

# Doctor Faustus – Context Work

## INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The context, period and genre of the play are an important part of almost any higher level course/exam. Students should therefore research a relevant historical and literary topic and do a presentation to the class.

Below, you'll find a range of 20 different topics, together with appropriate sub-topics. Simply print out and distribute as required.

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Renaissance Humanism

### SUB-TOPICS

The Quadrivium Rediscovery of ancient Latin & Greek texts

Elysium

Erasmus

Roger Bacon

Pietro d'Albano

Knowledge as power

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### The Life and Death of Christopher Marlowe

### SUB-TOPICS

Spying  
Cambridge University in the sixteenth century  
*The Jew of Malta*  
*Tamburlaine*  
"The Reckoning"  
Sixteenth Century concepts of atheism  
Renaissance attitudes to homosexuality

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Medieval Morality Plays

#### SUB-TOPICS

*Everyman*

The Vice

Mystery Plays

Salvation

Good and Bad Angels

Seven Deadly Sins

Hell

*Mankind*

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### The Faust Story before Marlowe

### SUB-TOPICS

Simon Magus, Magians and the *Ennoia*  
*The Historie of the damnable life, and the deserved death*  
*of Doctor Iohn Faustus* by PF  
Johann Georg Faust  
Pope Paul III  
Emperor Charles V  
Simon Peter  
Simonism

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Renaissance ideas of Hell

### SUB-TOPICS

The fall of Satan/Lucifer  
Separation from God  
Eternal damnation  
Protestant and Catholic ideas of Hell  
Dante's *Inferno*  
Hieronymus Bosch  
Existential ideas of Hell

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Sixteenth Century Wittenberg

### SUB-TOPICS

Famous students  
Martin Luther  
Philip Melancthon  
Hamlet  
University  
Scepticism  
Elector of Saxony

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Dr Faustus' A (1604) & B (1624) texts

### SUB-TOPICS

Differences between texts  
Act of Abuses of 1606  
Thomas Nashe  
Lucifer & Belzebub  
The Admiral's Men  
Philip Henslowe  
Edward Alleyn  
Burde and Row

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Helen of Troy

### SUB-TOPICS

*The Iliad*

*The Aeneid*

The Judgement of Paris

Menelaus & Agamemnon

Demoniality

Clytemnaestra & Leda

*Ennoia* of Magians

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### The Seven Deadly Sins

### SUB-TOPICS

The Seven Virtues  
Repentance in the Catholic Church  
The Ten Commandments  
Giotto & the Scrovegni Chapel  
*Mankind* (Morality Play)  
Spenser

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Ptolemaic astronomy

### SUB-TOPICS

Geocentrism

The Four Elements and the Four Humours below the sphere of the moon

Spheres of the moon and of the other erring planets

Orbs & Planets

Copernicus

Ptolemy

The Firmament & the Primum Mobile

Angelic planet guides

Astrology

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Renaissance vs. medieval ideas of knowledge

### SUB-TOPICS

Aristotle, Justinian, Galen  
Jerome's Vulgate  
Thomas Aquinas  
Petrus Ramus  
Copernicus  
Questioning based on evidence  
Medieval & Renaissance concepts of Science

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### English Catholicism under Elizabeth I

### SUB-TOPICS

Bloody Mary  
The Thirty-Nine Articles  
Catholic persecutions  
Jesuits  
Anti-Catholicism and English attitudes to the Pope  
Spanish Armada/Philip II

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Emperor Rudolph II (Rudolf)

### SUB-TOPICS

Rudolfinum  
Tycho & Kepler  
Alchemy  
Voynich manuscript  
Archimboldo  
John Dee & Edward Kelley

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### John Dee & Edward Kelley

### SUB-TOPICS

Magic  
Familiars  
Alchemy  
Enochian language  
Angel conversations  
Earth (natural) magic  
Rosicrucians  
Voynich manuscript  
Magic as extension of science

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### YOUR TOPIC

*Tamburlaine The Great Parts 1 & 2 by Christopher Marlowe*

### SUB-TOPICS

The Tyrant Play  
World conqueror from shepherd  
Divine judgement & moral order  
Declaration of war on gods  
Rule-breaking and "Aspiring Minds"  
Nature of linguistic power (language is power)

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### YOUR TOPIC

*The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* - Chaucer

### SUB-TOPICS

Old Man (torture and the personification of death)  
Joy in language  
Story frames – telling a different story from intention  
Can a sinner be pardoned?  
Sexual deviancy?  
Greed & sin  
Morality Plays  
Devils speak Latin  
The Medieval Vices  
Wife of Bath  
The Craft of storytelling and rhetoric

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### YOUR TOPIC

**Thomas Nashe**

### SUB-TOPICS

Comedy scenes in *Doctor Faustus*

Banalities of the actual

*Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem*

*Dido Queen of Carthage*

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Sixteenth Century concepts of penance, repentance and predestination

##### SUB-TOPICS

Catholic penitence

Indulgences

Lutheran repentance

Metanoia

Predestinarianism

Free agent or puppet?

Claudius repentance in *Hamlet*

Difficulty of Protestant repentance vs Catholic ideas of penance

Despair as unforgivable sin

The doctrine of the Soul

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### YOUR TOPIC

*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* – Robert Greene

### SUB-TOPICS

Bronze wall  
Roger Bacon  
Pietro d'Albano  
Greene's other work  
Homunculus (Talking Head)  
Albertus Magnus

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### YOUR TOPIC

#### Cornelius Agrippa

### SUBTOPICS

Peter Waldo  
Alchemy  
Reuchlin  
Medicine  
Judaism  
Occult Sciences  
The Black Dog



Because plays are  
written to be seen.