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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Dr. Faustus

by Christopher Marlowe

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Dr. Faustus

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the classical roots of Aristotelian tragedy.
2. cite evidence from the play in order to support or refute the statement that Dr. Faustus is a tragic hero.
3. discuss the roles of the characters, such as Mephistophilis, as they affect the decisions of Dr. Faustus.
4. discuss the purpose of a morality play and how Doctor Faustus fits the criteria of a morality play.
5. discuss the author's writing style, including hyperbole, allusion, and irony.
6. explain the function of the Good Angel and Evil Angel in the play.
7. supply textual evidence to support or refute themes in the play.
8. understand the role of the comic scenes in the play.
9. define and cite an example of irony.
10. explain one role of the chorus.

Dr. Faustus

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What questions or concerns would the play have raised for an Elizabethan audience in terms of Dr. Faustus' obvious rejection of popular religious beliefs? How would an Elizabethan audience view the play?
2. What limits of power does Dr. Faustus discover in his quest for knowledge?
3. What is the objective of Dr. Faustus when he first begins his study of black magic? How are the objectives of Dr. Faustus achieved or changed throughout the play?
4. Discuss how the theme of "selling one's soul" is applicable today.
5. Support Dr. Faustus as a morality play or a tragedy. Could it be a combination of the two? How?
6. Explain the concept of Hell as illustrated in the play.
7. Account for the sins of Dr. Faustus. What are they? What manifestations do those sins take?
8. Discuss the role of religion in the play. What comment does Marlowe seem to be making about the Catholic faith, and how would this have been received in an Elizabethan audience?
9. Provide examples of the supernatural in the play. Why are they included?
10. Explain the purpose of the Clown and Robin in the play. How do they contrast Faustus?
11. Cite lines from the play that either support or refute the notion that Dr. Faustus is an Aristotelian tragic hero.
12. Cite examples in the play that support the thematic statement: Man faces a constant internal struggle as he tries to live a moral life.
13. Explain the use of practical jokes as they demonstrate Faustus' decline from a great scholar to a simple person who only finds delight at the expense of others.
14. Explain the symbol of blood as it is used in the play and cite specific examples of its use.
15. Explain the purpose of the chorus' last speech in the play.

Dr. Faustus

Prologue

Vocabulary

audacious – daring or bold

dalliance – amorous play

necromancy – conjuring of the spirits of the dead for purposes of magically revealing the future or influencing the course of events

vaunt – to make a vain display of one's own worth or attainments

1. Who introduces the story of Dr. Faustus?

2. Where was Faustus born?

3. Where did Faustus attend school?

5. What two things does Faustus believe would make a physician's profession more esteemed?

6. After finding limitations in the study of philosophy and physics, what disciplines does Faustus pursue?

7. What type of person does Faustus seem to be as he wades through and discards various academic studies?

8. What does Faustus believe is the greatest study? Cite a line from the play that supports your answer.

9. In divinity, with what does Faustus disagree?

10. What does Faustus decide he wants to study and why?

11. To what does Faustus compare a student of necromancy? Cite the line from the text to support your answer.

Scene V

Vocabulary

bequeath – to leave property to another
contrition – repentance
courtesans – prostitutes
cull – to pick out from a group
execrable – detestable
lascivious – lustful
signiory – the territory over which a lord holds jurisdiction
wanton – sexually loose

1. In the beginning of the scene, Faustus is wavering between his loyalty to God and his decision to sell his soul to Lucifer. He states, “Why waverest thou? O, something soundeth in mine ears/Abjure this magic, turn to God again!’ Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again.” Immediately after he questions his desire, Faustus again denounces God and affirms to Lucifer his desires. Characterize the tone of what Faustus says at the end of his introductory speech. How do you feel about Faustus’ decision to forsake God? Is the decision abrupt? Why or why not?

2. In a morality play, the main character is to be representative of every man. In *Doctor Faustus*, does Dr. Faustus represent every man? Would “normal” people, who appear to have everything (knowledge, respect, and wealth), be willing to give it all up for the uncertainty of the future of their souls or for evil?

3. What is the purpose of Faustus’ speech at the beginning of the scene? Does the purpose of the scene make him more or less like “every man”? Why or why not?
