

# Intertextuality and the context of reception: *Dr Faustus* – Scene 5 part 1 by Christopher Marlowe

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### Lesson plan

#### Resources

- ❖ Copies of *Dr Faustus* texts
- ❖ **Resource A** – Film Clip of *Dr Faustus Scene 5 Part 1*
- ❖ **Resource B** – Extract from *Dr Faustus Scene 5 Part 1* with corresponding Bible passages
- ❖ **Resource C** – Bible reference task sheets

#### Learning objectives

- ❖ To analyse how Marlowe dramatically presents Dr Faustus' pact
- ❖ To consider the play's structure and building of tension
- ❖ To consider the play in performance
- ❖ To explore links between the text and the Bible
- ❖ To consider the context of production and reception.

#### Starter activity – recap/pros and cons

- ❖ Using copies of the complete text, allocate the prologue and scenes 1-4 to pairs of students.
  - Students are to make lists/tables of why Faustus should or shouldn't make the pact with the devil.
  - Feedback in order of scenes (also a useful way to recap the story so far).
    - Why do we think Marlowe delays until Scene 5 to let the audience see Faustus actually make the pact? (draw out Faustus' decision, tension, suspense, sense of building/impending danger, dramatic irony, climactic moment of play, etc.)

#### Intro – reading and understanding

- ❖ Read Scene 5 Part 1 (up to line 128 'In which thou hast given thy soul to Lucifer.')

- Working in pairs, students divide the scene into sections and make notes on events in order to establish understanding. (Faustus' soliloquy; conversation with the good angel and the evil angel; Faustus calls on Mephistophilis; they cut Faustus' arm; Faustus tries to write in blood but it congeals; Faustus writes on scroll; devils appear and dance and give gifts; Faustus reads out scroll; they discuss hell and Faustus considers it a 'fable'.)

#### Main activity 1 – teacher-led analysis of the pivotal moment

- ❖ Ask students to identify the methods Marlowe uses to continue to build tension and draw out events until the pact is finally written ie. up to line 75 '*Consummatum est: this bill is ended, / And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer.*' (eg. Faustus continues to deliberate during his soliloquy; the good angel tries to talk him out of it; Mephistophilis says the deal isn't made without a written deed; blood congeals – delay tactics).
  - Explain: When playwrights/directors want to emphasise that a critical point has been reached in the play, they might use a strategy called 'marking the moment'. (If you have students who have done GCSE Drama, they should be able to explain this more to the class). For example, if something of central importance happens in a play, the director might choose to do something dramatic with sound and lighting to focus the audience's attention on that moment.
    - Speculate how Marlowe could choose to 'mark the moment' of the writing of the pact
  - Discuss: After all the building of tension, how does Marlowe then emphasise that a pivotal moment has been reached? (lines 78-87)

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- What is the significance of the inscription on Faustus' arm and of the dancing devils? (Consider the audio-visual impact on the audience, the symbolic significance, how the actor playing Faustus might react, etc.)
- Ask: Why does Marlowe have Faustus read the scroll aloud as well as writing it? (double the horror; aural impact on audience as well as visual)
- Why does Marlowe immediately follow the reading of the scroll with the discussion on hell and damnation? (quick reminder of consequences of Faustus' actions)
- How would you describe the mood and atmosphere of this point of the play?

### **Main activity 2 – context of production and reception/group work on exploring Bible references**

- ❖ Debate: Would this moment of the play be more powerful on stage in a modern day production or an Elizabethan performance? (Students are likely to begin by considering the special effects associated with modern day theatre, but try to steer discussion towards impact on the audience – why would a Renaissance audience find more horror in this scene than a modern audience member would?)
- Watch the film clip [**Resource A**], in conjunction with the accompanying handout [**Resource B**]
- Divide students into small groups and give out Bible reference task sheets [**Resource C**]. High ability students could be given responsibility for leading a group as it discusses the questions
- Feed back ideas.

### **Plenary**

- ❖ Mind map on the board: How does Marlowe make Faustus' pact with devil an exciting moment for the audience?
- List as many ideas as possible - you could give thinking time in pairs first.
  - This task could then also be set for **homework**.

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## Resources

**Resource A** - <http://www.crossref-it.info/articles/category/90/AV-resources>

## Resource B

### *Dr Faustus Scene 5 1<sup>st</sup> part by Christopher Marlowe*

MEPHIST.

But, tell me, Faustus, shall I have thy soul?  
And I will be thy slave, and wait on thee,  
And give thee more than thou hast wit to ask.

FAUSTUS. Ay, Mephistophilis, I'll give it thee.

MEPHIST. Then, Faustus, stab thine arm courageously,  
And bind thy soul, that at some certain day  
Great Lucifer may claim it as his own;  
And then be thou as great as Lucifer.

FAUSTUS. [Stabbing his arm] Lo, Mephistophilis, for love of thee,  
Faustus hath cut his arm, and with his proper blood  
Assures his soul to be great Lucifer's,  
Chief lord and regent of perpetual night!

**Psalm 107:10-11 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; <sup>11</sup>Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:**

View here this blood that trickles from mine arm,  
And let it be propitious for my wish.

MEPHIST. But, Faustus,  
Write it in manner of a deed of gift. ...

FAUSTUS. Now will I make an end immediately.  
[Writes.]

MEPHIST. [Aside.]What will not I do to obtain his soul?

FAUSTUS. Consummatum est; this bill is ended,

**John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished': and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.**

And Faustus hath bequeath'd his soul to Lucifer.  
But what is this inscription on mine arm?  
Homo, fuge: whither should I fly?

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**1Timothy 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.**

If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell.  
My senses are deceiv'd; here's nothing writ:—  
O, yes, I see it plain; even here is writ,  
Homo, fuge: yet shall not Faustus fly. ...  
Mephistophilis, receive this scroll,  
A deed of gift of body and of soul:  
But yet conditionally that thou perform  
All covenants and articles between us both!

MEPHIST. Faustus, I swear by hell and Lucifer  
To effect all promises between us both!

FAUSTUS. Then hear me read it, Mephistophilis.

[Reads.]

*On these conditions following.*

*First, that Faustus may be a spirit in form and substance.*

*Secondly, that Mephistophilis shall be his servant, and be by him commanded.*

*Thirdly, that Mephistophilis shall do for him, and bring him whatsoever he desires.*

*Fourthly, that he shall be in his chamber or house invisible.*

*Lastly, that he shall appear to the said John Faustus, at all times, in what shape and form soever he please.*

*I, John Faustus, of Wittenberg, Doctor, by these presents, do give both body and soul to Lucifer prince of the east, and his minister Mephistophilis; and furthermore grant unto them, that, four-and-twenty years being expired, and these articles above-written being inviolate, full power to fetch or carry the said John Faustus,*

*body and soul, flesh and blood, into their habitation wheresoever.*

*By me, John Faustus.*

MEPHIST. Speak, Faustus, do you deliver this as your deed?

FAUSTUS. Ay, take it, and the devil give thee good of it! ...  
I think hell's a fable.

MEPHIST. Ay, think so .., till experience change thy mind.

FAUSTUS. Why, dost thou think that Faustus shall be damn'd?

MEPHIST. Ay, of necessity, for here's the scroll  
In which thou hast given thy soul to Lucifer.

**Revelation 14:9-11** <sup>9</sup>And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice,  
'If any man worship the beast and his image ... , <sup>10</sup>The same ... shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: <sup>11</sup>And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.'

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### Resource C – Bible reference task sheets

*Discuss the questions and tasks in your group and make notes:*

- 1) What subtleties might the original audience have been aware of, which are lost on a modern day audience?
  
- 2) Find examples of how Bible references are used as warnings for Faustus and the audience.
  
- 3) Find examples of how Bible references are used ironically i.e. taken from original 'good' context to highlight how wrong/perverse Faustus' words and behaviour are.
  
- 4) Which Bible references would have most impact on an audience and why?
  
- 5) Do you think this section of the play can have the same impact on a modern day audience?
  - a) Why /(why not) and how?