

Shakespeare Monologue options (feel free to bring in others!)

Orsino (From the play *Twelfth Night*)

If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.

Context: Orsino wishes that he wasn't so in love with the Countess Olivia, and asks his musicians to play love songs until he is sick of love. After getting tired of the music and asking the musicians to stop ("enough; no more") he reflects on how when someone is in love everything else seems cheap and boring in comparison.

Cressida (From the play *Troilus and Cressida*)

Hard to seem won: but I was won, my lord,
With the first glance that ever--pardon me--
If I confess much, you will play the tyrant.
I love you now; but not, till now, so much
But I might master it: in faith, I lie;
My thoughts were like unbridled children, grown
Too headstrong for their mother. See, we fools!
Why have I blabb'd? who shall be true to us,
When we are so unsecret to ourselves?
But, though I loved you well, I woo'd you not;
And yet, good faith, I wish'd myself a man,
Or that we women had men's privilege
Of speaking first. Sweet, bid me hold my tongue,
For in this rapture I shall surely speak
The thing I shall repent. See, see, your silence,
Cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws

My very soul of counsel! stop my mouth.

Context: Cressida starts by confessing her love to Troilus, a young soldier in the Trojan Army, before realizing that she might have said too much and tries to backtrack (“pardon me—if I confess much, you will play the tyrant”). She then goes back and forth between saying she loves him and that she is still in control of her feelings (“I love you now; but not, till now, so much but I might master it”). After going back and forth she wishes she had kept her thoughts private (“my thoughts were like unbridled children, grown too headstrong for their mother”) and tries to get him to stop her from revealing anything else (“Sweet, bid me hold my tongue”). Meanwhile Troilus is too nervous to say anything because he feels the same towards her so doesn’t respond at all! This causes Cressida to playfully blame his silence for tricking her into talking too much (“See, see, your silence, cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws my very soul of counsel!”)

Imogen (from the play *Cymbeline*)

Away, I do condemn mine ears that have
So long attended thee. If thou wert honorable,
Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not
For such an end thou seek’st—as base as strange.
Thou wrong’st a gentleman, who is as far
From thy report as thou from honor, and
Solicits here a lady that disdains
Thee and the devil alike. What ho, Pisanio!
The King my father shall be made acquainted
Of thy assault. If he shall think it fit
A saucy stranger in his court to mart
As in a Romish stew, and to expound
His beastly mind to us, he hath a court
He little cares for and a daughter who
He not respects at all. What ho, Pisanio!

Context: The Princess Imogen is talking to a stranger named Jachimo, who has just been telling her lies about her husband, who is living in France. Imogen sees through Jachimo’s lies and tells him to get out the court of the King, her father. She accuses him of telling lies about a good man (“Thou wrong’st a gentleman”) and of trying to seduce her even though she thinks of him as no better than the devil (“and solicits here a lady that disdains thee and the devil alike.”) She calls for her servant Pisanio to enter (“What ho, Pisanio!) and when he doesn’t come she threatens to tell her father about Jachimo’s behavior (“The King my father shall be made acquainted of thy assault”).

Caliban (From the play *The Tempest*)

This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,

Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strokedst me and madest much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee
And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king: and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' the island.

Context: Caliban is referred to as a monster by the other characters in the play, but was the original inhabitant of a magical island that was once ruled by his mother, a witch named Sycorax. In this monologue he talks about how his home was stolen from him, and how at first the Sorcerer Prospero was kind to him and taught him the English words from things like the sun and moon ("teach me how to name the bigger light, and how the less, than burn by day and night"), which tricked Caliban into showing him all around the island ("I loved thee, and show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle"). But now Caliban regrets having helped Prospero and curses him ("All the charms of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!") because he imprisons Caliban like a pig in a pig sty on one part of the island ("you sty me in this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me the rest of the island").