



كلية : الآداب

القسم او الفرع : اللغة الانكليزية

المرحلة: الثانية

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**Faustus**

## **Main Themes in Dr. Faustus**

### **1-Temptation, Sin, and Redemption**

Deeply immersed in Christianity, Marlowe's play explores the alluring temptation of sin, its consequences, and the possibility of redemption for a sinner like Doctor Faustus. Faustus's journey can be seen in relation to the possible trajectory from temptation to sin to redemption: Faustus' ambition is tempted by the prospect of limitless knowledge and power, he sins in order to achieve it, and then he rejects possible redemption. He is so caught up in his desire for power that he neglects the consequences of his deal with Lucifer. Giving into his temptations, he rejects God in favor of Lucifer and Mephistophilis, a sin if there ever was one.

In portraying Faustus' sinful behavior, Marlowe reveals the negative effects of sin on Faustus himself. Despite his originally lofty ambitions, Faustus ends up using his magic for practical jokes, parlor tricks, and the summoning of a beautiful woman (Helen of Troy). As the play's scholars lament, Faustus was once an esteemed scholar but after his deal with the devil he seems a mere shade of his former self.

While Faustus hurts himself and others through sin, he still has the possibility of redemption throughout the play. As the Good Angel tells him, it is never too late to repent and thereby gain God's mercy. But Faustus is persuaded by the Evil Angel not to repent, primarily by convincing Faustus that he's so damned already that he would never actually be able to return to God. These two angels can be seen as representing the opposing pulls of redemption and the temptation to sin even more. Faustus listens to the Evil Angel for the most of the play, but seems to repent in the final scene. Or does he? The question of whether Faustus really repents at the end of the tragedy is debatable and has important implications for whether the play suggests that at some moment it really is

too late for a sinner like Faustus to repent and be redeemed. In any case, whether because he repented too late or didn't repent truly, Faustus rejects the possibility of redemption and is ultimately damned for his sins.

## 2- The Bargain

Faustus' bargain with Lucifer is the most famous part of *Doctor Faustus*. The so-called “Faustian bargain” has become a standard way of referring to some kind of “deal with the devil,” a motif that recurs throughout Western literary and cultural traditions (from a version of the Faust story by the German poet Goethe to the blues musician Robert Johnson, who legend says sold his soul to Satan for his skill on the guitar). But the importance of the bargain extends beyond this famous plot device. The idea of some kind of economic exchange or deal pervades the tragedy. Just as Lucifer cheats Faustus in their deal, Faustus cheats the horse-courser who buys a horse from him and Wagner gets a clown to agree to be his servant in return for learning some magic. These deals might be taken to suggest that bargains are often simply occasions for one individual to exploit another.

However, there is another system of bargaining in the play, related to Christianity. The very word “redemption” literally means “a buying back.” In Christian thinking, Jesus redeems mankind by “buying back” their sins at the expense of his own death. If Faustus' bargain with Lucifer is sealed with blood, God's agreement with mankind is, too—with the very blood of Jesus, shed on the cross. Moreover, Faustus can strike a deal with God at any point in the play, gaining eternal salvation by simply repenting his sins. Lucifer may hold Faustus to his original agreement, threatening him when he thinks about repenting, but God is willing to take mercy even on sinners who don't uphold their end of the divine bargain. Faustus, however, refuses to make this ultimate deal. At the end of the play, he is desperate but still attempts to haggle with God, begging for salvation in return for a thousand or a hundred-thousand years in hell.

Thus, one could see the play as ultimately about good and bad deals. And through this profusion of deals and exchanges, Marlowe is able to raise questions of value: what is worth more, power in this world or salvation in the next? How much is a soul worth? Can it even be put in terms of money and profit? As a tragic hero, Faustus is done in by his excessive ambition and pride, but he is also doomed by his tendency to under-value the things he bargains with and over-value the things he bargains for.

### 3- The Renaissance Individual

Marlowe lived and wrote during the English Renaissance, and his play has much to say about the transition from a more medieval society to the Renaissance. Greatly simplified, this means a shift in a variety of ways from reliance on some kind of authority figure to reliance on one's own individual self. Humanist scholars of the Renaissance refocused their studies on the individual human subject, while the Protestant reformation affirmed the individual's prerogative to interpret scripture instead of relying on the pope and the hierarchical Catholic church. A flourishing of education and other social changes made it more and more possible for people to rise up through society through their own hard work and ambition.

Faustus embodies many of these changes: he is a self-made man, from humble origins, who has risen through education. He is ambitious and constantly desires to learn and know more about the world through various forms of scholarly inquiry. But Faustus also demonstrates some possible dangers in the Renaissance stress on one's own individual self. His self-reliance shades into selfishness and excessive pride. After making his deal with Lucifer, Faustus is too proud to admit that he was wrong and repent. He rejects the authority (and the help) of God and tries to handle things himself. While some resistance to authority and celebration of the individual may be a good thing (the play has no problems poking fun at the pope and the Catholic church, for example), Marlowe demonstrates the pitfalls of excessive individualism. Not only does Faustus serve as an example of excessive individualism. So does Lucifer himself, who originally rebelled

against the authority of God. The tension between the Renaissance notion of the power and importance of the individual and the Christian stress on obeying God fills and animates *Doctor Faustus*. Although Faustus suffers for erring too far in the direction of the individual, Marlowe's tragedy leaves the question of how to balance these opposing values unresolved (some may, after all, sympathize with the fiercely ambitious Faustus), forcing readers to come to their own answers.