

NIDA Auditions 2017 – Shakespeare Monologues

Suggested Shakespeare audition monologues (Female)

The below monologues are suggestions only, you may alternatively choose any short Shakespeare piece in verse (not a sonnet or poem)

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Suggested Shakespeare audition monologues (Male)

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Summary

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1 QUEEN MARGARET – Henry VI part 2 (1590 - 1591)

QUEEN MARGARET

My Lord of Suffolk, say, is this the guise?
Is this the fashion in the court of England?
Is this the government of Britain's isle,
And this the royalty of Albion's king?
What, shall King Henry be a pupil still,
Under the surly Gloucester's governance?
Am I a queen in title and in style,
And must be made a subject to a duke?
I tell thee, Poole, when in the city Tours
Thou ran'st a tilt in honour of my love
And stol'st away the ladies' hearts of France,
I thought King Henry had resembled thee,
In courage, courtship and proportion:
But all his mind is bent to holiness,
To number Ave-Maries on his beads;
His champions, are the prophets and apostles,
His weapons, holy saws of sacred writ,
His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves
Are brazen images of canonized saints.
I would the college of the cardinals
Would choose him Pope, and carry him to Rome,
And set the triple crown upon his head:
That were a state fit for his holiness.

2 HELENA – All's Well That End's Well (1602 - 1603)

HELENA

'Till I have no wife I have nothing in France.'

Nothing in France, until he has no wife:
Thou shalt have none Rossillion, none in France,
Then hast thou all again: poor lord, is't I
That chase thee from thy country, and expose
Those tender limbs of thine, to the event
Of the none-sparing war? And is it I,
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers,
That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
Fly with false aim, move the still-peering air
That sings with piercing, do not touch my lord:
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there.
Whoever charges on his forward breast
I am the caitiff that do hold him to't,
And though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected: better 'twere
I met the ravin lion when he roar'd
With sharp constraint of hunger: better 'twere
That all the miseries which nature owes
Were mine at once. No come thou home Rossillion,
Whence honour but of danger wins a scar,
As oft it loses all: I will be gone:
My being here it is, that holds thee hence:
Shall I stay here to do't? No, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house
And angels officed all: I will be gone,
That pitiful rumour may report my flight,
To console thine ear. Come, night; end, day!
For with the dark (poor thief) I'll steal away.

3 ROSALINE – Love's Labour's Lost (1595)

ROSALINE

Of have I heard of you my Lord Biron,
Before I saw you: and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks,
Full of comparisons and wounding flouts:
Which you on all estates will execute
That lie within the mercy of your wit.
To weed this wormwood from your fruitful brain,
And therewithal to win me, if you please,
Without the which I am not to be won:
You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick, and still converse
With groaning wretches: and your task shall be,
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.
A jest's prosperity, lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it: then, if sickly ears,
Deaf'd with the clamours of their own dear groans,
Will hear your idle scorns; continue then,
And I will have you, and that fault withal;
But if they will not, throw away that spirit,
And I shall find you empty of that fault,
Right joyful of your reformation.

4 PORTIA – The Merchant of Venice (1594 - 1597)

PORTIA

You see me Lord Bassanio where I stand,
Such as I am; though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better, yet for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself,
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
More rich, that only to stand high in your account,
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account: but the full sum of me
Is sum of something: which to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised,
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn: happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all, is that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted. But now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself: and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord, I give them with this ring,
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

5 EMILIA – Othello (1604)

EMILIA

In troth, I think I should, and undo't when I had done. Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition. But for the whole world: why, who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for't. But I do think it is their husbands' faults If wives do fall: (Say that they slack their duties, And pour our treasures into foreign laps; Or else break out in peevish jealousies, Throwing restraint upon us: or say they strike us, Or scant our former having in despite) Why, we have galls: and though we have some grace, Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know Their wives have sense like them: they see, and smell And have their palates both for sweet, and sour, As husbands have. What is it that they do, When they change us for others? Is it sport? I think it is: and doth affection breed it? I think it doth. Is't frailty that thus errs? It is so too. And have not we affections, Desires for sport? and frailty, as men have? Then let them use us well: else let them know, The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

6 ISABELLA – Measure for Measure (1604)

ISABELLA

To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,
Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,
That bear in them, one and the self-same tongue,
Either of condemnation, or approval,
Bidding the law make curtsey to their will,
Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,
To follow as it draws. I'll to my brother,
Though he hath fallen by prompture of the blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honour,
That had he twenty heads to tender down
On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up,
Before his sister should her body stoop
To such abhorr'd pollution.

Then Isabel live chaste, and brother die:
More than our brother is our chastity.
I'll tell him yet of Angelo's request,
And fit his mind to death, for his soul's rest.

7 HELENA – A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1595 - 1596)

HELENA

How happy some, o'er other some can be?
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so:
He will not know, what all, but he do know:
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes;
So I, admiring of his qualities:
Things base and vile, folding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity,
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste:
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear;
So the boy Love is perjured every where.
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence,
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.

8 IMOGEN – Cymbeline (1609 - 1610)

IMOGEN

[Reads] *'Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the strumpet in my bed; the testimonies whereof lie bleeding in me. I speak not out of weak surmises, but from proof as strong as my grief and as certain as I expect my revenge. That part thou, Pisanio, must act for me, if thy faith be not tainted with the breach of hers. Let thine own hands take away her life: I shall give thee opportunity at Milford-Haven. She hath my letter for the purpose where, if thou fear to strike and to make me certain it is done, thou art the pandar to her dishonour and equally to me disloyal.'*

False to his bed? What is it to be false?
To lie in watch there, and to think on him?
To weep 'twixt clock and clock? If sleep charge nature,
To break it with a fearful dream of him,
And cry myself awake? that's false to's bed? Is it?
I false! Thy conscience witness: Iachimo,
Thou didst accuse him of incontinency,
Thou then look'dst like a villain; now, me thinks
Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy
(Whose mother was her painting) hath betray'd him:
Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;
And for I am richer then to hang by the walls,
I must be ripp'd: To pieces with me: Oh!
Men's vows are women's traitors. All good seeming
By thy revolt (oh husband) shall be thought
Put on for villany; not born where't grows,
But worn a bait for ladies.

9 HAMLET – Hamlet (1600 - 1601)

HAMLET

O, that this too too solid flesh, would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew:
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, O God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world?
Fie on't! Oh fie, fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed: things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this:
But two months dead: nay, not so much; not two,
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr: so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth
Must I remember: why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on; and yet within a month?
Let me not think on't: Frailty, thy name is woman.
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears. Why she, even she.
(O, Heaven! A beast that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer) married with my uncle,
My father's brother: but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month?
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets:
It is not nor it cannot come to good.
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

10 BEROWNE – Love's Labour's Lost (1595)

BEROWNE

Have at you then affection's men at arms.
Consider what you first did swear unto:
To fast, to study, and to see no woman:
Flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth.
Say, can you fast? your stomachs are too young:
And abstinence engenders maladies.
For when would you my lord, or you, or you,
Have found the ground of study's excellence
Without the beauty of a woman's face;
For when would you (my liege) or you, or you,
In leaden contemplation have found out
Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes,
Of beauty's tutors have enrich'd you with:
Other slow arts entirely keep the brain:
And therefore, finding barren practisers,
Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil.
But love first learned in a lady's eyes,
Lives not alone immured in the brain;
But with the motion of all elements,
Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a double power,
Above their functions and their offices.
It adds a precious seeing to the eye:
A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind.
A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound.
Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockl'd snails.
Love's tongue proves dainty, Bacchus gross in taste,
And when Love speaks, the voice of all the Gods
Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.
Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
Until his ink were temper'd with Love's sighs:
O then his lines would ravish savage ears
And plant in tyrants mild humility.
From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire,
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain and nourish all the world.
Else none at all in ought proves excellent.
Then fools you were these women to forswear,
Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools,
For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love:
Or for love's sake, a word that loves all men.
Or for men's sake, the authors of these women:
Or women's sake, by whom we men are men.
Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.
It is religion to be thus forsworn.
For charity itself fulfills the law,
And who can sever love from charity?

11 ANGELO – Measure for Measure (1604)

ANGELO

What's this? what's this? is this her fault, or mine?
The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most? Ha!
Not she: nor doth she tempt: but it is I,
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be,
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman's lightness? having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie:
What dost thou? or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her foully, for those things
That make her good? O, let her brother live:
Thieves for their robbery have authority,
When judges steal themselves: what, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again?
And feast upon her eyes? What is't I dream on?
O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook: most dangerous
Is that temptation, that doth goad us on
To sin, in loving virtue: never could the strumpet,
With all her double vigour, art and nature,
Once stir my temper: but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite: Even till now,
When men were fond, I smiled and wonder'd how.

12 POSTUMOUS LEONATUS – Cymbeline (1609 - 1610)

POSTHUMUS LEONATUS

Is there no way for men to be, but women
Must be half-workers? We are all bastards;
And that most venerable man, which I
Did call my father, was, I know not where
When I was stamp'd. Some coiner with his tools
Made me a counterfeit: yet my mother seem'd
The Dian of that time: so doth my wife
The nonpareil of this. Oh, vengeance, vengeance!
Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd
And pray'd me oft forbearance; did it with
A pudency so rosy, the sweet view on't
Might well have warm'd old Saturn; that I thought her
As chaste, as unsunn'd snow. Oh, all the devils!
This yellow lachimo in an hour, wast not?
Or less; at first? Perchance he spoke not, but
Like a full-acorn'd boar, a German one,
Cried 'Oh!' and mounted; found no opposition
But what he look'd for, should oppose, and she
Should from encounter guard. Could I find out
The woman's part in me, for there's no motion
That tends to vice in man, but I affirm
It is the woman's part: be it lying, note it,
The woman's: Flattering, hers; deceiving, hers:
Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers: revenges, hers;
Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
Nice longing, slanders, mutability:
All faults that may be named, nay, that hell knows,
Why, hers, in part or all; but rather, all; For even to vice
They are not constant but are changing still
One vice, but of a minute old, for one
Not half so old as that. I'll write against them,
Detest them, curse them: yet 'tis greater skill
In a true hate, to pray they have their will:
The very devils cannot plague them better.

14 PRINCE HENRY – King Henry IV part 1 (1596 - 1597)

PRINCE HENRY

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours, that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So, when this loose behavior I throw off,
And pay the debt I never promised;
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground:
My reformation glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill,
Redeeming time, when men think least I will.

HENRY VI – Henry VI part 3 (1590 - 1591)

KING HENRY VI

This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend, with growing light,
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day, nor night.
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea,
Forced by the tide, to combat with the wind:
Now sways it that way, like the self-same sea
Forced to retire by fury of the wind.
Sometime, the flood prevails; and then the wind:
Now, one the better; then, another best;
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast;
Yet neither conqueror, nor conquered.
So is the equal of this fell war.
Here on this molehill will I sit me down,
To whom God will, there be the victory:
For Margaret my Queen, and Clifford too,
Have chid me from the battle: swearing both,
They prosper best of all when I am thence.
O God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run;
How many make the hour full complete,
How many hours bring about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years, a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours, must I tend my flock;
So many hours, must I take my rest:
So many hours, must I contemplate:
So many hours, must I sport myself:
So many days, my ewes have been with young:
So many weeks, ere the poor fools will wean:
So many years, ere I shall shear the fleece:
So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,
Pass'd over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah, what a life were this? how sweet? how lovely?
And to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure, and sweetly he enjoys,
Is far beyond a prince's delicates,
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couched in a curious bed,
When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him.

15 CASSIUS – Julius Caesar (1599)

CASSIUS

I know that virtue to be in you Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favour.
Well, honour is the subject of my story:
I cannot tell, what you and other men
Think of this life: but for my single self,
I had as lief not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing, as I myself.
I was born free as Caesar, so were you:
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold, as well as he.
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber, chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me 'Darest thou Cassius now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in,
And bade him follow; so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy.
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Caesar cried 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink'
I (as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear) so, from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar: And this man,
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake: 'Tis true, this god did shake,
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye, whose bend doth awe the world,
Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his, that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
As a sick girl. Ye gods, it doth amaze me,
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world,
And bear the palm alone.

SEBASTIAN – Twelfth Night (1601 – 1602)

SEBASTIAN

This is the air, that is the glorious sun;
This pearl she gave me, I do feel't, and see't,
And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
Yet 'tis not madness. Where's Antonio, then?
I could not find him at the Elephant:
Yet there he was, and there I found this credit,
That he did range the town to seek me out,
His counsel now might do me golden service,
For though my soul disputes well with my sense,
That this may be some error, but no madness,
Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune,
So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to distrust mine eyes,
And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
To any other trust, but that I am mad,
Or else the lady's mad; yet, if 'twere so,
She could not sway her house, command her followers,
Take, and give back affairs, and their dispatch
With such a smooth, discreet, and stable bearing
As I perceive she does: there's something in't
That is deceivable. But here the lady comes.