (catharsis) in the audience.
- Students work in pairs to use the table [**Resource C**] to compare Faustus to a tragic protagonist
- Feedback: To what extent can Faustus be considered a tragic protagonist?
 - Does this make sense of why Faustus does not repent?
 - Would it break too much with the tone and conventions of the play and character?

Plenary – summing up

- ❖ Whole class contribute all the possible reasons why Marlowe does not have Faustus repenting at the end of the play, but rather lets the audience watch him be taken by devils. (Eg. sense of justice, dramatic impact, conventions of tragedy, sin of blasphemy, Faustus' pride, never truly repents, blames others, etc.).
- ❖ How does Marlowe maintain tension right until the very end of the play?

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Resources

Resource A – <http://www.crossref-it.info/articles/465/Dr-Faustus-~-scene-13>

Resource B

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Enter FAUSTUS with Scholars.

FAUSTUS.

A surfeit of deadly sin ... hath damned both
body and soul.

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Yet, Faustus, look up to Heaven:
remember God's mercies are infinite.

**Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his
truth endureth to all generations**

FAUSTUS.

But Faustus' offences can never be pardoned:

**John 3:18 He that believeth on [Christ] is not condemned: but he that
believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in
the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

the serpent that tempted Eve may be saved,

**Genesis 3:4-6 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not
surely die: ... the woman ... took of the fruit thereof, and did eat...**

but not Faustus.

Faustus hath lost the world, yea, Heaven itself,
Heaven, the seat of God, the throne of the blessed, the
kingdom of joy; and must remain in hell for ever, hell,
ah, hell, for ever! Sweet friends! what shall become of
Faustus, being in hell for ever?

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Yet, Faustus, call on God.

FAUSTUS.

On God, whom Faustus hath abjured! on God,
whom Faustus hath blasphemed!

**Matthew 12:31 All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto
men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven
unto men.**

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Ah, my God, I would
weep, but the Devil draws in my tears. Gush forth
blood instead of tears! yea, life and soul!

Luke 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Oh, he stays
my tongue! I would lift up my hands, but see, they
hold them, they hold them!

ALL.

Who, Faustus?

FAUSTUS.

Lucifer and Mephistophilis. Ah, gentlemen, I
gave them my soul for my cunning!

ALL.

God forbid!

FAUSTUS.

God forbade it indeed but Faustus hath done
it: for vain pleasure of twenty-four years hath Faustus
lost eternal joy and felicity. I writ them a bill with mine
own blood: the date is expired; the time will come, and
he will fetch me.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

Why did not Faustus tell us of this
before, that divines might have prayed for thee?

FAUSTUS.

Oft have I thought to have done so; but the
Devil threatened to tear me in pieces if I named God;

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour

to fetch both body and soul if I once gave ear to divinity:
and now 'tis too late. Gentlemen, away! lest you perish with me. ...

ALL. Faustus, farewell.

[Exeunt Scholars.—The clock strikes eleven.]

FAUSTUS.

Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually! ...
O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?

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Psalms 18: 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!

John 19:34 one of the soldiers with a spear pierced [Jesus'] side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

One drop would save my soul—half a drop: ah, my Christ!

Revelation 5:9 [Christ] wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by [his] blood

Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!

Joel 2:13 Rend your heart and not your garments.

Yet will I call on him: O spare me, Lucifer!
Where is it now? 'tis gone; and see where God
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills come, come and fall on me,

Luke 23:30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

Isaiah 13:13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts...

No, no!
Then will I headlong run into the earth;
Earth gape O no, it will not harbour me! ...

[The clock strikes the half hour.]

Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon!
O God!
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransomed me,

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years—
A hundred thousand, and—at last—be saved!
O, no end is limited to damned souls! ...

2 Thessalonians 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power

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But mine must live, still to be plagued in hell.
Curst be the parents that engendered me!
No, Faustus: curse thyself: curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven.

[The clock strikes twelve.]

O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell! ...
My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah Mephistophilis!

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Resource C – the qualities of a tragic hero

According to Aristotle, a tragic figure should...	Apply to Faustus?	Example? Explain?
Be of noble stature		
Make an error of judgement (hamartia)		
Which may be due to his pride or over-reaching (hubris)		
Suffer a downfall (peripeteia)		
May reach a point of understanding about his misfortunes (anagnorisis)		
Die		
Inspire fear and pity (catharsis) in the audience		