Amir Timur
(1336 - 1405)
Christopher Marlowe’s play *Tamburlaine the Great* recounts the brutal rise to power and demise of the 14th century emperor and conqueror, Amir Timur.

Take a look at some of the facts about this fascinating historical figure below.
Name

- Timur comes from the Turkish word meaning ‘iron’.
- His Persian nickname, Timur-e Lang, translates to ‘Timur the Lame’, resulting in the European derivations Tamerlane and Tamburlaine.
Starting out

- Timur was born in 1336 near the city of Kesh (now Shakhrisabz, Uzbekistan).

- He began as a sheep-rustler and bandit.

- Timur was injured in a skirmish which left him lame in his right leg and unable to raise his right arm.

- In 1941 his tomb was excavated. Archaeologists found evidence of two healed wounds on Timur’s right leg and missing fingers on his right arm, confirming his injuries.
Military leader and rise to power

- Timur gained prominence as a military leader under the ruler Kurgan.
- He led a thousand soldiers in the invasion of Khorasan (north-east Iran). When Kurgan later died, Timur was given command of the tribe.
• Timur spent the next three decades legitimising his rule (including murdering his brother-in-law Amir Husayn, and claiming the Chagatai princess, Saray Mulk Khanum, as his bride), and gaining territory.
Conqueror of Asia

His military campaigns saw him conquer lands that comprise of modern-day countries Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and parts of Turkey, Syria and India.

Historians argue Timur was descended from Genghis Khan on his mother’s side. He therefore ruled over his conquered lands as an *Amir* (from the Arabic word for ‘Prince’), rather than as *Khan* (the name given to male rulers descended from Genghis Khan through the male line).
Fall of a Prince

However, Timur’s desire for power and control stretched too far – in the winter of 1404, Timur set out to invade China and conquer the Ming dynasty. The severe weather hampered his campaign and he fell ill. He died in February 1405. At its full height, Timur’s empire stretched from Russia to India, and from the Mediterranean Sea to Mongolia.

Amir Timur’s tomb