

Dr faustus by
christopher marlowe
essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Dr Faustus was written by Christopher Marlowe in the Elizabethan era, which was a time of great religious importance, and high in catholic beliefs.

Catholics believed that God was the most powerful entity in the world and the creator of the universe. Faustus condemned his soul to the devil, in order to become as powerful as God himself. This act is ironic in itself, however to an Elizabethan audience, this act of rebellion would not only be frightening, but in many ways exhilarating.

There is no-one in the world, old or young, who would not give everything they have to become as powerful as God, but would not dare rebel against the lord. Faustus committed blasphemy, and was rewarded by Lucifer, showing the people that God can indeed be undermined, and a bounty received. But the receiving would never out-do the giving, as Faustus gained twenty-four years of power for an eternity under the Devil. The people had no other options but to believe, and have a religion of which to hold on to.

Although Faustus gained from his deception, the people dare not go against God. Science was little researched, and a secular society was somewhat unheard of. The audience would have been intrigued and excited as to what fortunes he gained, but also terrified, as the outcome would end in Faustus' soul being owned and controlled by the Devil. Faustus' eyes are glistened by the idea of gold and power, but he doesn't realise until late on that he is losing his soul to a power he cannot control.

However, it is not only the religious values of an Elizabethan audience that would have lead to an exhilarating yet terrifying response. Cultural factors, including the society at the time, would have had a major affect on the

audience's reaction. In the Elizabethan era, there was the controlled and the controlling, the peasants and the ruling. This therefore meant that if given the chance to gain power, as Faustus had, many if not all of the people at that time would have snatched at the opportunity to gain immediate gratification, especially peasants.

However, knowing the consequences, most people wouldn't dare commit blasphemy, which is another reason as to why it would be so exciting yet frightening for an audience to watch. It is understandable that a peasant, which was the dominant group in the Elizabethan era, would have wanted this immediate gratification, as they had nothing else and nothing to live for. They were uneducated and perhaps unaware of the consequences they would face.

However, for Faustus, who was an educated doctor of middle class, it was both a naive, and selfish act, as he set out to gain for himself, he was full of greed and used his power unwisely. As an audience at the theatre in those times, you were more often than not of a middle class background, and therefore you were more likely to be able to relate to the play as it was about someone of the same class as yourself. If it was a play of a peasant who sold his soul to the Devil, the audience were less likely to be excited and exhilarated, as they probably didn't particularly care about peasants as they were of a lower class and status.

But the fact that it was a tale of a man of their class and status made it much more dramatic, tense, exciting, yet terrifying to watch. To conclude, it is clear that Faustus' act of rebellion was both exhilarating and terrifying in

equal measure, due to cultural factors at the time such as the class differences in society, and also because of the religious values in a highly non-secular society. However, I believe that the audience would have had more of an exciting reaction to the play, as it was so dramatic and unheard of that no-one really knew the true consequence, but were excited to find out what would really happen.