
# Sample Pages from Solo-Speare!: Shakespearean Monologues For Student Actors

# SOLO-SPEARE!:

## SHAKESPEAREAN MONOLOGUES FOR STUDENT ACTORS

EDITED BY
*Lindsay Price*

*Solo-Speare!:*
*Shakespearean Monologues for Student Actors*



Printed in the USA

## Editor's Notes

This collection gives you all the tools you need to put together the best Shakespearean monologue. Dynamic speeches, lesser-known characters (anyone can do "Romeo, Romeo" or "To be or not to be!") and all the help you'll need with acting suggestions, background info, and vocabulary.

**General Shakespeare Performance Tips:** Understand what you're saying. Look up every word you don't understand. The more you know, the more you can convey. Read the play, or at the very least the scenes leading up to the monologue. Have fun with it — try different interpretations of the words and images. You only have a couple of minutes to make a impression.

Go Big and Bold!

## Two Gentlemen of Verona Act 1 Scene 2

| | |
|---|---|
| **Background:** | The two "Gentlemen of Verona" are Valentine and Proteus. At this point in the play, Proteus is in love with Julia.<br><br>Julia has been hiding her feelings for Proteus to the point where she tears up a letter she has just received from him. As soon as she is alone, however, she dives for the pieces of paper scattered on the floor. She does love Proteus and this is the first time she speaks her feelings aloud. |
| **Character:** | Julia is a young upper-class woman of Verona. It's interesting to see Julia acting so foolishly, when it is not in her normal nature. |
| **Tips:** | This is a fun, physical piece. Make sure you have a torn-up letter to play with. It's very funny the way she talks to these little pieces of paper as if they were Proteus.<br><br>It's also funny that this speech is a declaration of love, and yet she's crawling around on the floor kissing "each several paper for amends." This means she's "making up" to the pieces of paper! At the end of the monologue Julia folds a piece of paper so that the two names (Proteus and Julia) appear to "kiss." There's a lot of room for humour here.<br><br>Julia is usually a refined, dignified woman - what happens to such a woman when she becomes lovesick? How does she change?<br><br>Notice how she treats herself in the speech. She calls her hands "injurious wasps" for tearing the letter and she chastises herself by throwing down any piece of paper with her name on it.<br><br>It's always interesting when people say things for the first time. Make sure Julia's feelings sound new and fresh — not rehearsed.<br><br>How will you end the piece? With a loving sigh? A kiss of the paper? With a laugh? Maybe you kiss the paper and it doesn't taste so great. |

## Vocabulary

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **writ** | written | **thrice** | three times |
| **bosom** | chest | **thence** | there |
| **heal'd** | healed | **lo** | look |
| **sovereign** | kingly. Meaning "supreme" in this context. | **sith** | since |

## JULIA

O hateful hands, to tear such loving words!
Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey
And kill the bees that yield it with your stings!
I'll kiss each several paper for amends.
Look, here is **writ** 'kind Julia.' Unkind Julia!
As in revenge of thy ingratitude,
I throw thy name against the bruising stones,
Trampling contemptuously on thy disdain.
And here is writ 'love-wounded Proteus.'
Poor wounded name! My **bosom** as a bed
Shall lodge thee till thy wound be thoroughly **heal'd**;
And thus I search it with a **sovereign** kiss.
But twice or **thrice** was 'Proteus' written down.
Be calm, good wind, blow not a word away
Till I have found each letter in the letter,
Except mine own name: that some whirlwind bear
Unto a ragged fearful-hanging rock
And throw it **thence** into the raging sea!
**Lo**, here in one line is his name twice writ,
'Poor forlorn Proteus, passionate Proteus,
To the sweet Julia:' that I'll tear away.
And yet I will not, **sith** so prettily
He couples it to his complaining names.
Thus will I fold them one on another:
Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will.

## HENRY VI PART 1 ACT 5 SCENE 4

| | |
|---|---|
| **Background:** | Henry the Sixth is a three-part story of civil war (part of the "War of the Roses" cycle) and the war between England and France. In this monologue, Joan of Arc is speaking to the Earl of Warick and the Duke of York, who have just condemned her to death for being a witch. |
| **Character:** | "La Pucelle" means "The Maid."<br><br>Joan of Arc is an historical figure from the 1400's. As a young girl she heard voices telling her she was going to help drive the English out of France. Astonishingly, she was able to convince the powers-that-be of this and went on to lead several battles. She was eventually captured and sold to the English. They feared her and burned her at the stake. She was only nineteen.<br><br>This monologue combines two different speeches from **Act V scene four**.<br><br>Joan is portrayed in French history as a brave soldier and a saint. The English thought she was a witch. Shakespeare did not see Joan as a brave soldier or a heroine. He has Joan beg for her life earlier in the scene by pretending she's pregnant as pregnant women could stay their execution until they gave birth. She also denies she is a country girl because of her relationship with God. |
| **Tips:** | Read all of **Act V scene four** to see the different tactics Joan uses to try and stop her execution.<br><br>There is a lot of information available about Joan of Arc; do some research and form your own opinion about how she should be portrayed. Despite Shakespeare's opinion of the character, you can certainly choose to play her any way you like!<br><br>Here are some ways to play the speech: as a crazed witch who thinks herself above her condemners, as a heroine bravely going to her death, as a young girl who is terrified of dying. Which is the most dramatic? Which will have the most impact on your audience?<br><br>Think about the setting of the speech. How does the monologue change if Joan can see the stake being prepared for her? Does she panic or grow in strength?<br><br>Lastly, don't forget she is speaking to two men. Experiment with addressing different parts of the speech to each of her listeners. |

## VOCABULARY

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **begotten** | born | **straight** | immediately |
| **swain** | rustic, country person | **reflex** | reflect |
| **progeny** | descendants | **make abode** | live |
| **celestial** | heavenly | **environ** | form a ring around |

## JOAN LA PUCELLE (JOAN OF ARC)

First, let me tell you whom you have condemn'd:
Not me **begotten** of a shepherd **swain**,
But issued from the **progeny** of kings;
Virtuous and holy; chosen from above,
By inspiration of **celestial** grace,
To work exceeding miracles on earth.
I never had to do with wicked spirits:
But you, that are polluted with your lusts,
Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,
Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,
Because you want the grace that others have,
You judge it **straight** a thing impossible
To compass wonders but by help of devils.

Then lead me hence; with whom I leave my curse:
May never glorious sun **reflex** his beams
Upon the country where you **make abode**;
But darkness and the gloomy shade of death
**Environ** you, till mischief and despair
Drive you to break your necks or hang yourselves!

## ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 5

| | |
|---|---|
| **Background:** | Romeo and Juliet are from rival families: the Montagues and the Capulets. The two meet, fall madly in love, and decide to marry — all in an evening.<br><br>It is the next day. Juliet waits impatiently (it has been three hours) for her nurse to return from meeting with Romeo. He is to give the nurse a time and place for he and Juliet to be married. |
| **Character:** | Juliet is fourteen years old in the story. She has lead a sheltered life and is currently "engaged" to Paris even as she plans a secret marriage to Romeo. She is impulsive and full-of-life.<br><br>Keep in mind that the story takes place even before Shakespeare's time: marriage at such a young age was not uncommon or unheard of. |
| **Tips:** | If you are unfamiliar with the story, read **Act I scene five** to see where Romeo and Juliet meet, and then read **Act II scene two** for the famous balcony scene. You'll need to be familiar with these scenes to understand the full extent of Juliet's emotions in the monologue.<br><br>The story of *Romeo and Juliet* is universal — the ultimate story of defying parental wishes and taking young love to the extreme. Do you know anyone who has acted like Juliet? (Perhaps not to this extent, though!) Can you think of a way to bring that person's attitude and energy to the speech?<br><br>This monologue is filled with extremes. Juliet zooms from frustration, to depression, to happiness, and back again. Use these emotions to find the comic potential in the speech. How would you physicalize each of these emotions? One suggestion is to use a chair as a prop. Juliet could repeatedly try to sit and be ladylike, only to be so agitated she keeps getting up.<br><br>Remember that this is one of Juliet's happiest moments: she is to be married to the man she loves and she has no idea of what's to come. Don't foreshadow the end.<br><br>There are a lot of interesting images in this monologue from the frowning hills, to the nurse being thrown like a ball. How can you best show these images to you audience? Think of specific actions and the way you use your voice. |

## VOCABULARY

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **perchance** | maybe | **bandy** | throw |
| **louring** | frowning, scowl, sullen | **feign** | pretend |
| **nimble-pinion'd** | agile bird's wing | **unwieldy** | slow, clumsy |
| **Cupid** | Roman God of Love | | |

## JULIET

The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse;
In half an hour she promised to return.
**Perchance** she cannot meet him: that's not so.
O, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over **louring** hills:
Therefore do **nimble-pinion'd** doves draw love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift **Cupid** wings.
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;
My words would **bandy** her to my sweet love,
And his to me:
But old folks, many **feign** as they were dead;
**Unwieldy**, slow, heavy and pale as lead.
O God, she comes!

| TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA ACT 2 SCENE 6 | |
|---|---|
| **Background:** | The two "Gentlemen of Verona" are Proteus and Valentine. They both leave Verona for Milan.<br><br>Before leaving, Proteus swears his love to Julia. But when he arrives in Milan, he falls in love with Sylvia. He knows his "best friend" Valentine is also in love with Sylvia.<br><br>Proteus decides to pursue his new love (Sylvia) and to forget his first love (Julia). He is going to betray his best friend and tell Sylvia's father how Valentine and Sylvia were planning to sneak away. |
| **Character:** | It's hard to like Proteus. But that is what makes this speech so interesting and fun to play. Most of us cannot imagine ourselves behaving and speaking in such a manner as Proteus behaves and speaks!<br><br>He's rash and puts love (which isn't returned) in front of everything. He even turns Love into a person in the monologue, calling on Love to help him in his quest.<br><br>He starts the play off as a gentleman and turns into a jerk rather quickly. He's impulsive and always in the moment. He is unconcerned about how Julia will feel when she learns he no longer loves her.<br><br>Is Proteus a villain? If so, what kind of villain is he? He's certainly not in the same league as Richard the Third but he does put his own needs above all others.<br><br>In Greek mythology, Proteus was a sea-god who was able to change his shape. In more modern terms, the name "Proteus" means "inconstant." |
| **Tips:** | There is a conflict here between loyalty and passion.<br><br>Read what Proteus says to Julia in **Act II scene two** and then see how quickly he forgets those words by **Act II scene four.**<br><br>How will you perform the moment where Proteus verbalizes his betrayal of both Valentine and Julia? Is he manic? Gleeful? Filled with remorse?<br><br>It's interesting to note how Proteus describes Julia and Sylvia. He calls Julia a "twinkling star" and Sylvia a "celestial sun." What physical actions could go with these very specific images? |

| VOCABULARY | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **foresworn** | false | **pretended** | intended |
| **provokes** | urges | **cross** | thwart, stop |
| **perjury** | break an oath or promise | **drift** | upcoming event |

## PROTEUS

To leave my Julia, shall I be **forsworn**;
To love fair Silvia, shall I be forsworn;
To wrong my friend, I shall be much forsworn;
And even that power which gave me first my oath
**Provokes** me to this threefold **perjury**;
Love bade me swear and Love bids me forswear.
O sweet-suggesting Love, if thou hast sinned,
Teach me, thy tempted subject, to excuse it!
At first I did adore a twinkling star,
But now I worship a celestial sun.
I will forget that Julia is alive,
Remembering that my love to her is dead;
And Valentine I'll hold an enemy,
Aiming at Silvia as a sweeter friend.
I cannot now prove constant to myself,
Without some treachery used to Valentine.
This night he meaneth with a corded ladder
To climb celestial Silvia's chamber-window,
Myself in counsel, his competitor.
Now presently I'll give her father notice
Of their disguising and **pretended** flight;
Who, all enraged, will banish Valentine;
For Thurio, he intends, shall wed his daughter;
But, Valentine being gone, I'll quickly **cross**
By some sly trick blunt Thurio's dull proceeding.
Love, lend me wings to make my purpose swift,
As thou hast lent me wit to plot this **drift**!

## ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 3 SCENE 3

| | |
|---|---|
| **Background:** | Romeo falls in love with Juliet, the daughter of his family's sworn enemy. They get married after knowing each other one night. But a fight between Romeo and Tybalt (Juliet's cousin) finds Tybalt dead and Romeo banished from Verona.<br><br>In the moment before this monologue Friar Lawrence happily relays the news of Romeo's banishment. He's happy because the punishment could have been death. Romeo feels that banishment is worse than death because he will never see Juliet again. |
| **Character:** | Romeo is sixteen years old. He is an intense fellow. Everything he does is to the extreme, including this reaction. Romeo doesn't see any other way out than the most dramatic reaction. He lacks moderation.<br><br>Having said that, he's not afraid to stand up for himself and his family. He kills Tybalt because Tybalt killed Mercutio, Romeo's best friend. |
| **Tips:** | How can you use Romeo's intense dramatic personality to its best potential? You don't want to be over-the-top for the whole monologue — that would be hard to watch and tiring to play.<br><br>The monologue has highs and lows, so you should contrast moments of intense drama with quiet.<br><br>Romeo also makes some very corny and melodramatic statements. He says that heaven is here where Juliet lives and every cat, dog, and mouse gets to live in heaven, but not him. That's a bit much. Is there some comic potential? Will you play the whole thing straight or ham it up a bit?<br><br>How do you the monologue to affect your audience? Since the piece is out of context with the rest of the play, you have some choice on how you present it.<br><br>Remember that Romeo too has an audience: he seems to be performing his grief rather than actually living it. |

## VOCABULARY

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **hath** | has | **hadst thou** | have you |
| **carrion-flies** | flies that buzz around the dead | **mean** | means |
| **vestal** | chaste | **ne'er** | never |

## ROMEO

Ha, banishment! Be merciful, say 'death;'
For exile **hath** more terror in his look,
Much more than death: do not say 'banishment.'
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 say'st thou yet that exile is not death?
**Hadst thou** no poison mix'd, no sharp-ground knife,
No sudden **mean** of death, though **ne'er** so mean,
But 'banished' to kill me? 'Banished?'
O friar, the damned use that word in hell;
Howlings attend it: how hast thou the heart,
Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,
A sin-absolver, and my friend profess'd,
To mangle me with that word 'banished'?

## LOVE'S LABOURS LOST ACT 3 SCENE 1

| | |
|---|---|
| **Background:** | King Ferdinand invites three young men to his court with some very specific conditions: they must only sleep three hours a night, they must fast once a week, and they must swear off women.<br><br>Of course, the last condition is very hard to follow. In this monologue Berowne talks about his sudden love for Rosaline, one of the ladies attending on the Princess of France.<br><br>In the moment before, Berowne has just given a love letter to a servant to deliver to Rosaline. |
| **Character:** | Berowne is a young lord. He has the most trouble with the conditions imposed by King Ferdinand.<br><br>Note: His name is "Biron" in some editions of the play. |
| **Tips:** | Read **Act II scene one** where Berowne and Rosaline first meet. You should also read the details of the pact between the four men and the conditions they must follow in **Act I scene one**.<br><br>One of the things that amazes Berowne in this monologue is that he has fallen in love with a "common" woman, someone of a lower class than he. Rosaline does not conform to the stereotypical notions of beauty. Note his unflattering description of her "pitch-ball" eyes.<br><br>This is one monologue where you should go over the top. Berowne is overcome with love. Note all the different silly names he comes up with for Cupid ("Dan" is another word for "Sir.")<br><br>Berowne is normally a courteous gentlemen, but this is a moment where he is unrestrained and not himself. How does love overtake him? Is he giddy? Is he very physical; running around and acting goofy? Is he melodious and romantic? Is he horrified at what is happening to him? Surprised? Amazed? It should be the first time this has ever happened to him.<br><br>Note that Berowne's romantic declaration doesn't rhyme. This is unusual for Shakespeare.<br><br>Remember too that as Berowne declares his love out loud he's supposed to have nothing to do with women. Is he aware that someone might discover him at any moment? Are there times in the monologue where he speaks quietly? |

## VOCABULARY

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **forsooth** | in truth | **plackets** | slit in a dress, blouse, or skirt |
| **beadle** | officer | **'paritors** | officers of the court |
| **pedant** | teacher | **wightly** | pale |
| **whimpled** | blindfolded | **Argus** | a giant monster with 100 eyes |
| **soverign** | king | **Joan** | name for a common woman (like 'plain Jane') |

## BEROWNE

O, and I, **forsooth**, in love! I, that have been love's whip;
A very **beadle** to a humorous sigh;
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable;
A domineering **pedant** o'er the boy;
Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
This **whimpled**, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid;
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
The anointed **sovereign** of sighs and groans,
Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
Dread prince of **plackets**, king of codpieces,
Sole imperator and great general
Of trotting '**paritors** (O my little heart)
And I to be a corporal of his field,
And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop!
What, I! I love! I sue! I seek a wife!
A woman, that is like a German clock,
Still a-repairing, ever out of frame,
And never going aright, being a watch,
But being watch'd that it may still go right!
Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all;
And, among three, to love the worst of all;
A **wightly** wanton with a velvet brow,
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes;
Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed
Though **Argus** were her eunuch and her guard:
And I to sigh for her! To watch for her!
To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague
That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might.
Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan:
Some men must love my lady and some **Joan**.

help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

# Want to Read More?

**Order a full script** through the link above. You can get a **PDF file** (it's printable, licensed for one printout, and delivered instantly) or a **traditionally bound and printed book** (sent by mail).