

How marlowe presents faustus at the beginning of the play essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the opening of the play ' Doctor Faustus' Marlowe uses a range of techniques to introduce his protagonist character, Faustus. Marlowe's primary technique is the prologue of the play which through performance by the chorus gives the audience a foresight into Faustus' traits and glooming downfall. Throughout the initial scenes of the play Marlowe builds on the characterisation of Faustus through the dialect and significance differences to his fellow characters.

Marlowe's primary description of Faustus ' his parents born of stock' allows the audience to immediately relate to Faustus; as the use of ' stock' suggests an ordinary individual as the majority of Marlowe's audience would have been, this would therefore have created an immediate empathy within the audience as they would have felt they could relate to Faustus themselves.

In addition to this the use of Marlow highlighting the Faustus was ' born of stock' may be a device used to link ' Doctor Faustus' to a mystery/morality play, which within the Medieval period were extremely common and Marlowe's audience would have been aware that the protagonist characters in such plays was an everyman a like Faustus. The association with such plays would also have created expectations within the audience for later features in the play, such as the profound emphasis on religion and good angel vs. ad angel.

The use of ' grac'd with doctors name' within the prologue gives an immediate indication of Faustus' education and this supported with ' excelling all' highlights his genius, showing him primarily in a positive light.

However, Marlowe soon reveals Faustus' faults through the description 'glutted with learning's golden gifts'. The choice of 'glutted' immediately forecasts Faustus' downfall as it is one of the seven deadly sins and thus conveys Faustus' greed of learning to be his underlying weakness and sin.

Marlowe's use of alliteration of the consonant G, highlights the significance of 'golden gifts', the choice of word 'golden' may be considered a juxtaposition as it has positive connotations yet is being used to describe magic which contextually within the play is the work of the devil. Marlowe also uses a metaphorical reference to the Greek myth of Icarus to highlight Faustus' downfall, 'his waxen wings did mount above his reach'.

It may be interpreted that 'waxen wings' is metaphorical for Faustus' later powers, as like the wings they were only temporary and similarly as experienced by Icarus were not in Faustus' control. Moreover, the use of 'mount above his reach' conveys Faustus as an arrogant character, perhaps foreshadowing that like Icarus, Faustus' fatal flaw will be his arrogance to the warnings of others. Marlowe goes on to continue portraying Faustus' arrogance as his protagonist joins the stage in Act 1 and talks himself of his own achievements and traits.

The use of 'art though still Faustus and a man' highlights through Marlowe's choice of 3rd person, Faustus' self-conceit and arrogance, referring to himself by name has the effect of conveying to the audience that Faustus believes he is of higher status than others; this may have the effect of alienating any empathy that the audience has grown for the protagonist character as he is distancing himself from them.

Moreover, the use of 'and a man' may be interpreted as one of the more subtle hints of Faustus' behalf that he wishes to gain further higher status in life, the suggestion of 'man' may indicate that Faustus wishes to become more than an ordinary human being. This followed by Marlowe's reference to the story of Lazarus, 'being dead, raise them to life again' may be interpreted that Faustus craves God like power, like that of Jesus.

However, Marlowe has Faustus contradict his own beliefs as he goes on to dismiss all forms of religion 'Divinity, adieu' therefore through the dismissal of religion he dismisses beliefs in God of which he has previously stated he wishes to become like. Moreover, through the dismissal of his religion Faustus is dismissing the medieval period that was dominated by religion and would have been present throughout Marlowe's society at the time of both writing and performing the play.

This therefore conveys Faustus as a renaissance man, 'we must sin, and must consequently die' would have been the final straw and eliminated any empathy of which may had been created for Faustus, as the audience would have predominantly withheld Protestant values and therefore been mortified at such a blatant outcast towards religion and the idea of sin.

Marlowe continues to build this idea as he uses ironic inversion, having Faustus describe 'and necromantic books are heavenly', the conflict of describing a book associated with magic and thus hell with religious associations would have further cast Faustus as a sinner within the audience's eyes. Despite his arrogance and association with sin, the protagonist character must be credited throughout the beginning of the play

for his determination, ' This night I'll conjure, though I die therefore'; which commands a respect for him as a character.

However, this determination may also be considered by the audience as a childlike stubbornness, as despite the consequences which Faustus is well aware of ' though I die therefore', he still continues in hope of succeeding in conjuring magic. The use of this quote by Marlowe, creates a foreshadowing of what is to come later in the novel, the association with ' die therefore' may be associated with the warning previously initiated by the chorus ' waxen wings did mount above his reach', conveying again the downfall of Faustus like Icarus ending with his death.

This would have built tension within the audience as they anticipated both the conjuring of magic and the glooming downfall of Faustus. Faustus' response "' damnation" terrifies not him For he confounds hell in Elysium' to the warning cast by Mephistophilis ' he is in danger to be damn'd', portrays the protagonist character's apparent obliviousness to the warnings highlighted by Lucifer's servants himself. The fact that Faustus is either blatantly ignoring or choosing to ignore the warnings given by Mephistophilis's not only highlights his arrogance and again links him to the myth of Icarus, yet it also creates an underlying comedy.

Mephistophilis's blatantly describes ' why, this is hell, nor am I out of it' yet Faustus is still convinced despite summoning an actual devil that Hell is ' in Elysium', which although to Marlowe's initial audience would have been extremely serious and threatening, to a modern day audience the juxtaposition may be considered comical at the expense of Faustus'

stubbornness. Overall, the beginning of the play casts Faustus as a Renaissance man, preoccupied with a fascination of magic and determination to not only conjure a devil but magic also.

The beginning although at first creating an empathy between the audience and the protagonist through the similarity of 'stock' backgrounds, foremost creates a wedge between the audience and Faustus, as they are introduced by Marlowe to the arrogant character who is 'glutted' with a desire for lives 'golden gifts'. The beginning of the novel succeeds in creating tension as to what will happen to the protagonist character and a foreshadowing that his sin will in fact be the source of his impending downfall.