

Medieval renaissance conflict in dr faustus assignment

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In the play, the protagonist, Doctor Faustus, is a well-respected German scholar who grows dissatisfied with his studies of medicine, law, logic and theology. He wants a career to match the scope of his ambition, a subject to challenge his enormous intellect; therefore, he decides to turn to the dangerous practice of necromancy, or magic. He makes a pact with Mephistopheles to sell his soul to Lucifer in return of twenty-four years of absolute power. Later, in his study, when Faustus begins to despair, a Good Angel and a Bad Angel appear to him; each encourages him to follow his advice.

Mephistopheles appears and Faustus agrees to sign a contract in blood with the devil even though several omens appear which warn him not to make this bond. Faustus begins to repent of his bargain as the voice of the Good Angel continues to urge him to repent. To divert Faustus, Mephistopheles and Lucifer both appear and parade the seven deadly sins before Faustus. After this, Mephistopheles takes Faustus to Rome and leads him into the pope's private chambers, where the two become invisible and play pranks on the pope and some unsuspecting friars.

After this episode, Faustus and Mephistopheles go to the German emperor's court, where they conjure up Alexander the Great. At this time, Faustus also makes a pair of horns suddenly appear on one of the knights who had been skeptical about Faustus' powers. After this episode, Faustus is next seen selling his horse to a horse-courser with the advice that the man must not ride the horse into the water. Later, the horse-courser enters Faustus' study and accuses Faustus of false dealings because the horse had turned into a bundle of hay in the middle of a pond.

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After performing other magical, nonsensical tricks Faustus returns to his study, where at the request of his fellow tries to get Faustus to hope for salvation and yet Faustus cannot. He knows it is now too late to turn away from the evil and ask for forgiveness. When the scholars leave, the clock strikes eleven and Faustus realizes that he must give up his soul within an hour. As the clock marks each passing segment of time, Faustus sinks deeper and deeper into despair. Finally, the Doctor Faustus ends with Faustus awaiting the final hour of his life before he is carried off to eternal damnation by the agents of the underworld.

THE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE CONFLICT Scholar R. M. Adkins famously remarked that Doctor Faustus tells “ the story of a Renaissance man who had to pay the medieval price for being one. ” This quotation throws light on one of the plays central themes- The conflict between Medieval ideals and the Renaissance ideals, and how Faustus is caught in the grip of the changing times. Certain aspects of the drama can be used to support an interpretation of Faustus as a Renaissance hero and other aspects suggest he is a medieval hero.

According to medieval view of the world, everything revolved around God and religion whereas the Renaissance view put more emphasis on the individual, on classical learning, and on scientific inquiry into the nature of the world. In the middle ages any attempt or ambition to go beyond the assigned place was considered a great sin of pride. For the medieval person, pride was one of the greatest sins that could be committed. This concept

was based upon the fact that Lucifer fall was the result of his pride when he tried to revolt against God.

Thus, for the medieval person, aspiring ride became one of the cardinal sins. The Medieval View According to the medieval view, Faustus has a desire for forbidden knowledge. In order to gain more knowledge than he is entitled to, Faustus makes a contract with Lucifer, which brings about his damnation. In the prologue, Marlowe writes - " Till swollen with cunning, of a self-conceit, His waxen wings did mount above his reach. " With these lines, he portrays an image of Cirrus, who flew too close to sun which melted his waxed wings. This story was popular as an image of self-destructive will and ambition.

Also, at the end of the play, Faustus learns that supernatural powers are reserved for the gods and that the person who attempts to handle or deal in magical powers must face eternal damnation. So, by the medieval standpoint, Faustus deserves his punishment hence the play is not so much a tragedy as it is a morality play. The ending is an act of Justice, when the man who has transgressed against the natural laws of the universe is Justifiably punished. The chorus at the end of the drama re-emphasizes this position when it admonishes the audience to learn from Faustus' damnation and not attempt to go beyond the restrictions placed on humanity.

The Renaissance View According to the Renaissance view, Faustus rebels against the limitations of medieval knowledge and the restriction put upon humankind decreeing that he must accept his place in the universe without challenging it. In his opening soliloquy in scene I, Faustus considers and rejects this medieval way of thinking. He resolves, in full Renaissance spirit,

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to accept no limits, traditions, or authorities in his quest for enlightenment and absolute power. His desire, is to transcend the limitations of humanity and rise to greater achievements and heights.

In the purest sense, Faustus wants to prove that he can become greater than he presently is. Because of his desire to go beyond human limitations, Faustus is willing to chance damnation in order to achieve his goals. Faustus, thus, may be considered as a 'Renaissance Hero'- a hero of the new modern world, a world free of God, religion, and the limits that the medieval ideas had imposed on humanity. CONCLUSION Christopher Marlowe lived the time of the Middle Ages and the start of the Renaissance.

These were two very different historical eras with quite different values, One of the reasons for the popularity of his play was that it traumatized the tug-of-war between the admonitions of the church and the exciting possibilities of knowledge suggested by the advance of science and the revival of classical learning. Marlowe own attitude toward the clash between medieval and Renaissance values is quite ambiguous. He seems hostile toward the ambitions of Faustus, and keeps his tragic hero squarely in the medieval world, where eternal damnation is the price of unman pride.

The disappointment and mediocrity that follow Faustus pact with the devil, as he descends from grand ambitions to petty conjuring tricks, might suggest that the new, modern spirit, though ambitious and glittering, will lead only to a Faustian dead end. On the other hand, his renaissance ideologies are reflected in Faustus character, he hears Renaissance voices which tell him Just the opposite – extend the boundaries of human

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knowledge. Seek wealth and power. Live this life to the full because tomorrow you'll be dead. This theme of “ eat, drink, and be merry for morrow we die” was a popular theme during the Renaissance period.