

Dr Faustus essay plans

Key:

- F = Faustus
- W = Wagner
- OM = Old Man
- L = Lucifer
- HofT = Helen of Troy
- V = Valdes
- C = Cornelius

1. Tragic hero

- First addition- 'Tragical history of Dr Faustus'- presented as a tragedy.
- Aristotle's definition = 'neither good nor thoroughly bad'- question severity of F's punishment.
- Prologue 'born of parents of base stock'- everyman figure.
- tragedy = describes downfall of a great man on account of his hamartia.
- 'tragoida' = Greek for goats play- sacrifices- sense of a great man sacrificed to appease wrath of God.
- Kastan 'is the tragic motor human error or capricious (unpredictable) fate?'
 - ⇒ Tragic flaw that led F to his fate? - hubris
 - ⇒ 'heavens conspired his overthrow'- universe governed by capricious deities?
- Kastan 'is the catastrophe (tragic outcome) a just, if appalling, retribution?'
 - ⇒ Fate might be deserved but even so- cruel justice.
- Last soliloquy- God presented as almost tantalising (teasing him).
 - ⇒ Audience encouraged to sympathise with F- methods evoke this.
- Is F a great man?
 - ⇒ Encouraged to think great but Marlowe spends time undermining.
 - ⇒ Through imagination/speculation of ambitions- link to humanists.
 - ⇒ Ambiguity- parents of base stock- everyman figure.
 - ⇒ While his greatness is questioned we do nevertheless have a sense of his fall.
 - ⇒ Great chain of being- 16thC audience not see F as great but meddling with divine order.
 - ⇒ Pity- epilogue 'cut is the branch that might have grown full straight'- F's potential.
- F's fall into mediocrity- strong sense of which contrasted to initial ambitions- 1st + last soliloquy.
 - ⇒ Increasingly degraded state- slapstick comic scenes- morality plays- socially lower characters.
 - ⇒ Contrasted to Chorus' initial presentation 'graced with doctor's name'.
- Anagnorisis- recognition of some universal truth about humanity.
 - ⇒ 'what art F but a man condemned to die'- contrast with ambitions- come to terms with truth of human condition.
 - ⇒ Towards end- repentance on his mind- 'I do repent yet I do despair'- evokes sympathy.
 - ⇒ Keep 'oath...made to Lucifer'- wanting to do right thing.
 - ⇒ Last soliloquy- methods- enhance dramatic atmos monosyllabic words 'now hast thou'- mirroring striking of clock.
- Hero of his own imaginations.
 - ⇒ 'I will be Paris'- sees himself as a hero.
 - ⇒ Determined/resolute but play undermines his sense of heroism.
 - ⇒ 'Hell's just a fable'- can you be truly heroic if you don't understand consequences of your actions?
- Fuses morality + classical tragedy.
 - ⇒ Creates tensions.
 - ⇒ Kastan argues tragedy makes us question nature of the gods- just cruel?- at odds with Christian view.
 - ⇒ By employing Christian theme but putting in a tragic universe- Marlowe obliges us to question God.
 - ⇒ Compared to Icarus- 'waxen wings'- in prologue- metaphor for attempt to usurp role of god.
 - ⇒ Critical tone of chorus in prologue- criticising F's arrogance- danger in Renaissance stress on individual- tension
 - ⇒ Morality plays- educated in God's governance not encouraged to question.
 - ⇒ Greater complexity- F = psychologically complex.
 - Christian narrative is inadequate- binary categorisation good/evil.
 - Places god on trial.