

Classical Monologues 2026:

Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare

(Act 2, Scene 3)

BENEDICK:

This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady. It seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! Why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her. They say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not seem proud. Happy are they that can hear their detractions and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair. 'Tis a truth, I can bear them witness. And virtuous – 'tis so, I cannot reprove it. And wise, but for loving me. By my troth, it is no addition to her wit – nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me because I have railed so long against marriage; but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? No. The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice.

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Associate Professor Kim Durban

A Midsummer Night's dream by William Shakespeare

(Act 2, Scene 1)

PUCK:

Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! here comes Oberon.

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Women Beware Women by Thomas Middleton

(Act 1, Scene 2)

ISABELLA:

Marry a fool!

Can there be greater misery to a woman

That means to keep her days true to her husband,

And know no other man, so virtue wills it!

Why, how can I obey and honour him,

But I must needs commit idolatry?

A fool is but the image of a man,

And that but ill made neither.

Oh the heartbreakings

Of miserable maids, where love's enforced!

The best condition is but bad enough:

When women have their choices, commonly

They do buy their thraldoms, and bring great portions

To men to keep 'em in subjection:

As if a fearful prisoner should bribe

The keeper to be good to him, yet lies in still.

And glad of a good usage, a good look sometimes.

By'r Lady, no misery surmounts a woman's.

Men buy their slaves, but women buy their masters.

Yet honesty and love makes all this happy

And, next to angels, the most blest estate.

That Providence, that has made ev'ry poison

Good for some use, and sets four warring elements

At peace in man, can make a harmony

In things that are most strange to human reason.

Oh, but this marriage!

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE:

Sweet mistress, what your name is else I know not,
Nor by what wonder you do hit of mine;
Less in your knowledge and your grace you show not
Than our earth's wonder, more than earth divine.
Teach me dear creature, how to think and speak;
Lay open to my earthly gross conceit,
Smother'd in errors, feeble, shallow, weak,
The folded meaning of your words' deceit.
Against my soul's pure truth, why labour you
To make it wander in an unknown field?
Are you a god? Would you create me new?
Transform me then and to your power I'll yield.
But if that I am I, then well I know
Your weeping sister is no wife of mine,
Nor to her bed no homage do I owe;
Far more, far more to you do I decline;
O, train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note
To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears;
Sing, siren, for thyself, and I will dote;
Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs,
And as a bed I'll take thee, and there lie,
And in that glorious supposition think
He gains by death that hath such means to die;
Let love, being light, drowned if she sink.

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Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare

(Act 3, Scene 1)

ANTONY:

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers.
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.
Woe to the hands that shed this costly blood!
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy
(Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips,
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue),
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quartered with the hands of war,
All pity chok'd with custom of fell deeds;
And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

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All's Well That Ends Well by William Shakespeare
(Act 1, Scene 1)

HELENA:

O! were that all. I think not on my father;
And these great tears grace his remembrance more
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
I have forgot him: my imagination
Carries no favour in 't but Bertram's.
I am undone: there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. It were all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me:
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
The ambition in my love thus plagues itself:
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, though a plague,
To see him every hour; to sit and draw
His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
In our heart's table; heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favour:
But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his reliques. Who comes here?
One that goes with him: I love him for his sake;
And yet I know him a notorious liar,
Think him a great way fool, solely a coward;
Yet these fix'd evils sit so fit in him,
That they take place, when virtue's steely bones
Look bleak in the cold wind: withal, full oft we see
Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly.

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The Tragedy of King Lear by William Shakespeare

(Act 1, Scene 2)

EDMUND:

Thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why 'bastard'? Wherefore 'base',
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With 'base', with 'baseness, bastardy – base, base'-
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth within a dull, stale, tired bed
Go to th'creating a whole tribe of fops
Got 'tween a sleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmond
As to th' legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'.
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
And my invention thrive, Edmond the base
Shall top th' legitimate. I grow, I prosper.
Now gods, stand up for bastards!

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The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

(Act 3, Scene 2)

JULIET:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That runaway's eyes may wink and Romeo
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night; come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes
And may not wear them. O, here comes my nurse,
And she brings news; and every tongue that speaks
But Romeo's name speaks heavenly eloquence.

(Act 3, Scene 3)

ROMEO:

'Tis torture and not mercy. Heaven is here
Where Juliet lives, and every cat and dog
And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
Live here in heaven and may look on her,
But Romeo may not. More validity,
More honourable state, more courtship lives
In carrion flies than Romeo. They may seize
On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand,
And steal immortal blessing from her lips,
Who, even in pure and vestal modesty,
Still blush, as thinking their own kisses sin.
But Romeo may not, he is banished,
Flies may do this, but I from this must fly.
They are free men, but I am banished.
And sayst thou yet that exile is not death?
Hadst thou no poison mixed, no sharp-ground knife.
No sudden mean of death, though ne'er so mean,
But 'banishéd' to kill me - 'banishéd' ?
O friar, the damnéd use that word in hell.
Howling attends it. How hast thou the heart,
Being a divine, a ghostly confessor.
A sin-absolver and my friend professed,
To mangle me with that word 'banishéd'?

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A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

(Act 2, Scene 1)

OBERON:

I pray thee, give it me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,

Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,

Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,

With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,

Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;

And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,

Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:

And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,

And make her full of hateful fantasies.

Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:

A sweet Athenian lady is in love

With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;

But do it when the next thing he espies

May be the lady: thou shalt know the man

By the Athenian garments he hath on.

Effect it with some care, that he may prove

More fond on her than she upon her love:

And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Richard the Second by William Shakespeare

(Act 3, Scene 2)

RICHARD II:

No matter where – of comfort no man speak.
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs,
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.
Let's choose executors and talk of wills.
And yet not so – for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all, are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death;
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For God's sake let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been depos'd, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping kill'd,
All murdered – for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks;
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and, humour'd thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty;
For you have but mistook me all this while.
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends – subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?

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Cymbeline by William Shakespeare

(Act 3, Scene 4)

IMOGEN:

Why, I must die,

And if I do not by thy hand, thou art

No servant of thy master's. Against self-slaughter

There is a prohibition so divine

That cravens my weak hand. Come, here's my heart.

Something's afore't. Soft, soft, we'll no defence,

Obedient as the scabbard. What is here?

[She pulls letters from her bodice.] The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,

All turned to heresy? Away, away,

[She throws the letters away.]

Corrupters of my faith, you shall no more

Be stomachers to my heart. Thus may poor fools

Believe false teachers. Though those that are betrayed

Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor

Stands in worse case of woe. And thou, Posthumus,

That didst set up my disobedience 'gainst the King

My father, and makes me put into contempt the suits

Of princely fellows, shalt hereafter find

It is no act of common passage but

A strain of rareness; and I grieve myself

To think, when thou shalt be disedged by her

That now thou tirest on, how thy memory

Will then be panged by me. Prithee dispatch,

The lamb entreats the butcher. Where's thy knife?

Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding

When I desire it too.

MRS. PINCHWIFE:

'For Mr Horner'. - So, I am glad he has told me his name. Dear Mr Horner! But why should I send thee such a letter that will vex thee, and make thee angry with me? - Well, I will not send it. - Ay, but then my husband will kill me, for I see plainly he won't let me love Mr Horner - but what care I for my husband? - I won't, so I won't, send poor Mr Homer such a letter - but then my husband - But oh - what if I writ at bottom my husband made me write it? - Ay, but then my husband would see't. - Can one have no shift? Ah, a London woman would have had a hundred presently. Stay - what if I should write a letter, and wrap it up like this, ' and write on't too ? Ay, but then my husband would see't. - I don't know what to do. - But yet y'vads, I'll try, so I will -for I will not send this letter to poor Mr Horner, come what will on't. *[She writes and repeats what she hath writ.]* 'Dear, Sweet Mr Horner -- so - my husband would have me send you a base, rude-, unmannerly letter - but I won't' - so 'and would have me forbid you loving me - but I won't -- so 'and would have me say to you I hate you, poor Mr Homer - but I won't tell a lie for him' - there - 'for I'm sure if you and I were in the country at cards together', - so - 'I could not help treading on your toe under the table' - so -- 'or rubbing knees with you, and staring in your face till you saw me' - very well - 'and then looking down, and blushing for an hour together' - so - 'but I must make haste before my husband come; and now he has taught me to write letters, you shall have longer ones from me, who am Dear, dear, poor dear Mr Horner, your most humble friend, and servant to command 'till death, Margery Pinchwife.' Stay, I must give him a hint at bottom - so - now wrap it up just like t'other - so - now write 'For Mr Homer'. But oh now what shall I do with it? For here comes my husband.

LADY ANNE:

Set down, set down your honourable load,
If honour may be shrouded in a hearse,
Whilst I a while obsequiously lament
The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
Poor key-cold figure of a holy king,
Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster,
Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood!
Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughter'd son,
Stabb'd by the selfsame hand that made these wounds!
Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life,
I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.
O! cursed be the hand that made these holes,
Cursed the blood that let this blood from hence,
Cursed the heart that had the heart to do it!
More direful hap betide that hated wretch
That makes us wretched by the death of thee
Than I can wish to wolves, to spider, toads,
Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives!
If ever he have child, abortive be it,
Prodigious, and ultimately brought to light,
Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
May fright the hopeful mother at the view,
And that be heir to his unhappiness!
If ever he have wife, let her be made
More miserable by the death of him
Than I am made by my young lord and thee!

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The Tempest by William Shakespeare

(Act 5, Scene 1)

PROSPERO:

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight-mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew, by whose aid –
Weak masters though ye be – I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread-rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt: the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, ope'd and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and when I have required
Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

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The Two Gentlemen of Verona by William Shakespeare

(Act 4, Scene 4)

JULIA:

How many women would do such a message?

Alas, poor Proteus! thou hast entertain'd

A fox to be the shepherd of thy lambs.

Alas, poor fool! why do I pity him

That with his very heart despiseth me?

Because he loves her, he despiseth me;

Because I love him I must pity him.

This ring I gave him when he parted from me,

To bind him to remember my good will;

And now am I, unhappy messenger,

To plead for that which I would not obtain,

To carry that which I would have refused,

To praise his faith which I would have dispraised.

I am my master's true-confirmed love;

But cannot be true servant to my master,

Unless I prove false traitor to myself.

Yet will I woo for him, but yet so coldly

As, heaven it knows, I would not have him speed.