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 Melanchthon
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*
*Banality 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.