



APPROVED LIST OF PLAYWRIGHTS

We encourage participants to select monologues from one of the following playwrights. We consider these playwrights essential members of the classic theatre canon.

Ayad Akhtar, David Auburn, Annie Baker, Amir Baraka, Anton Chekov, Alice Childress, Caryl Churchill, Nilo Cruz, Christopher Durang, Maria Irene Fornés, Federico García Lorca, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Lorraine Hansberry, David Henry Hwang, Quiara Legría Hudes, Henrik Isben, Rajiv Joseph, Tony Kushner, Tracy Letts, David Lindsay-Abaire, Christopher Marlowe, Arthur Miller, Molière, Lynn Nottage, Qui Nguyen, Eugene O'Neill, Suzan-Lori Parks, Manuel Puig, Jose Rivera, Sarah Ruhl, William Shakespeare, Sam Shepard, Ntozake Shange, John Patrick Shanley, Anna Deavere Smith, Tom Stoppard, Diana Son, Oscar Wilde, Thornton Wilder, Paula Vogel, Luis Valdez, Tennessee Williams, August Wilson, George C. Wolfe, Mary Zimmerman.

Can't decide?

Choose from our **monologues examples** below!



Note to Actors:

We encourage students to research and be mindful of their character's ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Gender bent and gender-inclusive monologue selection is encouraged.

Eurydice in *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl

Sarah Ruhl's tragedy, *Eurydice*, retells the ancient story of Orpheus and Eurydice: two lovers torn apart by Hades, who kidnaps Eurydice and takes her to the underworld. Orpheus goes on a treacherous journey to retrieve the love of his life. In this monologue, Eurydice has lost all her memories after crossing the river Styx. She speaks to her father, whom she does not recognize.

Eurydice: At last, a porter to meet me! (To the Father) Do you happen to know where the bank is? I need money. I've just arrived. I need to exchange my money at the Bureau de Change. I didn't bring traveler's checks because I left in such a hurry. They didn't even let me pack my suitcase. There's nothing in it! That's funny, right? – ha, ha! I suppose I can buy new clothes here. I would really love a bath. What is that language you're speaking? It gives me tingles. Say it again. Oooh – it's like fruit. Again! (Strangely imitating) Eurydice, I'm your father! How funny! You remind me of something but I can't understand a word you're saying. I need a reservation. For the fancy hotel. I would like a continental breakfast, please. Maybe some rolls and butter. Oh – and jam. Please take my suitcase to my room, if you would. What? No rooms? Where do people sleep? I have to say I'm very disappointed. It's been a tiring day. I've been traveling all day – first on a river, then on an elevator that rained, then on a train... I thought someone would meet me at the station... I don't know where I am and there are all these stones and I hate them! They're horrible! I want a bath! I thought someone would meet me at the station!

Rosencrantz in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard

Tom Stoppard's absurdist comedy retells Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through the perspective of two minor characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The two friends are in Elsinore on a mission from Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, to find the source of Hamlet's gloom. Throughout the play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern eavesdrop on conversations happening around them and pass the time by talking and playing games. In this monologue, Rosencrantz contemplates mortality in a conversation with Guildenstern.

Rosencrantz: Do you ever think of yourself as actually dead, lying in a box with the lid on it? Nor do I really. Silly to be depressed by it. I mean, one thinks of it like being alive in a box. One keeps forgetting to take into account that one is dead. Which should make all the difference. Shouldn't it? I mean, you'd never know you were in a box would you? It would be just like you were asleep in a box. Not that I'd like to sleep in a box, mind you. Not without any air. You'd wake up dead for a start and then where would you be? In a box. That's the bit I don't like, frankly. That's why I don't think of it. Because you'd be helpless wouldn't you? Stuffed in a box like that. I mean, you'd be in there forever. Even taking into account the fact that you're dead. It isn't a pleasant thought. Especially if you're dead, really. Ask yourself: if I asked you straight off I'm going to stuff you in this box now – would you rather to be alive or dead? Naturally you'd prefer to be alive. Life in a box is better than no life at all. I expect. You'd have a chance at least. You could lie there thinking, well, at least I'm not dead. In a minute, somebody's going to bang on the lid and tell me to come out. (knocks) "Hey you! What's your name? Come out of there!" It's easy to be depressed by it. I wouldn't think about it if I were you.

Biff in *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller

Miller's tragic masterpiece, *Death of a Salesman*, depicts a middle-class family living in Brooklyn, New York dealing with the false promises of the American Dream. In this moment, Biff unleashes years of pent-up frustration on his father, Willy Lowmen, after coming to the shattering realization that his father raised him to chase all the wrong dreams.

Biff: Now hear this, Willy, this is me. You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was jailed. I stole myself out of every good job since high school. And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is! It's time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it! Willy! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw- the sky. I saw the things that I love in the world. The work and the food and the time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you! I am not a leader of me, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash-can like all the rest of them! I'm a dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it! A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes anymore, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home! Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all. Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?

Beneatha in *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry

Hansberry's moving drama, *A Raisin in the Sun*, centers around a family living in Chicago during the 1950s. After the grandfather of the Younger family passes away, the family receives an insurance check for \$10,000. An hour before this scene, Walter Younger, Beneatha Younger's brother, confesses to the family that he lost the money in a poor business deal, destroying Beneatha's dream of going to medical school.

Beneatha: When I was small... we used to take our sleds out in the wintertime and the only hills we had were the ice-covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day... and it was very dangerous, you know... far too steep... and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk and we saw his face just split open right there in front of us... And I remember standing there looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and sewed it all up... and the next time I saw Rufus he just had a little line down the middle of his face.... I never got over that... What one person could do for another, fix him up – sew up the problem, make him all right again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world... I wanted to do that. I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know – and make them whole again. This was truly being God... It used to be so important to me. It used to matter. I used to care. Yes – I think I stopped. Because it doesn't seem deep enough, close enough to what ails mankind! It was a child's way of seeing things – or an idealist's. You are still where I left off. You with all of your talk and dreams about Africa! You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism – (loftily, mocking it) with the Penicillin of Independence – ! Independence and then what? What about the crooks and thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before – only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new independence – WHAT ABOUT THEM?

Julia in *Fefu and Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornés

Fefu and Her Friends takes place in the 1930s. Fefu has gathered seven of her friends to plan a fundraiser, one of which is Julia. Julia has recently suffered from a terrible hunting accident and is now in a wheelchair. In this monologue, Julia reflects on the concept of death.

Julia: I feel we are constantly threatened by death, every second, every instant, it's there. And every moment something rescues us. Something rescues us from death every moment of our lives. For every moment we live we have to thank something. We have to be grateful to something that fights for us and saves us. I have felt lifeless and in the face of death. Death is not anything. It's being lifeless and I have felt lifeless sometimes for a brief moment, but I have been rescued by these...guardians. I am not sure who these guardians are. I only know they exist because I have felt their absence. I think we have come to know them as life, and we have become familiar with certain forms they take. Our sight is a form they take. That is why we take pleasure in seeing things, and we find some things beautiful. The sun is a guardian. Those things we take pleasure in are usually guardians. We enjoy looking at the sunlight when it comes through the window. Don't we? We, as people, are guardians to each other when we give love. And then of course we have white cells and antibodies protecting us. Those moments when I feel lifeless have occurred, and I am afraid one day the guardians won't come in time and I will be defenseless. I will die...for no apparent reason.

Konstantin in *The Seagull* by Anton Chekov

The Seagull is a play set in late 19th century Russia on a country estate during the summer. At the estate, Konstantin Treplev, a young writer, prepares to showcase his experimental play. His love interest and star of the play, Nina, is a young woman from a nearby estate. In this monologue, Konstantin examines his feelings towards Nina.

Konstantin: (*pulling petals off a flower*) She loves me - she loves me not... She loves me - she loves me not... Loves me, loves me not. (*Laughs.*) There you are - she doesn't love me. Well, of course she doesn't. She wants to live and love and dress in light colors, and there am I, twenty-five years old, perpetually reminding her that she's stopped being young. When I'm not there she's thirty-two - when I am she's forty - three; and that's why she hates me. Then again I don't acknowledge the theatre. She loves the theatre - she thinks she's serving humanity and the sacred cause of art, whereas in my view the modern theatre is an anthology of stereotypes and received ideas. When the curtain goes up, and there, in a room with three walls lit by artificial lighting because it's always evening, these great artists, these high priests in the temple of art, demonstrate how people eat and drink, how they love and walk about and wear their suits; when out of these banal scenes and trite words they attempt to extract a moral - some small and simple moral with a hundred household uses; when under a thousand different disguises they keep serving me up the same old thing, the same old thing, the same old thing - then I run and don't stop running, just as Maupassant ran from the sight of the Eiffel Tower, that weighed on his brain with its sheer vulgarity. What we need are new artistic forms. And if we don't get new forms it would be better if we had nothing at all.

***Blanche* in A Streetcar Named Desire**

by Tennessee Williams

Set in 1940s New Orleans, *A Streetcar Named Desire* explores the complicated relationship between two sisters, Blanche and Stella and their own complicated relationships with their romantic partners. Blanche, a schoolteacher, arrives at her sister's apartment to bare the bad news of the loss of Belle Reve, their ancestral home due to the death of their family members. Here, Blanche reveals how the deaths in her family, including the loss of her parents and her husband's suicide, have caused great strain on her mental wellbeing.

Blanche: I, I, I took the blows on my face and my body! All those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard. Father, Mother, Margaret that dreadful way. So big with it, she couldn't be put in a coffin, but had to be burned like rubbish! You came just in time for funerals Stella. And funerals are pretty compared to death. Funerals are quiet, but deaths not always. Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, sometimes it rattles, sometimes they cry out to you, "Don't let me go!" Even the old sometimes say it- "Don't let me go". As if you could stop them! Funerals are quiet, with pretty flowers. And oh, what lovely boxes they pack you away in! Unless you were there at the bed when they cried out "Hold me" you'd never suspect there was struggle for breath and bleeding. You didn't dream, but I saw! Saw! And now you sit there telling me with your eyes that I let the place go. How in hell do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive Miss Stella! And old Cousin Jessie, right after Margaret's, hers! The Grim Reaper put his tent up on our doorstep! Stella, Belle Reve was his headquarters. Honey, that's how it slipped through my fingers. Which of them left us a fortune? Which of them left us a cent of insurance even? Only poor Jessie- one hundred to pay for her coffin. That was it Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at the school! Yes, accuse me! Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go. I let the place go! Where were you Stella?

Rosalind in *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare

In Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Rosalind is betrothed to Orlando. She disguises herself as a man named Ganymede to test Orlando's true love for her. In this scene, the shepherd Silvius has just been rejected by Phebe, a shepardess. Rosalind (as Ganymede) berates Phoebe, saying that she is rather plain and should be happy to win Silvius's love.

Rosalind: And why, I pray you? Who might be your mother,
That you insult, exult, and all at once,
Over the wretched? What though you have no beauty,—
As by my faith, I see no more in you
Than without candle may go dark to bed,—
Must you be therefore proud and pitiless?
Why, what means this? Why do you look on me?
I see no more in you than in the ordinary
Of nature's sale-work. O, my little life!
I think she means to tangle my eyes too.
No, faith, proud mistress, hope not after it:
'Tis not your inky brows, your black silk hair,
Your bugle eyeballs, nor your cheek of cream,
That can entame my spirits to your worship.
You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her,
Like foggy south puffing with wind and rain?
You are a thousand times a properer man
Than she a woman: 'tis such fools as you
That make the world full of ill-favour'd children:
'Tis not her glass, but you, that flatters her;
And out of you she sees herself more proper
Than any of her lineaments can show her.
But, mistress, know yourself: down on your knees,
And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love:
For I must tell you friendly in your ear,
Sell when you can; you are not for all markets.

Macbeth in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

In act I scene VII of *Macbeth*, Macbeth considers whether he can go through with the murder of Duncan, the King of Scotland, in order to take the throne for himself. Although Macbeth is prophesized to become king by the Weird Sisters, Macbeth is conflicted: Duncan is his cousin, as well as a virtuous King. He wonders if he should--or even can--carry out the deed.

Macbeth: If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust;
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.

Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

by William Shakespeare

Four lovers, a group of actors, and a few mischievous fairies cross paths in an enchanted forest. This is the premise of Shakespeare's comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play begins when Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius (who her father has chosen for her) because she is in love with another. In this monologue, Helena, Hermia's friend, processes her unrequited love for Demetrius, who is in love with Hermia.

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, holding 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 everywhere;

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 tomorrow 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.

Hamlet in *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's most famous tragedy tells the story of Hamlet, the prince of Denmark. He is tasked with killing Claudius, the man who murdered his father. In this monologue, Hamlet expresses his frustrations with his inaction in avenging his father's death.

Hamlet: O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That, from her working, all his visage wann'd,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing! No, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain?