

# **Dr. Faustus Book Notes**

## **Dr. Faustus by Christopher Marlowe**

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## Author/Context

Christopher Marlowe was born around February 26, 1563 or 64, the precise date is not recorded (William Shakespeare is reported to have been born two months after Marlowe). He was baptized at St. George's Church in Canterbury. His father, John, was a well-to-do shoemaker; his mother, Catherine, was the daughter of the rector of St. Peter's. Christopher was the second of nine children. At the age of fifteen, Marlowe entered the King's School (W. Somerset Maugham is an alum) and two years later, entered Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University. He received his bachelor's degree in 1584, and continued on for a master's degree on a scholarship designated for those studying for the clergy.

In 1587, he was denied a M.A. because of his failure to meet the residency requirements of the scholarship. But the Queen's Privy Council interceded on his behalf, and he was able to obtain the degree. Even as an undergraduate, Marlowe was known to have made extended trips overseas. Added to that were records of his service to the government, all of which confirm that Marlowe served as a government informant, or as a spy in some manner or capacity. The extent of his life as a spy is not known, but Marlowe certainly made acquaintances with high-level government officials, as well as with notorious figures in the London underworld.

Consistent with his double life as a spy, Marlowe lived a colorful life. He was once roommates with another prominent Elizabethan writer, Thomas Kyd. Marlowe also frequented the house of Sir Walter Raleigh, the famous adventurer and man of letters. He shared many of Sir Walter Raleigh's unorthodox political and religious views, which branded Marlowe as an atheist. In 1589, Marlowe was arrested for aiding in a murder but was later acquitted. Trouble did not leave him, however, as he continued to live an interesting, albeit dangerous life. In 1593, while at a Tavern in Deptford with three other shady characters, Marlowe was killed in a fight. He was supposedly stabbed to death by one of his acquaintances over a backgammon game. Marlowe was only twenty-nine years old. There has been much speculation about the suspicious nature of his death, but there has not been much evidence to disprove the official story.

Though he lived an eccentric life, Marlowe was foremost a writer, one of the most popular writers of the Elizabethan drama, and one of the greatest playwrights England has produced. He was also a classical scholar who regarded antiquity as the main source of his literary inspiration. He was influenced by the Latin writers, Ovid, Virgil, and Lucan. He wrote his first play, *Tamburlaine the Great*, while he was at Cambridge. The play was first performed in 1587 to critical success. He probably wrote *Dr. Faustus* a year before his death. It was published in 1604. His other noted works include *Edward II*, published in 1594 and *The Jew of Malta*, published in 1633.

Marlowe's works have many consistent themes. His protagonists are often fierce individualists who reject Christian beliefs. Thus Kocher sees in Marlowe a precursor of the Renaissance Man. Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare is rightfully noted, however, many literary critics believe that Marlowe was a poetic genius in his own right.



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# Plot Summary

The Chorus introduces the story of Faustus, born to lowly parents in Rhodes, going off to study at Wittenberg while staying with a kinsman. Faustus is gifted in divinity, but his self-conceit leads him to consider necromancy.

Faustus sits in his study, analyzing different academic disciplines. He concludes that although divinity is the subject that is best, it does not satisfy him. He would rather pursue black magic so that he can be his own god. He orders his servant, Wagner, to get his friends Valdes and Cornelius, who are known to be practitioners of magic. Before they come, the Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear. Although Faustus is not aware of their presence, the Good Angel tries to discourage him, while the Evil Angel urges him to go forward. Valdes and Cornelius come and they offer to teach him the basics of magic.

Through magic, Faustus conjures up the devil, Mephistophilis. Because Faustus has blasphemed against God in his incantations, Mephistophilis has come to see if he can claim Faustus' soul. Faustus makes a deal with Mephistophilis, agreeing to give his soul in exchange for twenty-four years of the devil's service. Mephistophilis goes to get approval of the deal from Lucifer, the Prince of the devils. Lucifer demands that Faustus write the deed with his own blood. When Faustus is done writing the deed, an inscription on his arm reads, "Man, fly!" Faustus wonders if this is a sign from God. But Mephistophilis quickly distracts him with riches and entertainment.

Faustus' first request is to ask Mephistophilis about the nature of hell. Although Mephistophilis explains how he and the other devils are condemned to hell forever, Faustus refuses to believe that hell exists; at least, he thinks hell is not so bad. Faustus then asks for a wife, as well as books on magic, books on the motions of stars and planets and of plants and animals.

Faustus begins to waver in his decision and wishes to repent. When he calls on the name of Christ, Lucifer and Belzebug come with Mephistophilis to visit him. Lucifer diverts Faustus' mind by entertaining him with a display of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Wagner narrates how Faustus has traveled the world over. Faustus makes his way to Rome to visit the Pope's chambers. Faustus and Mephistophilis play a practical joke on the Pope. The Chorus then narrates how Faustus' fame spread, reaching even the ears of the German Emperor, Carolus the Fifth. Faustus visits the Emperor's court where he impresses the Emperor by making Alexander the Great and his Paramour appear. He also spites a skeptical knight by giving him horns on his head. Faustus' other exploits include leaving a Horse-Courser on the short end of a deal, producing grapes in winter in front of the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt, and making Helen of Troy appear before a group of wide-eyed scholar friends.

When the twenty-four years are almost up, an Old Man appears and tells Faustus to repent before God before it is too late. In despair, Faustus almost repents, but



Mephistophilis reminds him of his vow. Faustus reaffirms his deal with Lucifer. His last request to Mephistophilis is to have Helen of Troy as his lover.

Before the group of his scholar friends, Faustus confesses to have made a deal with Lucifer. His friends urge him to repent before God, but Faustus finds his heart too hardened to repent. Midnight comes and the twenty-four year period comes to an end. Devils come to take Faustus away.

The Chorus ends the story by stating that Faustus went to hell because he desired more than what God permits for a man.



## Major Characters

**Faustus, John (Doctor):** The main character of the story, Faustus is a professor of divinity at Wittenberg, as well as a renowned physician and scholar. Not satisfied with the limitations of human knowledge and power, he begins to practice necromancy. He eventually makes a deal with Lucifer (commonly referred to as the "Faustian bargain"), whereby he exchanges his soul for twenty-four years of the devil's service to him. In the next twenty-four years, Faustus obtains all kinds of knowledge and power through his devil-servant, Mephistophilis. They travel all over the world, playing practical jokes on peasants and even the Pope, displaying magical powers to the emperor and the nobility; Faustus wishes and whims are played out in his various adventures. At times Faustus experiences doubt and despair over having sold his soul to the devil. He comes close to repenting at several crucial points in the story, but never follows through. Even to the end, Faustus refuses to fully repent, and he is eventually taken by the devils to hell. The character of Faustus comes from a well-known legend of a German physician who reported sold his soul to the devil in exchange for magical powers. In Marlowe's rendition, he is portrayed as a tragic hero in that his unbridled ambitions lead him to an unfortunate end. But at a deeper level, the tragedy is twofold. First, there is a clear devolvement of his character, from a confident, ambitious scholar, to a self-satisfied, low-level practical joker. Although he makes a name for himself as an expert magician, Faustus never accomplishes the lofty goals he initially sets for himself. Second, there are times when Faustus despairs over his decision and comes close to repenting, only to back away at the last moment. On the other hand, Faustus can be seen as a hero in that he rejects God's authority and determines his own course of life. Faustus is the paragon of the Renaissance Man—turning away from the religious strictures of the Medieval Age (God-centeredness) in favor of the enlightened age of reason and human achievement (man-centeredness).

**Wagner:** Faustus' servant and eventual heir of his fortunes, Wagner is a pale reflection of Faustus; he displays a nature similar to his master, even trying to obtain his own servant through the practice of magic. Wagner's background is not known, but it is clear from his language and demeanor that he is a young servant who looks up to Faustus. Wagner tries to imitate Faustus in many ways, in the way he talks and even in his taking up of magic. Wagner is Faustus' image-bearing progeny. That he inherits Faustus' fortunes suggests he might even be of physical progeny. At several points, Wagner acts as a narrator, filling in gaps in the story.

**Good Angel:** An agent of God who appears in pair with the Evil Angel, the Good Angel tries to make Faustus think about God and of heavenly things. The Good Angel represents the good side in the good/evil dichotomy. In a literary sense, the Good Angel reflects the good side of Faustus' conscience, for Marlowe tries to show that Faustus, like every human being, has two natures, both good and bad. What the Good Angel says mirrors what Faustus' good nature is thinking. Thus, the interchanges between the Good Angel and the Evil Angel reveal Faustus' inner struggles with himself. The Good Angel's main message to Faustus is that it is never too late to turn to God.



**Evil Angel:** An agent of Lucifer who appears in pair with the Good Angel, the Evil Angel tries to keep Faustus focused on power, wealth, and worldly pleasures. In direct contrast to the Good Angel, the Evil Angel represents the evil side in the good/evil dichotomy. In a literary sense, the Evil Angel reflects the evil side of Faustus' conscience, for Marlowe tries to show that Faustus, like every human being, has two natures, both good and bad. What the Evil Angel says mirrors what Faustus' evil nature is thinking. Thus, the interchanges between the Good Angel and the Evil Angel reveal Faustus' inner struggles with himself. The Evil Angel main message to Faustus is that God will not accept his repentance.

**Mephistophilis:** The devil that appears before Faustus, Mephistophilis makes the deal where he is to serve Faustus for twenty-four years in exchange for Faustus' soul. Mephistophilis is the main antagonist in the story, but he is also a conflicted character in his own right. As part of the rebellion of heaven, Mephistophilis was cast out with the other angels and sent to hell. When Faustus inquires about hell, Mephistophilis admits that he regrets forgoing the joys of heaven for the torment of hell. Mephistophilis tries to talk Faustus out of making a pact with Lucifer. But when Faustus makes the deal, Mephistophilis dutifully fulfills Faustus' wishes, whims, and desires for the next twenty-four years. Although Mephistophilis warns Faustus about the torments of hell, once the deal is made, Mephistophilis uses his power and cunning to prevent Faustus from repenting.

**Lucifer:** The Prince of the devils, Lucifer was once an angel of God who was cast out of heaven with other rebel angels because of their pride and insolence. Lucifer authorizes the deal between Faustus and Mephistophilis. If Mephistophilis is a conflicted devil, Lucifer shows no such weaknesses or signs of remorse for having been cast out of heaven. When Faustus cries upon the name of Christ, Lucifer comes, as though Mephistophilis is not crafty enough in such urgent cases. Lucifer masterly prevents Faustus from turning back to God at key points in the story.

### Minor Characters

**Chorus:** A stage and literary device associated with Greek tragedy, the Chorus narrates and fills in parts of the story.

**Valdes and Cornelius:** Friends of Faustus, they are reputed to be practitioners of magic. Faustus calls on them to teach him the black arts. Valdes and Cornelius tell Faustus that with his wit, he will be powerful, and together they will be famous all over the world.

**Two scholars:** Faustus' fellow colleagues at the university, they are concerned that he has not been around. They ask Wagner about Faustus' whereabouts. When they find out Faustus has been with Valdes and Cornelius, they decide to tell the Rector of the university.

**Belzebub:** A companion prince of Lucifer, Faustus refers to Belzebub when he denounces God.



**Clown:** A poor, beggar-like character, the Clown is threatened by Wagner to be his servant. When the clown refuses, Wagner conjures up some spirits to scare him. The Clown follows Wagner, but asks Wagner to teach him magic.

**Baliol and Belcher:** Two spirits that Wagner conjures up to scare the Clown into serving him, Baliol and Belcher is a he-devil and a she-devil respectively.

**Seven Deadly Sins:** At the behest of Lucifer, Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery appear before Faustus. Faustus is delighted by their presence.

**Pope:** Faustus intrudes upon the Pope's privy-chamber and creates havoc, even hitting the Pope on the head.

**Cardinal of Lorrain:** The Pope's guest when Faustus enters the privy-chamber, the Cardinal thinks the invisible Faustus is a ghost from purgatory.

**Emperor Carolus the Fifth:** Faustus visits the German Emperor, Carolus the Fifth, who makes a request to see Alexander the Great and his paramour in person.

**Robin the Ostler:** An employee of an inn, Robin steals one of Faustus' magic books and makes Mephistophilis appear. He is turned into an ape by Mephistophilis.

**Ralph:** A fellow employee with Robin at the inn, Robin is turned into a dog by Mephistophilis.

**Vintner:** The Vintner, a wine merchant, comes to collect from Robin a silver goblet that is owed him. Robin tries to elude the Vintner by conjuring up a spirit, but it backfires.

**Knight:** The Knight, who serves in the court of Emperor Carolus the Fifth, is skeptical about Faustus' magical powers. In spite, Faustus makes horns grow on his head.

**Alexander the Great:** Alexander the Great, the famous Macedonian conqueror, and his Paramour are the two figures of the past that the Emperor Carolus the Fifth wants Faustus to produce.

**Paramour:** Emperor Carolus the Fifth is curious to know if Alexander the Great's lover, the Paramour, has a mole or a wart on her neck.

**Horse-Courser:** The Horse-Courser purchases a horse from Faustus. He is warned by Faustus not to ride the horse through water, but does not listen. When the Horse-Courser rides into water, the horse turns into a bottle of hay. The Horse-Courser tries to get Faustus' attention by pulling on his leg while he is sleeping. But Faustus plays a joke on him by making his leg fall off, scaring the Horse-Courser away.

**Duke of Vanholt:** Faustus visits the court of the Duke of Vanholt. The Duke is impressed with Faustus' magical powers.



**Duchess of Vanholt:** The Duchess of Vanholt, who is pregnant, desires ripe grapes in the dead of winter. Faustus is able to get her the best grapes she has ever had. The Duke and Duchess agree to reward Faustus handsomely.

**Helen of Troy:** The figure over which the Trojan War was fought, Helen of Troy is deemed to be the most admirable beauty in history. Faustus makes her appear before his colleagues. Faustus' last request to Mephistophilis is to have Helen of Troy as his lover.

**Old Man:** The Old Man appears to Faustus in order to convince him to repent and turn to God. A contrast to Faustus, the Old Man keeps his faith even through persecution from devils.



## Objects/Places

**Rhodes:** The city of Faustus' birth.

**Wittenberg:** The city where Faustus goes to study, Wittenberg is located in Northern Germany. At the time of Marlowe's writing, the University of Wittenberg was renowned for its theological faculty, as Martin Luther once taught there. Faustus is a professor of divinity (theology) at the university in Wittenberg.

**necromancy:** The practice of summoning the spirits, it is also referred to as black magic.

**Trinity:** The theological reference to the three-fold personhood of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the blaspheming of the Trinity, Mephistophilis cites, is the fastest way for one to make a devil appear. Mephistophilis admits he came to Faustus with the hope of obtaining his soul for hell.

**blood:** Faustus is commanded to write the deed with his own blood. Faustus "sheds" his blood and gives up his life (soul) to Lucifer, just as Christ shed his blood and gave up his life on the cross. Faustus, after signing the deed with his blood, even quotes Jesus' words on the cross: "It is finished." As he despairs over his soul, Faustus acknowledges that even a half drop of Christ's blood can save him.



## Quotes

Quote 1: "The reward of sin is death." That's hard...(the following verse in Latin)...If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us." Why then, belike we must sin and so consequently die. Ay, we must die an everlasting death. What doctrine call you this, *Che sera sera*, 'What will be shall be?' Divinity, adieu!" Scene 1, p. 4

Quote 2: "O what a world of profit and delight, of power, of honour, and omnipotence is promis'd to the studious artisan!" Scene 1, pg. 5

Quote 3: "For when we hear one rack the name of God, abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ, we fly in hope to get his glorious soul; nor will we come, unless he use such means whereby he is in danger to be damn'd: Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring is stoutly to abjure the Trinity, and pray devoutly to the Prince of Hell." Scene 3, pg. 13-14

Quote 4: "To God?-He loves thee not. The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite..." Scene 5, pg. 19

Quote 5: "My heart's so hard'ned I cannot repent. Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven, but fearful echoes thunder in mine ears, 'Faustus, thou art damn'd!'" Scene 6, pg. 25

Quote 6: "What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemn'd to die? Thy fatal time doth draw to final end; Despair doth drive distrust unto my thoughts: Confound these passions with a quiet sleep: Tush, Christ did call the thief upon the cross; Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit." Scene 11, pg. 45

Quote 7: "Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium? Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. Her lips suck forth my soul; see where it flies!-Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again. Here will I dwell, for Heaven be in these lips, and all is dross that is not Helena." Scene 13, pg. 52

Quote 8: "My faith, vile hell, shall triumph over thee. Ambitious fiends! See how the heavens smiles at your repulse, and laughs your state to scorn! Hence, hell! For hence I fly unto my God." Scene 13, pg. 52

Quote 9: "The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike, the Devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd. O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down? See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament! One drop would save my soul-Half a drop: ah, my Christ! Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ! Yet will I call on him: O spare me, Lucifer!" Scene 14, pg. 55



# Topic Tracking: Duality of Man

## Prologue

Duality of Man 1: Faustus is a doctor of divinity. But despite his great knowledge about the nature of God, he finds the dark powers of magic alluring. Ironically, it is his dissatisfaction with the limits of his knowledge of God that tempts Faustus to seek knowledge forbidden by God.

## Scene 1

Duality of Man 2: Even as Faustus rejects the study of the academic disciplines, he realizes the limitations of man, especially the inevitable reality of death. In the bible, he finds that the reward for sin is death. For Faustus, it is difficult for him to reconcile the reality of death with his vague theological notions of eternal life; thus, he rejects divinity altogether.

Duality of Man 3: The Good Angel and the Evil Angel represent the voices of good and evil. As a literary device, the contrasts of the two angels reveal Faustus' internal struggles and the conflict between choosing what is right (soul or conscience) and following his fleshly (body) desires.

## Scene 5

Duality of Man 4: Faustus begins to waver, as he hears a voice telling him to turn to God again. But Faustus flips the condition on its head by convincing himself that God does not love him, therefore, he will serve the god that truly loves him—his own appetite. Faustus' fleshly desires overcome his spiritual struggles.

Duality of Man 5: Just when Faustus seems to be focused on wealth and earthly desires, he continues to come back to supernatural matters. After having signed over his soul and body in blood, the first question he asks Mephistophilis is about hell. Even though Mephistophilis confirms the reality of hell, Faustus refuses to believe in it.

## Scene 6

Duality of Man 6: Faustus contradicts himself many times. Before, he rebukes Mephistophilis for regretting having been cast out of heaven. This time, he accuses Mephistophilis of depriving him of the joys of heaven. Within a short time span, Faustus' soul moves back and forth between repenting before God and rejecting God.

## Scene 13

Duality of Man 7: Here, there is not only a distinction between man's body and soul, but even in the way the two are treated. The devils can afflict a person's body, but they cannot touch the soul. The Old Man knows this, and therefore, he is confident that even



though he might be persecuted in body, his soul will be able to stand against the devils if he remains strong in his faith.

**Scene 14**

Duality of Man 8: Faustus admits that his life of sin has taken its toll on both his body and soul. Not only is his body old and weary, but his soul has been tarnished to the point where Faustus feels he cannot repent.



# Topic Tracking: Hubris

## Prologue

Hubris 1: Even in the prologue, the chorus refers to Faustus' pride as his major character trait, even making an allusion to the ancient Greek tragedy of Daedalus and Icarus, where Icarus, while flying with waxen wings, defies his father's warning and gets too close to the sun, plunging to his death.

## Scene 1

Hubris 2: Valdes and Cornelius act as feeders of Faustus' ego by proclaiming that he has a great mind for magic, that once he gets a feel for it, he will surpass their expertise and become renowned and powerful for his skills. They profess no limitations, but only boundless opportunities. Faustus happily and greedily accepts such praise. They have made him so excited that he wishes to start that very night.

## Scene 2

Hubris 3: Faustus' chief characteristic can be further assessed through the character of the people he influences, namely, his servant Wagner. As if begotten of Faustus, Wagner acts and speaks with an air of sophistication to the two scholars. Wagner's attitude echoes that of Faustus'. Furthermore, the fact that one of the scholars thinks that Faustus cannot be dissuaded suggests that he is known to be stubborn and difficult to control.

## Scene 3

Hubris 4: Faustus believes that his powers and skills in magic allowed him to command even a devil. Faustus' confidence in himself is growing.

Hubris 5: Mephistophilis reveals that Lucifer was once a dearly beloved angel of God, but was cast down to hell because of his "aspiring pride and insolence." Having experienced the agonies of hell, Mephistophilis tries to dissuade Faustus, but he does not listen. In fact, Faustus rebukes Mephistophilis for not being as defiant as he. Faustus has reached a level of arrogant defiance against God that surpasses even a devil.

## Scene 4

Hubris 6: There is a development in Wagner's character that sheds light on what he is learning from his master. As Faustus makes a bargain with the devil, Wagner now goes off looking for his own servant. He makes the clown follow him by a display of magic that he somehow learns from Faustus. In his encounter with the two scholars, Wagner was arrogant in speech. Here, his arrogance has grown. He is arrogant in action.

## Scene 6



Hubris 7: Faustus is close to repenting, but almost commits the ultimate act of hubris-believing that he is beyond the point of repentance. The Good Angel says that it is never too late to call on the name of Christ. Faustus relents by calling on Christ, but Lucifer steps in to prevent full repentance. Faustus vows to burn the Scriptures, a conspicuous act of rejecting God.

### **Scene 7**

Hubris 8: Faustus uses his powers to travel around the world. But he requests to invade the Pope's privy-chamber to play a practical joke on the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church. Faustus has complete disregard for the religious establishment.

### **Scene 9**

Hubris 9: Robin and Ralph use the stolen magic book to conjure Mephistophilis. This scene serves as comic relief, but it also parodies Faustus' use of magic. It is understandable that Robin and Ralph would use magic for such lowly activities, but Faustus' use of it is not much nobler, although he thinks he is great because of the power and notoriety he receives.

### **Scene 10**

Hubris 10: Faustus' confrontation with the Knight shows the pettiness of his arrogance. Faustus puts horns on the head of the Knight because the Knight had doubted his powers. Faustus makes a point that knowledge (being a scholar) is more powerful than the sword (a knight).

### **Scene 13**

Hubris 11: Rather than heed the words of the Old Man, Faustus chooses the ultimate act of hubris-killing oneself instead of repenting. The Old Man convinces him not to go through with it.

### **Scene 14**

Hubris 12: The Chorus ends the story by restating what it proclaimed at the beginning-that Faustus' fall was the result of overstepping the God-given boundaries of man.



# Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance

## Scene 1

Sin & Repentance 1: Faustus reads a bible passage on sin and its consequence, death. If all men sin and must die, thinks Faustus, then it is best to live on earth as one desires. By casting aside the bible to embrace books on magic, Faustus rejects the prospects of salvation in order to invite the punishment of sin, death.

Sin & Repentance 2: The Good Angel continually encourages Faustus to repent and seek salvation. The Evil Angel tries to turn Faustus away from God by keeping him interested in magic. Throughout the story, the two angels battle for Faustus' soul.

## Scene 3

Sin & Repentance 3: Mephistophilis says he came mainly because he heard Faustus blaspheme the name of God. When he hears men say such things, he comes opportunistically to claim their souls to hell. The quickest way to be damned, Mephistophilis confesses, is to forswear the Trinity. Faustus is unaffected. Instead, he dismisses hell as an old wives tale, and makes a bargain with the devil, thereby rejecting God (salvation) in the most conspicuous way.

## Scene 5

Sin & Repentance 4: Faustus considers contrition, prayer, and repentance, but eventually rejects them. As he has turned away from thoughts of heavenly things, he wonders about the kingdom of hell and why Lucifer would want his soul. Mephistophilis explains that Lucifer wants to enlarge his kingdom. When Faustus tries to sign the deed in blood, the wound on his arm congeals, which makes him pause and consider whether to continue. But he decides to go through with it, and with a sense of defiant irony, says "It is finished," the same words Jesus says on the cross before he dies (John 19:30). Faustus has essentially killed his spiritual self for the glories of the earth. An inscription on his arm appears, warning Faustus to flee, but Mephistophilis distracts Faustus with a promenade of worldly things.

## Scene 6

Sin & Repentance 5: Faustus comes close to repentance when he calls on the name of Christ, but Lucifer interferes and reminds Faustus to keep his promise of not bringing up anything related to God. Then, Faustus is interrupted from thoughts of repentance by the Seven Deadly Sins.

## Scene 11

Sin & Repentance 6: As Faustus realizes that he is near death, he begins to think again about whether he can be forgiven. With the thought that Jesus forgave the thief even on the cross, Faustus falls asleep.



### **Scene 13**

Sin & Repentance 7: Faustus takes a step toward repentance, but still hesitates to fully trust in the mercy of God. Before he can fully repent, Mephistophilis comes to stop him. Faustus misses another chance and instead, repents to Lucifer for turning from his vow. In another ironic gesture, Faustus damns the Old Man for trying to turn him away from Lucifer.

Sin & Repentance 8: The Old Man stands in contrast to Faustus. Even as devils come to torment him, the Old Man remains steadfast in faith. He heeds the words that appeared on Faustus' arm-Man, fly! He flies unto the arms of God.

### **Scene 14**

Sin & Repentance 9: As the time draws near for his departure from the world, Faustus regrets living his life as he did. Even at the last hour, he wishes he was a beast or a drop of water so as to avoid eternal damnation.



## Prologue (Chorus)

The Chorus enters to introduce the play to the audience, stating that the story is not of battles or love or kings, but the person of Faustus. He is born to lowly parents in the German town of Rhodes and goes off to study at Wittenberg, where he is brought up by a kinsman. Faustus is naturally gifted in divinity and is soon made a doctor. He is without equal when it comes to discussing theology, but his great learning makes him proud and full of self-conceit. The Chorus alludes to Faustus' "waxen wings," symbolic of his attempts to reach beyond the limits of knowledge by practicing in "cursed necromancy," or black magic.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 1

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 1



# Scene 1

Faustus is in his study preparing his teaching materials. Although a professor of divinity, he seeks to plumb the depths of every academic discipline. He examines Aristotle and logic; he has already mastered it. Galen and medicine too. Faustus, although a reputed physician, is dissatisfied with medicine because he cannot make men live forever. Justinian and law is deemed too petty. When it comes down to it, divinity is most worthy of his great mind. He reads from Jerome's bible.

*"The reward of sin is death." That's hard.*

*"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us." Why then, belike we must sin and so consequently die.*

*Ay, we must die an everlasting death.*

*What doctrine call you this, Che sera sera,*

*"What will be shall be?" Divinity, adieu! Scene 1, p. 4*

He finds the bible passages difficult to accept. Why must men sin and inevitably die? He casts off the bible and embraces books on black magic.

*"O what a world of profit and delight,*

*Of power, of honour, and omnipotence*

*Is promis'd to the studious artisan!" Scene 1, pg. 5*

Faustus concludes that the practice of magic will bring him what he wants in life-to be a god. He asks his servant, Wagner, to summon his friends, Valdes and Cornelius, so that he can consult with them about magic.

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 1

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 2

While Faustus waits for his friends, the Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear (on stage, Faustus is oblivious of their presence). The Good Angel reproves Faustus for reading magic books and beckons him to read the bible instead. The Evil Angel encourages Faustus in his pursuit of power over through the practice of magic. Meanwhile, Faustus entertains thoughts of what he will do with such powers-he would pursue wealth and knowledge; he would revive Germany and reign over all its provinces.

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 3

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 2

Upon the arrival of Valdes and Cornelius, Faustus accepts their previous offer to study magic together. He expresses his personal attraction to magic, which he fancies over philosophy, law, physics, and the dreadful subject, divinity. With Faustus' great mind, proclaims Valdes, they will be able to harness the powers of black magic and have the world at their feet. Cornelius adds that since Faustus is already gifted in all that magic



requires, he will desire to know nothing else once he gets a taste of what magic can do. Convinced, Faustus asks that they go to some grove so he could learn and practice this craft. Valdes and Cornelius agree to instruct him in the basics so that he can try some on his own later. Faustus is eager to try it out that very night.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 2

## Scene 2: Before Faustus' House

Two scholars, both Faustus' colleagues at the university, wonder why he has not been at school. Upon spotting Wagner, they ask him about Faustus' whereabouts. Wagner is artful and evasive with his answer, but finally tells them that his master is at dinner with Valdes and Cornelius. The two scholars note how Valdes and Cornelius are infamous for their involvement with black magic. One of them suggests they go tell the rector of the university so that he can dissuade Faustus. The other fears that Faustus is already beyond the point of dissuasion.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 3



## Scene 3: A Grove

At a grove, Faustus begins his incantations. He draws a circle, writes the names of holy saints in different sequences, and analyzes the movement of the stars and planets. He offers spells that profane the name of Jehovah and the cross in hopes of conjuring the devil, Mephistophilis. Indeed, Mephistophilis appears, but Faustus is disgusted by his hideous appearance. He orders it to go away and change into the form of a Franciscan friar before returning. When Mephistophilis goes away, Faustus is proud that he has made a devil obey his very words. He commends himself for his powers and skills.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 4

Mephistophilis re-enters and asks what he can do. Faustus asks Mephistophilis to be his servant, to do whatever he commands. Mephistophilis replies that he is servant only to the great Lucifer; he cannot do anything without his master's permission. Faustus wonders, had not Lucifer sent Mephistophilis to him. And was it not Faustus' incantations that caused Mephistophilis to appear? Mephistophilis answers that he came not necessarily because of the spells, but from having heard Faustus blaspheme the name of God. Mephistophilis explains:

*"For when we hear one rack the name of God,  
Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,  
We fly in hope to get his glorious soul;  
Nor will we come, unless he use such means  
Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd:  
Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring  
Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity,  
And pray devoutly to the Prince of Hell."* Scene 3, pg. 12-13

Faustus is undaunted. He professes his allegiance to Belzebub and his indifference to hell. Instead, he desires to rise above the trivial lives of men. He asks about Lucifer, the commander of all spirits, and it is revealed that he was once a dearly loved angel of God, but fell because of his "aspiring pride and insolence" for which God cast him from heaven (p. 14). Mephistophilis is one of the angels who conspired with Lucifer and was damned to hell. Faustus asks how Mephistophilis is now outside of hell. In a rare moment of soul-baring, Mephistophilis acknowledges that he is constantly in a state of hell, which is far inferior to the bliss of heaven. Mephistophilis even tries to dissuade Faustus from his demands, but to no avail. Faustus challenges Mephistophilis to be as courageous as he is in defying God. Faustus then gives this message for Mephistophilis to take back to Lucifer: His very own soul in exchange for twenty-four years of the devil's service to him. When Mephistophilis leaves, Faustus imagines himself ruling the world. While he waits to hear back from Mephistophilis, Faustus thinks about magic.

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 3

Topic Tracking: Hubris 5



## Scene 4: A Street

Wagner encounters a poor clown with whom he holds a conversation. Wagner supposes that the clown is so hungry he would probably give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton. The clown replies in jest that for such a great price, it would have to be a well-roasted mutton with good sauce. Wagner asks the clown to serve him for seven years. The clown does not take Wagner seriously. Wagner then warns the clown that he will summon two devils, Baliol and Belcher; still, the clown is impudent until he sees the two devils appear. He runs around crying so Wagner orders the spirits away. The clown notes how he recognized one as a he-devil-by its horns, and the other a she-devil-by its clifts and cloven feet. Having proven himself, Wagner orders the clown to follow him. The clown concedes, but begs Wagner to teach him how to call up the spirits. Wagner agrees to teach him how to turn himself into animals. Instead of animals, the clown insists, he would prefer to be turned into a flea so that he could go everywhere. Wagner bids him to follow with his eyes to the ground and even insists the clown call him, "Master Wagner."

Topic Tracking: Hubris 6



## Scene 5

Faustus is in his study deep in despair because of his thoughts about God and heaven. So as not to waver in his decision, Faustus convinces himself to forget about such things and be resolute about his decision. But he hears something in his hear telling him to turn to God again. Faustus, however, recommits himself in his decision:

*"To God?-He loves thee not-  
The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite,"* Scene 5, pg. 19

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 4

The Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear again. The Good Angel urges Faustus to turn away from black magic. Faustus considers the acts of contrition, prayer, and repentance, and concludes that they are merely foolishness. While the Good Angel appeals to Faustus to think of heavenly things, the Evil Angel counters by encouraging Faustus to think about honor and wealth. Both angels then exit.

Picking up on the words of the Evil Angel, Faustus begins to think about wealth and how great things would be if Mephistophilis served him. He calls for Mephistophilis to come quickly with news from Lucifer. Mephistophilis enters and tells Faustus that he will indeed serve him, but Faustus must first write a deed with his own blood. Faustus asks why Lucifer would want his soul and Mephistophilis answers candidly that it enlarges Lucifer's kingdom, as "misery loves company" (p. 20). Faustus has more questions about hell, but Mephistophilis distracts Faustus by urging him to prick his arm and seal the agreement. Faustus obeys, but when he tries to write, the blood on his arm congeals so that he cannot go on. Mephistophilis quickly goes off to get some fire to open the wound again. While Mephistophilis is away, Faustus wonders if the congealment of his blood is a sign that he should not continue. Mephistophilis re-enters with some coals, and as an aside, he says slyly (to the audience) how he will do anything to obtain Faustus' soul. Faustus writes the deed and says in Latin, "*Consummatum est*," it is finished. As soon as he signs over his soul to Lucifer, there appears an inscription on his arm-*Homo, fuge!*-Man, fly! Faustus wonders if his eyes are deceiving him, but it is clearly written on his arm. Is it a sign from God to turn back to him? Faustus wonders.

Mephistophilis loses no time in disappearing and reappearing with some other devils to distract Faustus with displays of crowns, rich apparel, and dancing. Faustus asks Mephistophilis whether he can call up the spirits as he pleases. Mephistophilis promises this and more, whereupon Faustus reads the contract he has written, stipulating five conditions: first, that Faustus be a spirit in form and substance; second, that Mephistophilis be his servant at his command; third, that Mephistophilis brings him whatever he desires; fourth, that he (Mephistophilis) shall be in his chamber or house invisible; and fifth, that he shall appear to Faustus in what form or shape at all times. In exchange, Faustus gives both body and soul to Lucifer, Prince of the East, and his



minister Mephistophilis; after twenty-four years, they are allowed to carry Faustus' body and soul to their habitation.

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 4

After receiving the deed, Mephistophilis asks Faustus what he wants. Faustus' first question is about hell-where is it? Mephistophilis explains that hell is where devils like him are tortured forever, that in the end times, hell will be all that is not heaven. Faustus does not believe in life after death and considers hell to be an old wives' tale.

Mephistophilis points to himself as proof of hell's existence. But Faustus thinks that if hell affords the freedom to walk about doing things like Mephistophilis, then he will gladly be damned. He then asks for the fairest maiden in Germany to have as a wife. Mephistophilis tries to discourage Faustus, but without success. Because of Faustus' insistence, Mephistophilis goes off and returns with a devil dressed like a woman.

Faustus is repulsed. Mephistophilis explains that marriage is just ceremonial, and that Faustus should not think about it. Rather, he can have a different woman every morning. Mephistophilis offers Faustus a book of spells that can create gold, control weather, and bring forth men in armor. Faustus asks Mephistophilis for a book that can raise spirits, a book that shows the motions of the heavenly bodies, and a book that shows all the plants on the earth.

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 5



## Scene 6: The Same

Deep down in his heart, Faustus begins to regret making the deal and accuses Mephistophilis of depriving him of the joys of heaven. Mephistophilis tells him that man is more glorious than heaven because it was made for man. It follows then, argues Faustus, that if heaven was made for man, it was made for him. He wants to turn away from magic and repent.

The Good Angel and Evil Angel enter again. The Good Angel urges Faustus to repent, for God will forgive him. The Evil Angel claims that God cannot pity him. It seems Faustus hears what the Evil Angel says, but tells himself that even if he were a devil, God will pity him if he repents. The Evil Angel presumes that Faustus will never repent. The two angels exit. Faustus says:

*"My heart's so hard'ned I cannot repent.  
Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,  
But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears  
'Faustus, thou art damn'd!'"* Scene 6, pg. 25

Perhaps he should have killed himself before gaining the power's bestowed upon him. Faustus is somehow able to pull himself out of despair, resolving never to repent. He begins to question Mephistophilis about astrology and Mephistophilis obliges by giving him answers. But Faustus knows that the answers to his questions are elementary. Faustus then challenges Mephistophilis by asking who made the world. Mephistophilis refuses to answer because he is not allowed to talk about God, the Creator. Faustus' mind reverts to thoughts about God and he is troubled once more.

The Good Angel and Evil Angel again appear. The Evil Angel claims it is too late to repent, that if he repents, devils will come and kill Faustus. The Good Angel claims it is never too late to repent, that if Faustus repents, no devil can harm him. They exit.

Faustus calls on the name of Christ to save his soul. Just then, Lucifer, Belzebub, and Mephistophilis enter. Lucifer explains that Christ cannot save his soul. Faustus asks about his identity, and Lucifer introduces himself and his companion, Belzebub, as princes of hell. Faustus thinks they have come to take away his soul. Lucifer claims they have come only because Faustus has broken his promise by calling on Christ. Lucifer tells Faustus to think of the devil, not God. Faustus promises not to think of heaven, or call on the name of God. He even vows to burn the Scriptures.

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 6

Topic Tracking: Hubris 7

Lucifer is quite pleased. He tells Faustus that they will entertain him with the display of the Seven Deadly Sins. Faustus is delighted as he watches each of the Seven Deadly Sins appear:



Pride claims to be like a flea, able to climb all over a wench. Then complaining of a smell, he vows to speak no more. Covetousness wishes the house and all in it were turned to gold so he can keep it locked up in his chest. Wrath tells Faustus that after having leapt out of a lion's mouth (he was born in hell) he has been all over the world, wielding a pair of rapiers. Envy wishes all books were burnt because he cannot read and that there would be famine so he can live alone and be fat. He complains that others are sitting, while he is standing. Gluttony complains that he has only enough money for thirty meals a day. He speaks of his ancestors-all having some name synonymous with food. Sloth gripes about having been called away from his life of lying on a sunny bank. Finally, Lechery (apparently a female characterization) parades around and makes a suggestive comment about being full of lust. Lucifer quickly sends them away to hell and the Sins exit.

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 5

Lucifer asks if Faustus likes the show. Faustus answers that it feeds his soul and wonders if he can visit hell. Lucifer promises to send for him at midnight. He gives Faustus a spell book that shows how one can turn into any shape. Faustus thanks Lucifer and bids him farewell. Wagner enters to narrate some of Faustus' adventures. He then introduces what Faustus will do next-visit the Pope in Rome.



## Scene 7: The Pope's Privy-chamber

Faustus recounts all the places Mephistophilis has taken him—from mountaintops to rivers and lakes, to splendid sites of European cities. Now, they have ended up in the Pope's privy-chamber. Mephistophilis declares the majesty of Rome. Faustus is eager to see its sites, but Mephistophilis convinces him to stay and take part in the holy celebrations of Peter's feast. Faustus, eager for some merriment, asks to be made invisible.

At the sounding of the trumpet, the Pope, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and some friars enter. An invisible Faustus begins to speak and the Pope wonders where the sound is coming from. The Pope tries to pass a dish to the Cardinal but Faustus intercepts it. The Pope passes another dish; this too, Faustus takes. The Pope offers a cup, which Faustus promptly snatches away. The Cardinal presumes the culprit to be some ghost from purgatory, seeking pardon from the Pope. The Pope commands the friars to sing a dirge to drive the ghost away. When the Pope makes a sign of the cross, Faustus warns him not to do it again. After the Pope does it a third time, Faustus hits him on the head. Faustus and Mephistophilis run away with glee.

The friars enter to sing the dirge. While they are singing, Mephistophilis and Faustus beat them and throw fireworks at them.

The Chorus enters to tell how Faustus went back home and became famous throughout the land because of his great knowledge and wit. He became known even to the Emperor Carolus the Fifth.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 8

## Scene 8: An Inn-Yard

Robin the Ostler enters, having stolen one of Faustus' conjuring books. He is excited about the prospects of using magical powers to fulfill his lustful desires.

His friend, Ralph, calls for him, telling Robin that a gentleman at the inn wants his horse cleaned. Robin tells him to keep out. Ralph wonders what Robin is doing with a book since he cannot read. Robin tells Ralph that with this book of magic, he can get him all the drink he wants. And he can make the kitchenmaid serve him in any way. Ralph is excited and they make plans to use the book of spells later.

## Scene 9: An Inn

Robin and Ralph enter with a silver goblet. The Vintner enters and asks to get the silver goblet back. While the Vintner searches them, Robin begins to conjure the spirits. Mephistophilis enters and puts fireworks on the backs of Robin and Ralph, then exits. The fireworks make them run around and it is revealed that they have the silver goblet. Ralph gives the silver goblet to the Vintner and the Vintner exits. Mephistophilis re-enters and chastises the two fools for using the magic book. He turns Robin into an ape and Ralph into a dog.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 9



## Scene 10: The Court of the Emperor

Emperor Carolus the Fifth enters with Faustus, a Knight, and some attendants. The Emperor tells Faustus about the intriguing reports he has heard about his powers and wishes to see a demonstration. The Knight, as an aside, sarcastically notes that Faustus looks like a conjuror. Faustus asks the Emperor what he will have him do. The Emperor expresses his desire to see Alexander the Great and his Paramour as they were in their time. Faustus confesses he cannot raise their actual bodies, but spirits that only resemble them. The Knight refuses to believe Faustus can do what he says and leaves. Mephistophilis enters with two spirits resembling Alexander the Great and his Paramour. The Emperor is curious to see whether the Paramour has a wart or mole on her neck. Because of their authentic look, the Emperor believes that the spirits are the actual bodies of the two. Faustus asks the Emperor to call for the skeptical Knight. The Knight enters with a pair of horns on his head (Faustus' revenge for a sarcastic remark made by the Knight about being turned into a stag). The Knight demands Faustus undo what he had done. Faustus obliges only at the request of the Emperor, but warns the Knight to "speak well of scholars" (p. 41). He then commands Mephistophilis to remove the horns. The Emperor tells Faustus that he will receive a handsome reward for his exploits.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 10



## Scene 11: A Green; Afterwards, the House of Faustus

Having grown old, Faustus asks Mephistophilis to take him back to Wittenberg.

A Horse-Courser comes to buy a horse from Faustus. Faustus sells it to him, but warns him not to ride the horse into water. The Horse-Courser determines that if the horse is not up to quality, he will be back. He exits.

Before falling asleep on his chair Faustus tells himself:

*"What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemn'd to die? Thy fatal time doth draw to final end; Despair doth drive distrust unto my thoughts: Confound these passions with a quiet sleep: Tush, Christ did call the thief upon the cross; Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit."* Scene 11, pg. 45

The Horse-Courser re-enters, all wet. He demands to speak with Faustus because he had ridden the horse into water and it turned into a bundle of hay. Mephistophilis tries to forbid him from waking Faustus. But the Horse-Courser makes his way through and pulls Faustus by the leg. The leg comes off, thereby scaring the Horse-Courser off. Faustus has another leg appear. He and Mephistophilis enjoy a good laugh.

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 6

Wagner enters and announces that the Duke of Vanholt wishes to see Faustus.



## Scene 12: The Court of the Duke of Vanholt

Faustus and Mephistophilis enter with the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt. Faustus asks the pregnant Duchess what she so desires. She longs for ripe grapes, which are out of season because it is the dead of winter. Mephistophilis goes away and comes back with grapes. The Duke asks how Faustus got the grapes, and he explains how with his swift spirit, he was able to fetch grapes on the other side of the globe, where it is summer. The Duchess tastes the grapes and declares them the best she has ever tasted. The Duke commends Faustus for being so learned and kind and promises him rewards.



## Scene 13: A Room in the House of Faustus

Wagner believes his master is near death for he has bequeathed all his goods to him. But Wagner is upset that his master continues to drink and banquet with his colleagues, something he has never experienced before. Faustus enters with some fellow scholars.

One of the scholars convey how in their discussion about fair ladies, they chose Helen of Troy as the most admirable. He asks for the privilege to see her in person. Faustus honors the request. He makes Helen of Troy appear and the scholars are quite taken by her beauty.

An Old Man enters and dismisses the scholars. When they are alone, the Old Man pleads with Faustus to repent and be washed by the blood of the Savior, Christ. Faustus, realizing that he will soon meet his end, wonders whether it is better to kill himself (Mephistophilis provides him a dagger). The Old Man stops Faustus by telling him that he sees an angel over his head. He tells Faustus that God's mercy is still available to him. Faustus asks to be left alone to think on it. The Old Man leaves with a heavy heart, fearing that Faustus will not listen to him.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 11

Faustus repents, but only partially. He feels the tension between hell and grace pulling at his heart. Just then, Mephistophilis comes to warn Faustus that if he repents, he will tear him to pieces. Faustus asks for forgiveness from Lucifer, even offering to reaffirm his vow by writing the deed with his blood again. Faustus pricks his arm and rewrites the vow, while cursing the Old Man for trying to dissuade him from his destiny. Mephistophilis admits he cannot touch the Old Man's soul because of his great faith, but promises to afflict the Old Man's body.

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 7

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 7

Faustus asks Mephistophilis one more thing-to have Helen of Troy as his lover. Upon seeing Helen of Troy appear, Faustus exclaims:

*"Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium? Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. Her lips suck forth my soul; see where it flies!-Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again. Here will I dwell, for Heaven be in these lips, and all is dross that is not Helena." Scene 13, pg. 52*

Faustus, seduced by Helen's beauty, forgets about repentance. The Old Man appears and pities Faustus for rejecting heaven. As devils come to torment him, the Old Man stands triumphant in faith:



*"My faith, vile hell, shall triumph over thee. Ambitious fiends! see how the heavens smiles at your repulse, and laughs your state to scorn! Hence, hell! for hence I fly unto my God."* Scene 13, pg. 52

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 8

## Scene 14: The Same

Faustus enters with some scholars. They ask what is troubling him. Faustus reveals that sin has ravaged both his body and soul. A scholar suggests he remember God's infinite mercies. Faustus confesses to them that he made a pact with Lucifer, a life of luxury and power in exchange for his soul. The time has drawn near; they will come to claim his soul to hell. The scholars promise Faustus that they will pray for him. If he is still alive in the morning, says Faustus, he will visit them. Otherwise, he has gone to hell. At eleven o'clock, Faustus wishes that time would stand still. He despairs:

*"The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,  
The Devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.  
O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?  
See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!  
One drop would save my soul-Half a drop: ah, my Christ!  
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!  
Yet will I call on him: O spare me, Lucifer!"* Scene 14, pg. 55

Topic Tracking: Duality of Man 8

The clock strikes midnight. While Faustus is still ranting, devils come to take him away.

Topic Tracking: Sin & Repentance 9

The Chorus enters and says that Faustus was a learned man who could have been righteous, but fell because he wanted more than what heaven permits in a man.

Topic Tracking: Hubris 12