

DR. FAUSTUS by Christopher Marlowe

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INTRODUCTION:

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was an Elizabethan playwright of great prestige who made key contributions to the development of English drama, mostly regarding language, style, thematic innovations, and characterization. Inspired in an earlier German folk story, *Dr. Faustus* (printed in 1604 and again, with further additions and changes, in 1616) is perhaps Marlowe's most imaginative and boldest tragedy. It deals with power, ambition, and the limits of human knowledge. The following set of activities will help you go over some of the most important thematic and stylistic elements of the play using, as a triggering device, an audiovisual adaptation of this story.

Didactic Goals:

- to familiarize yourself with key elements and vocabulary of Elizabethan theatre
- to learn more about the universal figure of Dr. Faustus and its contemporary legacy
- to explore the art of adaptation, and rewriting as well as the transformative potential of art and knowledge
- to strengthen critical thinking and research skills

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Faustus is a well known character in the Western literary tradition. How much do you know about this famous tragic hero, alchemist, doctor, necromancer? Let's test your knowledge.

- 1. In pairs: Read the next fragment describing Doctor Faustus. Discuss these ideas with your classmate and review Dr. Faustus' basic plot. Try to imagine what type of person this peculiar doctor would be in our days.**

“Staging a complex and ambiguous portrait of a man who sells his soul in return for knowledge and power, Doctor Faustus eschews simple moral judgements, exploring instead the human implications of one man's agonised quest to reach beyond the limits of the possible. Articulating his at once noble and narcissistic desires in speeches of often astonishing beauty, Faustus both bravely and foolishly flies in the face of conventional morality” (Naomi Baker)

- 2. Below you will find Faustus's final speech (Act 5, Scene 2), which is performed in the video you are about to watch. Read the scene carefully and fill out the crossword that follows.**

All. Faustus, farewell! Exeunt SCHOLARS. The clock strikes eleven.

Faust. Ah, Faustus,

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,

And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!

Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of Heaven,

30

That time may cease, and midnight never come;

Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again and make

Perpetual day; or let this hour be but

A year, a month, a week, a natural day,

That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

35

O lente, lente, curite noctis equi.

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,

The Devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.

O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?

See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!

40

One drop would save my soul—half a drop: ah, my Christ!

Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!

Yet will I call on him: O spare me, Lucifer!—

Where is it now? 'Tis gone; and see where God

Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!

45

Mountain and hills come, come and fall on me,

And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

No! no!

Then will I headlong run into the earth;

Earth gape! O no, it will not harbour me!

50

You stars that reign'd at my nativity,

Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,

Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist

Into the entrails of yon labouring clouds,

That when they vomit forth into the air,

55

My limbs may issue from their smoky mouths,

So that my soul may but ascend to Heaven.

The watch strikes [the half hour].

Ah, half the hour is past! 'Twill all be past anon!

O God!

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,

60

Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransom'd me,

Impose some end to my incessant pain;

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years—

A hundred thousand, and—at last—be sav'd!

O, no end is limited to damned souls!

65

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?

Or why is this immortal that thou hast?

Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis! were that true,

This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd

Unto some brutish beast! All beasts are happy,

70

For when they die,

Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;

But mine must live, still to be plagu'd in hell.

Curst be the parents that engend' red me!

No, Faustus: curse thyself: curse Lucifer

75

That hath depriv'd thee of the joys of Heaven.

The clock striketh twelve.

O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,

Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell. Thunder and lightning.

O soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,

And fall into the ocean—ne'er be found.

80

My God! my God! look not so fierce on me! Enter DEVILS.

Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!

Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!

I'll burn my books!—Ah Mephistophilis!

Exeunt DEVILS with FAUSTUS.

3. **CROSSWORD:** Use the words in the box to complete the crossword. There are several extra words that are unnecessary.

CLOCK	NATURE	REPETITIONS	TROCHAIC
IAMBIC	SOLILOQUY	ETHOS	DEVIL
PATHOS	APOSTROPHE	SOCIETY	APOCALYPTIC
DIALOGUE	ANTITHESIS	CONSCIOUSNESS	BELLS

Down

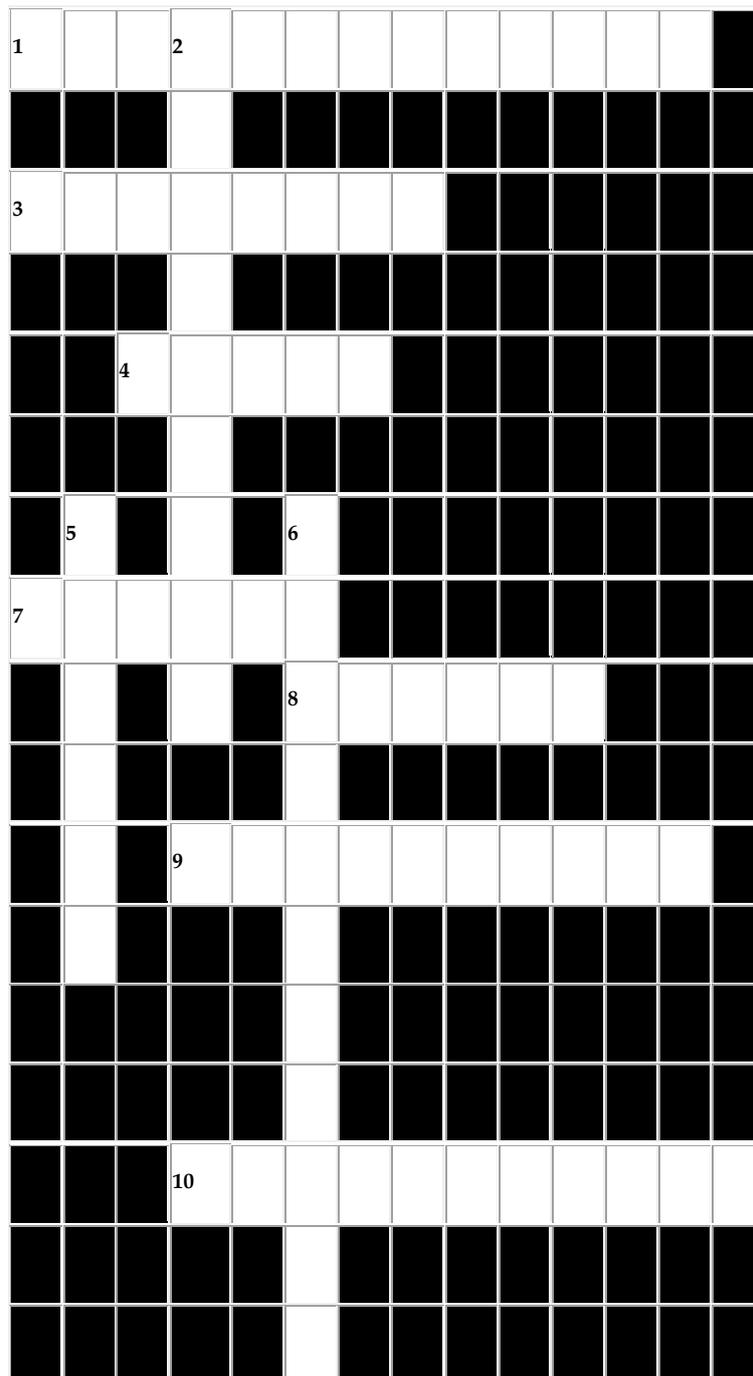
2. This last speech is a _____ and not a dialogue, because Faustus is speaking to himself about his fears and anxieties, and he is not addressing other characters in an engaging manner.
5. Marlowe wrote Dr. Faustus in blank verse, that is, poetry written in unrhymed _____ pentameter, as we can see in the lines above.
6. The final part covers the last few seconds of Faustus' life, when the devils come to take him. The raising intensity is reflected in the language used, with sentences that become shorter and that are constantly interrupted. Marlowe uses exclamations and _____ in lines 77 and 81 to emphasize emotional instability and lack of eloquence in Faustus' last words.

Cross

1. Faustus uses the 3rd person to address himself, which emphasizes his solitude and alienation, as in line 38 when he says "Faustus must be damned", which shows he has a rather modern _____ .
3. Faustus also uses the 2nd person pronoun "thou" in order to address himself, as if he was engaged in an inner _____. See for example line 26: "Now hast thou but one bare hour to live".
4. The text can be divided into three parts that follow his emotional state, which is driven by the striking of the _____.
7. The first half of Faustus' last hour (l. 58-76) is filled with images and metaphors related to astronomy (l. 30), Christianity (l. 40) and _____ (l. 50).
8. Throughout the whole speech, and especially in the last line, Faustus tries to appeal to the audience's emotions through the rhetorical technique of _____.

9. Some figures of speech like enjambments (l. 32), apostrophes (l.30), and _____ (l. 30 or l. 75) are also used throughout the whole speech in order to raise the tension and to emphasize his anxiety and inner contradictions.

10. The second part (l. 58 to 76), just before midnight comes, shows Faustus in a more desperate and pessimistic state, as we can see in the use of _____ images such as that of hell (l. 73) and awareness of his cursed doom (l. 62).



Now click on this image or, alternatively, follow the link below and enjoy the video!



http://mmedia.uv.es/buildhtml?lang=es_ES&user=abrico&name=fausto1.mp4&path=/&id=30036

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

After watching the video, pause for a while and try to remember what you have just seen. Make a quick mental list of elements, details, and/or specific rhythms that stroke you. Afterwards, answer the following questions. Watch the video twice if necessary.

4. Answer the following questions.

1. What do you think Doctor Faustus is really looking for? Do you identify with him/her? Is s/he a hero or a villain? What are the characteristics of a modern hero?
2. Why do you think the authors have chosen a female lead for the role of Faustus?
3. The cheerful, open scenery inspired in the 1920s, which is used in the first part of the video, finally vanishes leaving Faustus in a dark room, where she finds herself completely alone. What do you think this change in lights, pace and setting symbolizes? What is the significance of the dark room, the presence of the clock, and the mirror?
4. Doctor Faustus is given a voice only in the second part of the video, when she delivers her last speech –an inner monologue in which she desperately tries to stop the movement and progress of time, suggesting that she may be repenting from her deal with the devil. Why is this scene given so much importance in the video? In your opinion, does Faustus repent in the end?
5. Mephistopheles is characterized as a female dancer, simultaneously seductive and dubious as a snake figure. What is the meaning of this ambiguous characterization and symbolism? Why does she cry at the end?
6. If we compare this adaptation with Marlowe's original version, we can appreciate some key differences. In fact, the video is divided into two clear parts that represent,

according to their authors, two distinctive moments of English drama: playwriting before Marlowe's contributions to the field, and English theatre after Marlowe's transformative effects – changes that will have a clear influence on William Shakespeare's own works. Let's see, in this basic scheme, what the authors were looking for.

	BEFORE	AFTER
History of Theatre	Morality plays	Modern drama
History of Cinema	Silent films	Talking cinema
Main elements	Action	Words
Character	A voiceless puppet	A protagonist with his own voice
Genre	Light, moral comedy	Tragedy

Think about the parallelisms that can be established between the passage from medieval theatre to modern drama and from silent films to talking cinema. Do you think this version helps to understand what Marlowe's contribution to theatre meant at his time? How so?

FURTHER RESEARCH:

5. **Faustus was not, however, the first story in the Western tradition to talk about the dangers of wanting to go beyond the limits of human knowledge; many other myths and stories had already questioned this human urge. Try to remember what these other stories were about, match each character with a tale and decide which one is off topic.**

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Icarus | A. Bit an apple from the Tree of Knowledge and were expelled from paradise |
| Dr. Frankenstein | B. Burned his wings by flying too close to the sun |
| Adam & Eve | C. Fell on the lake where he was contemplating himself and drowned |
| Narcissus | D. Created a being who later transformed into a monster |

6. **Look for other versions of this universal figure. Find other genres, other than theatre, that have represented this story, as we have seen with this audiovisual interpretation of Marlowe's text. Mention at least three works from three different genres (HINT:**

look for novels, operas, ballets, films...)

17. To conclude, think about Faustus in our contemporary era. Think of popular films, TV series or public characters that remind you of Faustus. Do you think we all are, in some instances, a type of overreaching Faustus, always trying to improve and go beyond our own limitations and life roles? Write a creative description of how a modern Faustus would be today, and, why not, film it!

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