

Overdone Shakespeare monologues

Survey from www.monologueaudition.com

This list was compiled by a few of us including Walton Wilson, Head of Voice and Speech and Associate Chair of the Yale School of Drama; and Atlantic/NYU Shakespeare teacher [Charles Tuthill](#), who also coaches many actors for graduate school auditions.

I asked [Deloss Brown](#), who taught Shakespeare at Juilliard for years, and he said, “The problem, dear, is that these are only overdone if you are an expert. When you properly present any of them to a bunch of people who haven't seen them before, they fall over in astonishment.”

I agree, and let me clarify – I think actors should work on ALL of these speeches; you probably just don't want to do them for your grad or undergrad auditions because everyone else has, and is. Like most overdone monologues, they are overdone because they are some of the best, and the most accessible. Most actors know *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*; fewer actors know *Cymbeline*, *Coriolanus*, or *Henry VIII*.

ALL Shakespeare monologues can be viewed as overdone because there are a limited number, especially women's. But these are the ones we consider to be MOST overdone in recent years. [Comments and additions are invited](#).

GREAT SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUE RESOURCES

Before listing the overdone pieces, here is some good news: Thanks to the internet, it is very easy to find a Shakespeare monologue to work on. Go to one of these sites:

<http://www.shakespeare-monologues.org/womensmonos.htm>

<http://www.shakespeare-monologues.org/mensmonos.htm>

You will see that there are many Shakespeares that are not on the lists below. The pages list women's and men's monologues with the play, character, verse/prose, act, scene, line number, and first line, which when you click on it, will instantly download you a pdf of that monologue. It's that easy. Pick a monologue that appeals to you a little bit. Then go to:

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

If you don't know the play already, you can read the plot summary and find out more about the character; and then, you can and must read the whole play. The site (and there are many others, just search under Shakespeare) is also filled with facts and links that will enrich your understanding of the play, and therefore your performance.

WOMEN'S SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUES THAT ARE OVERDONE IN AUDITIONS:

All's Well That Ends Well/HELENA/Then I confess, here on my knee
As You Like It/PHEBE/Think not I love him, though I ask for him
As You Like It/PHEBE/I would not be thy executioner
As You Like It /ROSALIND/And why, I pray you? Who might be your mother
Hamlet/OPHELIA/Alas my lord I have been so affrighted
Hamlet/OPHELIA/O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown
Henry IV Pt 2/LADY PERCY/O yet, for God's sake, go not to these wars!
Julius Caesar/PORTIA/Nor for yours neither. You've ungently Brutus
Julius Caesar/PORTIA/Is Brutus sick? And is it physical
King John/CONSTANCE/I am not mad, this hair I tear is mine...
Macbeth/LADY MACBETH/Was the hope drunk wherein you dressed yourself?
The Merchant of Venice/PORTIA/I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two
The Merchant of Venice/PORTIA/You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand
The Merchant of Venice/PORTIA/The quality of mercy is not strain'd
A Midsummer Night's Dream/HELENA/How happy some o'er other some
Othello/EMELIA/But I do think it is their husband's faults if their wives do fall
Richard III/ANNE/Set down, set down your honourable load
Romeo and Juliet/JULIET/O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou
Romeo and Juliet/JULIET/Gallop apace, you fiery footed steeds
Troilus and Cressida/CRESSIDA/Hard to seem won: but I was won, my lord
Twelfth Night/VIOLA/I left no ring with her: what means this lady?
Two Gentlemen of Verona/JULIA/O hateful hands, to tear such loving words!
The Winter's Tale/HERMIONE/Sir, spare your threats
The Winter's Tale/HERMIONE/Since what I am to say must be that
The Winter's Tale/PAULINA/What studied torments, tyrant hast for me?

MEN'S SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUES THAT ARE OVERDONE IN AUDITIONS:

As You Like It/ORLANDO/ As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion
As You Like It/JAQUES/All the world's a stage
Hamlet/HAMLET/To be or not to be
Hamlet/HAMLET/O what a rogue and peasant slave am I
Hamlet/HAMLET/Speak the speech
Hamlet/HAMLET/Alas poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio
Henry IV Pt 1/HOTSPUR/My liege I did deny no prisoners
Henry V/CHORUS/All prologues
Henry V/Henry/Once more into the breach dear friends once more
Henry V/Henry/This day is called the feast of Crispian
Julius Caesar/ANTONY/Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears
King Lear/EDMUND/Thou, Nature, art my goddess
Macbeth/MACBETH/If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
Macbeth/MACBETH/Is this a dagger I see before me

Macbeth/MACBETH/Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Measure for Measure/ANGELO/Who will believe thee Isabel
A Midsummer Night's Dream/PUCK/ My mistress with a monster is in love
Othello/IAGO/Thus do I ever make my fool, my purse
Othello/IAGO/And what's he then that says I play the villain?
Richard III/RICHARD/Now is the winter of our discontent
Romeo and Juliet/MERCUTIO/Then I see Queen Mab hath been with you
Romeo and Juliet/ROMEO/But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
Twelfth Night/SEBASTIAN/This is the air, that is the glorious sun
Two Gentlemen of Verona/LAUNCE/When a man's servant shall play the cur
Two Gentlemen of Verona/PROTEUS/Even as one heat another heat expels

Go to

[Overdone Monologues](#) – how the survey was done and what it reveals
[More survey results](#) – more opinions and preferences on material choice
[Men's overdone monologues \(contemporary\)](#)
[Women's overdone monologues \(contemporary\)](#)

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