

**Ministry of Higher Education and
Scientific Research/University of Tikrit
College of Education for Humanities
Department of English**



Dr .Faustus / Drama

Second Stage

Act 4- Scene 1-3

By

Lect. Assist.. Mohammed Khalaf Hamdan

2026/2025

Doctor Faustus

Christopher Marlowe

Act 4- Scene 1

Summary: Scene 1

At the court of the Duke of Vanholt, Faustus's skill at conjuring up beautiful illusions wins the duke's favor. Faustus comments that the duchess has not seemed to enjoy the show and asks her what she would like. She tells him she would like a dish of ripe grapes, and Faustus has [Mephastophilis](#) bring her some grapes. (*Doctor Faustus*, Robin, Dick, the carter, the horse-courser, and the hostess from the tavern burst in at this moment. They confront Faustus, and the horse-courser begins making jokes about what he assumes is Faustus's wooden leg. Faustus then shows them his leg, which is whole and healthy, and they are amazed. Each then launches into a complaint about Faustus's treatment of him, but Faustus uses magical charms to make them silent, and they depart.) The duke and duchess are much pleased with Faustus's display, and they promise to reward Faustus greatly.

Analysis: 1

Faustus's downward spiral, from tragic greatness to self-indulgent mediocrity, continues in these scenes. He continues his journey from court to court, arriving this time at Vanholt, a minor German duchy, to visit the duke and duchess. Over the course of the play we see Faustus go from the seat of the pope to the court of the emperor to the court of a minor nobleman. The power and importance of his

hosts decreases from scene to scene, just as Faustus's feats of magic grow ever more unimpressive. Just after he seals his pact with Mephistophilis, Faustus soars through the heavens on a chariot pulled by dragons to learn the secrets of astronomy; now, however, he is reduced to playing pointless tricks on the horse-courser and fetching out-of-season grapes to impress a bored noblewoman. Even his antagonists have grown increasingly ridiculous. In Rome, he faces the curses of the pope and his monks, which are strong enough to give even Mephistophilis pause; at the emperor's court, Faustus is opposed by a collection of noblemen who are brave, if unintelligent. At Vanholt, though, he faces down an absurd collection of comical rogues, and the worst of it is that Faustus seems to have become one of them, a clown among clowns, taking pleasure in using his unlimited power to perform practical jokes and cast simple charms. (Magic and the supernatural as a motif)

Selling one's soul for power and glory may be foolish or wicked, but at least there is grandeur to the idea of it. Marlowe's Faustus, however, has lost his hold on that doomed grandeur and has become pathetic. The meaning of his decline is ambiguous: perhaps part of the nature of a pact with Lucifer is that one cannot gain all that one hopes to gain from it. Or perhaps Marlowe is criticizing worldly ambition and, by extension, the entire modern project of the Renaissance, which pushed God to one side and sought mastery

over nature and society. Along the lines of this interpretation, it seems that in Marlowe's worldview the desire for complete knowledge about the world and power over it can ultimately be reduced to fetching grapes for the Duchess of Vanholt—in other words, to nothing. ([The conflict between medieval and Renaissance values in the play](#))

Earlier in the play, when Faustus queries Mephistophilis about the nature of the world, Faustus sees his desire for knowledge reach a dead end at God, whose power he denies in favor of Lucifer. Knowledge of God is against Lucifer's kingdom, according to Mephistophilis. But if the pursuit of knowledge leads inexorably to God, Marlowe suggests, then a man like Faustus, who tries to live without God, can ultimately go nowhere but down, into mediocrity.

There is no sign that Faustus himself is aware of the gulf between his earlier ambitions and his current state. He seems to take joy in his petty amusements, laughing uproariously when he confounds the horse-courser and leaping at the chance to visit the Duke of Vanholt. Still, his impending doom begins to weigh upon him. As he sits down to fall asleep, he remarks, "What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?". Yet, at this moment at least, he seems convinced that he will repent at the last minute and be saved—a significant change from his earlier attitude, when he either denies

the existence of hell or assumes that damnation is inescapable. “Christ did call the thief upon the cross,” he comforts himself, referring to the New Testament story of the thief who was crucified alongside Jesus Christ, repented for his sins, and was promised a place in paradise. That he compares himself to this figure shows that Faustus assumes that he can wait until the last moment and still escape hell. In other words, he wants to renounce Mephistophilis, but not just yet. We can easily anticipate that his willingness to delay will prove fatal. ([Important quotes about the theme of sin versus redemption](#))

Summary: Scene 2

Faustus enters with some of the scholars. One of them asks Faustus if he can produce Helen of Greece (also known as Helen of Troy), who they have decided was “the admirablest lady / that ever lived” . Faustus agrees to produce her, and gives the order to [Mephistophilis](#): immediately, Helen herself crosses the stage, to the delight of the scholars.

The scholars leave, and an old man enters and tries to persuade Faustus to repent. Faustus becomes distraught, and Mephistophilis hands him a dagger. However, the old man persuades him to appeal to God for mercy, saying, “I see an angel hovers o’er thy head / And with a vial full of precious grace / Offers to pour the same into thy soul!”. Once the old man leaves, Mephistophilis threatens to shred

Faustus to pieces if he does not reconfirm his vow to Lucifer. Faustus complies, sealing his vow by once again stabbing his arm and inscribing it in blood. He asks Mephistophilis to punish the old man for trying to dissuade him from continuing in Lucifer's service; Mephistophilis says that he cannot touch the old man's soul but that he will scourge his body. Faustus then asks Mephistophilis to let him see Helen again. Helen enters, and Faustus makes a great speech about her beauty .

Summary: Scene 3

The final night of Faustus's life has come, and he tells the scholars of the deal he has made with Lucifer. They are horrified and ask what they can do to save him, but he tells them that there is nothing to be done. Reluctantly, they leave to pray for Faustus. A vision of hell opens before Faustus's horrified eyes as the clock strikes eleven. The last hour passes by quickly, and Faustus exhorts the clocks to slow and time to stop, so that he might live a little longer and have a chance to repent. He then begs God to reduce his time in hell to a thousand years or a hundred thousand years, so long as he is eventually saved. He wishes that he were a beast and would simply cease to exist when he dies instead of face damnation. He curses his parents and himself, and the clock strikes midnight. Devils enter and carry Faustus away as he screams, "Ugly hell gape not! Come not, Lucifer! / I'll burn my books—ah, Mephistophilis!".

