CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Tamburlaine the Great, Parts I and II

Christopher Marlowe · *c. 1587-1588 (published 1590) · original English text (Project Gutenberg #1094 and #1589; both parts in this file)*

From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, and such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, we'll lead you to the stately tent of war, where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine. The hosted text is Marlowe's English, both parts in one file, Project Gutenberg #1094 and #1589. For grades 10–12. Label both parts honestly. Quote the prologue, not the typographic notes that stand first.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What happens when a shepherd makes himself a scourge of kings, and how should a school read both parts of this play—the rise, and then the later cruelty and death—without treating conquest as a glory to be admired unexamined?

"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"

Part I, the prologue

The prologue leaves jigging clownage for the stately tent of war and the Scythian Tamburlaine. Part I is his rise from a shepherd to a conqueror; Part II continues the career to a harsher close. This hosted file contains both parts; label them honestly. Teach the magnificent verse, the ambition, and the cost, for grades 10–12. Quote the prologue, not the typographic notes about square brackets that stand first.

KEY CHARACTERS

Tamburlaine
The Scythian, a shepherd who makes himself a scourge of kings; both parts are his career

The prologue
Which leaves jigging clownage for the stately tent of war

The kings he overthrows, and Zenocrate
The first contrast of courts, and the woman who belongs to the cost as well as to the love

FROM JIGGING VEINS TO A TENT OF WAR

> *"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"*
>
> Part I, the prologue

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

The Stately Tent of War

PART I, THE PROLOGUE

The play will not be a clown's jig. It will lead you to war, and to the Scythian Tamburlaine. The first sentence is already a claim about style, and about the kind of man you are to hear.

- The first lines are exact, including "jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits."
- Typographic notes about square brackets stand first in this file; do not quote them as Marlowe.
- This file contains both parts, PG #1094 and #1589. For grades 10–12.
- Label both parts honestly.

> *"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"*
>
> Part I, the prologue

02

A Shepherd's Rise

PART I

Tamburlaine rises from a shepherd to a man who overthrows kings. The verse is magnificent, and the ambition is without a bridle. Teach the rise as the play writes it, not as a simple success story.

- Keep "Tamburlaine" as this file spells it.
- Mycetes and the Persian court are the first contrast.
- Glory and cruelty are already together in Part I.
- 10–12.

> *"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"*
>
> Part I, the prologue

03

Kings, and a Scourge

PART I, LATER

The conqueror calls himself, and is called, a scourge. Crowns are taken and given. A school should hear the proud speech and also the cost to cities and captives.

- Gravity. Do not treat conquest as a pageant only.
- Zenocrate, if you reach her, belongs to the human cost as well as to the love.
- Quote this file, not a later adaptation.
- Tact on the captives.

> *"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"*
>
> Part I, the prologue

04

Part II

THE SECOND PART

The second part continues the career and does not leave it in triumph. Death, further war, and a harsher close belong here. A school that reads only Part I has not read this file.

- This hosted file includes both parts; say so, and finish both if you assign the work.
- Do not invent a softer ending than Marlowe wrote.
- The magnificence of the verse is still there; the judgment is heavier.
- 10–12.

> *"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"*
>
> Part I, the prologue

05

Both Parts, One File

THE EDITION

Project Gutenberg #1094 and #1589, both parts. Quote the prologue to Part I, not the editor's notes on brackets.

- Catalogue 10–12.
- Original English, c. 1587–1588, published 1590.
- Not a later film or a shortened school edition of Part I only.
- The first lines are the right first quotation.

> *"From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine"*
>
> Part I, the prologue

Ambition | A Scourge of Kings | Magnificent Verse | The Cost of Conquest | Two Parts, One Career

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The prologue to Part I opens: "From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, We'll lead you to the stately tent of war, Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine." Typographic notes stand first; do not quote them as Marlowe.
2. This hosted file contains both Part I and Part II, PG #1094 and #1589. Label both honestly. For grades 10–12.
3. Part I is the rise of a shepherd-conqueror. Glory and cruelty are already together. Do not treat it as a simple success story.
4. Part II continues the career to a harsher close. A school that reads only Part I has not read this file.
5. Not a later film or a shortened school edition of Part I only.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text (Project Gutenberg #1094 and #1589; both parts in this file), Project Gutenberg #1094 and #1589, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/marlowe-tamburlaine-the-great/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.