

- 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 in 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