- Accused of ‘diabolic atheism’
- Plays portray a fascination with individualism and the men whose aspirations and desires refuse to be held back
- Explores the theme of homosexuality in Edward II
- Challenges the conventional connection between worthiness and social rank
- Largely responsible for establishing blank verse
- Consisting of lines of iambic pentameter
- Developed the line into a flexible verse form, with a regular underlying rhythm which could be manipulated and varied to create particular effects
- Theorised that he wrote some of Shakespeare’s plays
- Died on the 30th May 1793 in strange and uncertain circumstances, possibly linking to his career in espionage
- Very controversial both in and after life

Shakespeare
- Born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 1564
- Married Anne Hathaway in November 1582
  - Their first child was born shortly after their marriage
  - They had twins two years later, with their son dying at age eleven
- One of the managing partners of the Lord Chamberlain’s Company
- First poems were published in 1593 and 1594
  - Thought that he also wrote many of his sonnets at this time
- Early plays were mainly histories, including Henry VI and The Merchant of Venice
- Several of his plays were performed before the Queen at court
- Described by Francis Meres in 1598 as England’s greatest writer in comedy and tragedy
- Wrote numerous tragedies, including Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear
- Died on 23 April 1616 and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford
- First collected edition of his works - 'The First Folio' - was published in 1623

The Great Chain of Being
- A hierarchical structure of all matter and life, thought to be determined by God
- Starts with God and progresses downward to angels, demons, stars, moon, kings, princes, nobles, commoners, wild animals, domesticated animals, trees, other plants, precious stones, precious metals and other minerals

The Faust Legend
- Marlowe based the story and character of Dr Faustus on this classical German legend
- Faust is highly successful yet dissatisfied with his life, which leads him to make a pact with the Devil, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures
- German plays and puppet theatre loosely based on this legend were popular in the 16th century, often reducing Faust and Mephistopheles to figures of vulgar fun.
- The early Faust chapbook, while in circulation in northern Germany, found its way to England, where in 1592 an English translation was published