



## CHRISTOPHER MARLOW AND “TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT”

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***ABSTRACT.** This article's main point is that Christopher Marlowe's significant contributions to English literature with his masterpiece "Tamburlaine the Great." This play explores themes of ambition and the human condition. Marlowe's skillful use of language and dramatic techniques captivates audiences, while his portrayal of the titular character, Tamburlaine, offers insight into the complexities of leadership and authority. Through an analysis of Marlowe's work, one gains a deeper understanding of Renaissance drama and its enduring impact on the literary landscape. "Tamburlaine the Great" stands as a testament to Marlowe's enduring influence and remains a cornerstone of English theatrical tradition.*

***Keywords:** prominent playwright, Jew of Malta, human condition, unrhymed iambic pentameter, blank verse, renaissance, protagonist, atheist, immense power, morality play.*

### **Introduction**

Foremost, Marlowe's plays are impactful and forceful; although he did not possess the same depth and profundity as Shakespeare, who admired and imitated him, it is important to acknowledge that Marlowe essentially created the era of Elizabethan Drama. His initial significant play, "Tamburlaine the Great," was unlike anything previously witnessed on stage, a lively production featuring a confident and imposing man who overthrew kingdoms and conquered a large portion of Asia

in the 14th century. "Tamburlaine" was also the first publicly performed play to be written in unrhymed iambic pentameter blank verse which, primarily due to the success of this play, became the standard for English drama as long as English playwrights wrote in verse.

Christopher Marlowe is one of the leading dramatists of the 16th Century Elizabethan period. Marlowe is considered as an indirect rival of William Shakespeare. Had Marlowe not died at such a young age, there would be two outstanding dramatists in the Elizabethan era [1]. It is also said that if there were no Marlowe, there would be no Shakespeare. The writing style that William Shakespeare used in his plays was borrowed from Christopher Marlowe. In the very short span of his life, Marlowe had written dramas that are still considered as one of the best dramas of the English literature. Marlowe was a genius who completed his education by the scholarship provided by the university. At a very young age, his name was added to the greatest dramatists. Dr. Faustus, Tamburlaine, and the Jew of Malta are among his prominent plays. Because of the influencing style of Tamburlaine, the play went highly successful on stage. Marlowe, then, also wrote the second part of the drama. Some of the main characteristics of the writing style of Marlowe are the following.

The play is often associated with Renaissance humanism, which celebrated the potential of human beings. Tamburlaine's desire for immense power raises important religious questions as he assumes the role of the "scourge of God" (a title originally given to Attila the Hun). Some readers have connected this attitude with the fact that Marlowe was accused of being an atheist. Others have focused on the play's anti-Muslim theme, particularly in a scene where the main character burns the Qur'an. In his article "Christian Underscoring in Tamburlaine the Great, Part II," [2] Jeff Dailey suggests that Marlowe's work is influenced by traditional medieval morality plays, regardless of whether or not he was an atheist, and that religious elements and allegorical methods are present in his work. So then Marlowe portrayed Tamburlaine's character in a similar way to how early Humanist Renaissance historians viewed him, as a typical Renaissance Hero. In Marlowe's play, like in

Faustus, the main focus is on showcasing the protagonist's exceptional power to control his own fate. This is evident in Tamburlaine's ability to rise above his humble beginnings and achieve the highest status. This transformation of character, or "identity shift," is symbolized by a change in attire, going from rags to armor and from a shepherd to a noble leader.

The play has long been criticized for many times in that period. Some critics viewed the play within the convention of the old "morality play", whereas others viewed it is a typical "Renaissance tragedy play" [3]. Latter criticism, however, focused on the play's strong rhetorical effect and its magnificent poetical images. Modern criticism, however, has focused on the different contexts of the play. The protagonist's contradictory attitudes and characteristics may also complicate any attempt of interpretation. Many critics and audiences view Tamburlaine's character in different ways. Some critics, such as Roy Battenhouse, argues that they meant to "condemn him" [4], while others claim that "we are invited to admire him". There are other critics who rather leave it to the audience how to view the protagonist's character.

Each of these interpretations of the play focuses on a specific aspect. Some critical approaches emphasize the play's aesthetic and artistic qualities, while others highlight its underlying political and religious implications. Consequently, the characterization of the protagonist, whether as a hero or a villain, depends on the interpretation of the play, which can be seen as either a moral tale or a subtle political and religious allegorical satire. However, the play itself is intricate and cannot be easily categorized within a specific literary genre. This complexity arises from the various intricacies embedded within the play. To fully comprehend the multiple facets of the protagonist, one must consider and reconcile the different, and sometimes conflicting, interpretations of the play. However, even though the play suggests that the main character exercises his free will, it also raises doubts about the limitations on this freedom. The main character's eventual death may signify the end of his boundless desire for power. In this way, the play explores contentious

theological and philosophical topics like the Freedom of Will and Predestination.

In conclusion, Christopher Marlowe is a prominent figure in Elizabethan literature, making a lasting impression with his masterpiece, "Tamburlaine the Great." In this play, Marlowe explores ambition, power dynamics, and the human mind, presenting a captivating story that remains relevant through the ages. His inventive language and portrayal of complex characters provide deep understanding of human nature, solidifying his reputation as an innovative playwright of great importance. Marlowe's contributions to English literature continue to be influential, proving his lasting impact on the theater tradition.

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