**Dr. Faustus Study Questions**

***Answer these questions in 50-100 words using textual evidence.*** Make sure to cite your references. Since this is a play with no acts, you will simply cite scene and line numbers, for example: “Now that the gloomy shadow of the earth / Longing to view Orion’s drizzling look,” (3.1-2)

**Form:** Note that while most of the play is written in blank verse, some passages are not.

1. When and under what circumstances is prose used?

2. Do any characters speak in both prose and blank verse? If so, when is each form is used? Why?

3. When and for what does Marlowe choose rhymed verse? What is the effect of this variation in form?

4. In particular, note the alternation of scenes primarily in prose and scenes primarily in blank verse; also, of prose and blank verse within individual scenes. Is there any pattern to this alternation? (e.g. "high" and "low" scenes or subject matter; "serious" and "comical" characters; interior monologues vs. dialogue with other characters.)

**Themes:**

1. What is the attitude toward learning in this play? Note the various references to books and learning, e.g. in Dr. Faustus's monologue (sc. 1) as he rejects the classical disciplines in turn as unworthy of his further attention.

2. Why does he turn to Necromancy?

3. Which books does Cornelius direct him to use to conjure the devil. Why is this significant?

4. What is implied about the power and nature of scripture and of learning in general?

5. Is the setting of the play significant? Explain.

6. Notice the forms of address used for Faustus (e.g., the Doctor, the conjurer, etc.) When is each used? What is implied?

7. Do the comments of the scholars change the depiction of learning in the play?

8. Are there parallels between Dr. Faustus and Lucifer? To what extent is Marlowe's Lucifer typical of Renaissance rather than medieval world views?

9. The Seven Deadly Sins confer upon Dr. Faustus a thematic link to the medieval genre known as the morality play, which also used allegorical personification to teach a lesson about the battle of good and evil in one man's soul. Which sin appears first to Dr. Faustus? What is the significance of that order to the themes of the play?

10. What is the function of the Old Man who urges Faustus to repent? What about the scholars? Why doesn't Faustus take their advice?

11. What is the function of the "low" comedy scenes (Wagner; the "clown"; Ralph and Robin; the Horse-Courser)?

12. What role does Helen of Troy play in the drama of Faustus's damnation? What does her presence suggest about Marlowe's attitudes toward women? Consider also the comments on wives and marriage and the role of the Duchess of Vanholt.

13. How does Dr. Faustus’s behavior degrade from scene to scene? Is his behavior consistent with his earlier ambitions? For what is he now using his magical powers? What do Faustus's various acts of magic have in common? Are his actions what one had expected when he explained his reasons for accepting Lucifer's bargain?

14. How is Dr. Faustus representative of the spirit of the Renaissance? For what qualities can he be admired? How are those qualities linked to his downfall? What is suggested about the link between learning and power? Between learning and pride?

15. Consider the final comments of the scholars and the Chorus. Do these speeches change somewhat the representation of learning within the play?

16. To what extent is *Dr. Faustus* a Renaissance version of a morality play? Consider the presence of Good and Bad Angels, Lucifer, Mephistophilis, the Seven Deadly Sins.

Contents of this and linked pages Copyright Debora B. Schwartz, 1997-2007