

# What do scenes 1 and 3 tell us about Elizabethan beliefs essay sample



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## Scene 1.

The opening speech to Scene 1 demonstrates how Elizabethan people began to think differently, due to the Renaissance. Lines 1-3 tell us about Faustus' education, as does the use of Latin; this shows that Faustus is educated. Followed by line 4 - 'Yet level at the end of every work', that shows how he is now considering all options. As a Renaissance man, he no longer has to live the life he was intended to (for example to follow his father's career); instead, he has choices.

Line 5 refers to Aristotle, whose work in Elizabethan times was disputed by another philosopher, Ramus. This proves how Elizabethan people were beginning to challenge their own opinions, and the opinions of others, as well as thinking of new ideas- all typical Renaissance attitudes.

This first speech also reveals the greed the Elizabethans had for knowledge, a typical Renaissance trait. Faustus asks 'Affords this art no greater miracle', while talking about philosophy. This is saying he needs more than just philosophy, more than just learning, he has experienced both of this already: he wants something new.

To satisfy their greed for knowledge many Elizabethans went travelling, in hope to discover more. Lines 82-83- 'I'll have them fly to India for gold, Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,' show how Faustus wants to go travelling, and shows his greed for materialistic objects.

It also shows the arrogance of the time, Faustus believes he can do anything, yet he is actually not prepared to put any effort in. He says 'the reward of

sin is death. That's hard', while talking about becoming a priest. This shows that he wants to have fun, he does not want to exert himself, yet he wants to reap the benefits.

In the opening scene, there are also references to religion. Faustus says ' we must die an everlasting death'. This suggests that Elizabethans believe in life after death.

The scene also challenges God, Faustus says ' A sound magician is a mighty god', a typical Renaissance theme. This illustrates Elizabethans questioning Christianity, and changing their views.

Also note that God is spelt without a capital letter, and the God is said to be ' mighty' rather than ' Christian'. Both these points highlight the atheism of the Renaissance.

The new knowledge of the Renaissance also resulted in unstable beliefs, Faustus expresses this; he does not believe in God, yet he believes he has a soul.

The good and evil angel in the scene are allegories for how Elizabethan people felt; how they tried to divide good from bad, right from wrong etc, in light of their new knowledge. The evil angel represents temptation, and the temptation of new knowledge and curiosity. The good angel represents conscience, and knowing your limits- something Faustus fails to acknowledge.

Another theme of the scene is Humanism, which Faustus definitely

demonstrates. He is curious, and feels powerful due to his knowledge yet he <https://assignbuster.com/what-do-scenes-1-and-3-tell-us-about-elizabethan-beliefs-essay-sample/>

does not set himself boundaries. This shows how Elizabethans believed they could achieve above what was realistically possible. This is verified in the introduction to Scene 1, where the story of Icarus is told. The story shows the consequences of over-ambition, and tells you what will happen to Faustus.

Scene 1 also shows the Elizabethan need for extravagance, money and fame, lines 14-15 show how Faustus wants gold, and to be immortalized.

Scene 3.

The opening to Scene 3 is Faustus conjuring a devil. In Elizabethan times spells, folklore, superstition etc, were a normal part of life. This is shown in Line 7- 'Seeing thou hast prayed and sacrificed to them', where Faustus prepares for his conjuring act. It is ironic that he prays, as he does not believe in God. Following this ritual, he draws a circle around himself, to keep evil spirits from harming him. This is ironic once more, as he is conjuring the devil at the same time- who is surely the most evil spirit possible.

The entire conjuring scene is set to challenge religion, as many Elizabethans did. Faustus uses holy water and the sign of the cross to conjure the devil. Both of which are traditionally used in Christianity.

Atheism is shown repeatedly through-out the scene, in particular, when Faustus says, 'There is no chief but only Belzebub, To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself'. Atheism was a common Elizabethan belief.

Scene 3 also sees Faustus challenge 'The Chain of Being', as many Elizabethans did in their egotism. Faustus believes he can over-power god, this will result in Faustus not being rewarded by God and going to Heaven.  
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Scene 3 reiterates the arrogance of Faustus, and of Elizabethans. This is shown when Faustus says 'thou art too ugly to attend on me'. Suddenly Faustus thinks he has the right and power to tell a devil that he is too ugly! It shows how Elizabethans were guilty of the second deadly sin- PRIDE. Because of their new knowledge, they saw themselves as superior.

In Scene 3 Mephistophilis warns Faustus by telling him what happened to Lucifer. He tells Faustus 'O, by inspiring pride and insolence, From which God threw him from the face of heaven'. This is exactly what is going to happen to Faustus, but he is too arrogant to listen to Mephistophilis. This creates dramatic irony for the audience, as they know what is going to happen to Faustus. It also shows how Elizabethans were so haughty that they refused to listen to others views, or even consider that they may be right.

You can also see pride in Faustus saying 'I see there's virtue in my heavenly words'. Faustus is so conceited with himself, as he thinks he has succeeded in conjuring the devil. This offers humour for the audience, because in fact, the devil came himself- it was nothing to do with Faustus.

In scene 3, you can also see the doubts of Faustus. He says 'then fear not Faustus but be resolute'. This shows that although the Renaissance had brought superiority to Elizabethans, it also brought them doubt. The Renaissance proved that not all they believed was true-, which accounts for their doubts.