

Christopher marlowe, playwright extraordinaire

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Christopher Marlowe is one of the most renowned playwrights in British history, often considered second only to Shakespeare.

His plays were revolutionary for their time, sometimes intentionally shocking their audiences with such themes as homosexuality and dissident religious views. The plays present the King of England as an ordinary person and disparage the corrupting influence of too much knowledge, both strange and controversial ideas for the era. Seven of Marlowe's plays survive to modern times, the most famous among them *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe's life story is rather obscured by history, thanks in part to the poor record-keeping practices of the day, in part to the low social status of playwrights, and in part to the slander of him by those who disapproved of his work, particularly Puritans. However, it is known that Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564, just a few months before Shakespeare's birth, and that his family was somewhat privileged, though not upper class. Marlowe was educated at King's School, an academy known for its focus on dramatic literature, starting when he was 14.

After King's School, Marlowe entered Corpus Christi College in Cambridge on a scholarship. While getting his master's degree, he may have converted to Catholicism, a grievous offense in England at the time. On this suspicion, his master's degree was nearly withheld, but Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council intervened, implying that Marlowe was a member of the secret service and Cambridge need not question his private business. After his education, Marlowe moved to London to pursue a career as a playwright, a profession considered beneath his education. He became popular quickly, thanks to his brilliant plays, but he was also known as quarrelsome and controversial.

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Some considered him an atheist, he may have been homosexual, and he was briefly imprisoned after he was involved in a brawl that ended in death for one participant. However, Marlowe did not encounter as much legal trouble as he could have, thanks to his favor with the Walshingham family, a powerful noble clan with a member in the Privy Council. This favor allowed him to live freely and keep writing even as some of his colleagues were imprisoned for their actions or religious views. On May 30, 1593, Marlowe was stabbed to death under mysterious circumstances. He is survived by seven revolutionary and thought-provoking plays—artist gone, musings preserved for posterity.