

How To SPEAK THE SPEECH!



*Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you,
trippingly on the tongue.*

— Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 2

Inspired by William Shakespeare's directive to "speak the speech" and our gorgeous garden setting, we invite you to use your voice to bring these famous speeches to life on stage! Pick a selection from one of Shakespeare's famous plays, take the stage, and speak the speech! Each selection includes the original text, a modern translation, and a character description.

Film yourself and share with #ASFspeaks + #SPEAKtheSPEECH

Need a little inspiration?

Check out actors performing these and other Shakespeare monologues.

[ASF.net/SPEAK](https://www.asf.net/SPEAK)

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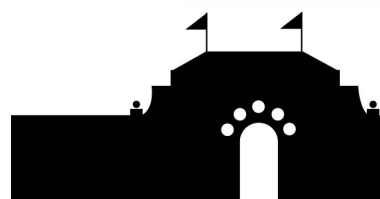
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ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Romeo & Juliet

ORIGINAL

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

JULIET appears in a window above

But soft! What light through yonder window
breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.

Be not her maid since she is envious.

Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off!

It is my lady. Oh, it is my love.

Oh, that she knew she were!

She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?

Her eye discourses. I will answer it.—

I am too bold. 'Tis not to me she speaks.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those
stars

As daylight doth a lamp. Her eye in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not
night.

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.

Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand

That I might touch that cheek!

MODERN

ROMEO

It's easy for someone to joke about scars if
they've never been cut.

JULIET enters on the balcony.

But wait, what's that light in the window over
there? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Rise
up, beautiful sun, and kill the jealous moon.

The moon is already sick and pale with grief
because you, Juliet, her maid, are more
beautiful than she.

Don't be her maid, because she is jealous.

Virginity makes her look sick and green. Only
fools hold on to their virginity. Let it go. Oh,
there's my lady! Oh, it is my love. Oh, I wish she
knew how much I love her. She's talking, but
she's not saying anything. So what? Her eyes
are saying something. I will answer them. I am

too bold. She's not talking to me. Two of the
brightest stars in the whole sky had to go away
on business, and they're asking her eyes to
twinkle in their places until they return. What if
her eyes were in the sky and the stars were in
her head?—The brightness of her cheeks would
outshine the stars the way the sun outshines a
lamp. If her eyes were in the night sky, they
would shine so brightly through space that birds
would start singing, thinking her light was the
light of day. Look how she leans her hand on
her cheek. Oh, I wish I was the glove on that
hand so that I could touch that cheek.

About the Character — Romeo

The son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague. A young man of about sixteen, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, and sensitive. Though impulsive and immature, his idealism and passion make him an extremely likable character. He lives in the middle of a violent feud between his family and the Capulets, but he is not at all interested in violence. His only interest is love. At the beginning of the play he is madly in love with a woman named Rosaline, but the instant he lays eyes on Juliet, he falls in love with her and forgets Rosaline. Thus, Shakespeare gives us every reason to question how real Romeo's new love is, but Romeo goes to extremes to prove the seriousness of his feelings. He secretly marries Juliet, the daughter of his father's worst enemy; he happily takes abuse from Tybalt; and he would rather die than live without his beloved. Romeo is also an affectionate and devoted friend to his relative Benvolio, Mercutio, and Friar Lawrence.

Romeo & Juliet

ORIGINAL

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.
'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name, which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

MODERN

JULIET

(not knowing ROMEO hears her) Oh, Romeo,
Romeo, why do you have to be Romeo? Forget
about your father and change your name. Or
else, if you won't change your name, just swear
you love me and I'll stop being a Capulet.
(still not knowing ROMEO hears her) It's only
your name that's my enemy. You'd still be
yourself even if you stopped being a Montague.
What's a Montague anyway? It isn't a hand, a
foot, an arm, a face, or any other part of a man.
Oh, be some other name! What does a name
mean? The thing we call a rose would smell just
as sweet if we called it by any other name.
Romeo would be just as perfect even if he
wasn't called Romeo. Romeo, lose your name.
Trade in your name—which really has nothing
to do with you—and take all of me in exchange.

About the Character — Juliet

The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. A beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Juliet begins the play as a naïve child who has thought little about love and marriage, but she grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo, the son of her family's great enemy. Because she is a girl in an aristocratic family, she has none of the freedom Romeo has to roam around the city, climb over walls in the middle of the night, or get into swordfights. Nevertheless, she shows amazing courage in trusting her entire life and future to Romeo, even refusing to believe the worst reports about him after he gets involved in a fight with her cousin. Juliet's closest friend and confidant is her nurse, though she's willing to shut the Nurse out of her life the moment the Nurse turns against Romeo.

Hamlet

ORIGINAL

HAMLET

To be, or not to be? That is the question—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep—
No more—and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished! To die, to sleep.
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the
rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may
come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of
time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's
contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

MODERN

HAMLET

The question is: is it better to be alive or dead?
Is it nobler to put up with all the nasty things
that luck throws your way, or to fight against all
those troubles by simply putting an end to them
once and for all? Dying, sleeping—that's all
dying is—a sleep that ends all the heartache
and shocks that life on earth gives us—that's an
achievement to wish for. To die, to sleep—to
sleep, maybe to dream. Ah, but there's the
catch: in death's sleep who knows what kind of
dreams might come, after we've put the noise
and commotion of life behind us. That's
certainly something to worry about. That's the
consideration that makes us stretch out our
sufferings so long.
After all, who would put up with all life's
humiliations—the abuse from superiors, the
insults of arrogant men, the pangs of
unrequited love, the inefficiency of the legal
system, the rudeness of people in office, and
the mistreatment good people have to take
from bad—when you could simply take out your
knife and call it quits? Who would choose to
grunt and sweat through an exhausting life,
unless they were afraid of something dreadful
after death, the undiscovered country from
which no visitor returns, which we wonder
about without getting any answers from and
which makes us stick to the evils we know
rather than rush off to seek the ones we don't?
Fear of death makes us all cowards, and our
natural boldness becomes weak with too much
thinking. Actions that should be carried out
at once get misdirected, and stop being actions
at all.

About the Character — Hamlet

The Prince of Denmark, the title character, and the protagonist. About thirty years old at the start of the play, Hamlet is the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet, and the nephew of the present king, Claudius. Hamlet is melancholy, bitter, and cynical, full of hatred for his uncle's scheming and disgust for his mother's sexuality. A reflective and thoughtful young man who has studied at the University of Wittenberg, Hamlet is often indecisive and hesitant, but at other times prone to rash and impulsive acts.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

ORIGINAL

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long.
Else the Puck a liar call.
So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

MODERN

ROBIN

If we actors have offended you, just think of it this way and everything will be all right—you were asleep when you saw these visions, and this silly and pathetic story was no more real than a dream. Ladies and gentlemen, don't get upset with me. If you forgive us, we'll make everything all right. I'm an honest Puck, and I swear that if we're lucky enough not to get hissed at, we'll make it up to you soon. If not, then I'm a liar. So good night to everyone. Give me some applause, if we're friends, and Robin will make everything up to you.

About the Character — Robin Goodfellow (Puck)

Also known as Robin Goodfellow, Puck is Oberon's jester, a mischievous fairy who delights in playing pranks on mortals. Though *A Midsummer Night's Dream* divides its action between several groups of characters, Puck is the closest thing the play has to a protagonist. His enchanting, mischievous spirit pervades the atmosphere, and his antics are responsible for many of the complications that propel the other main plots: he mistakes the young Athenians, applying the love potion to Lysander instead of Demetrius, thereby causing chaos within the group of young lovers; he also transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

ORIGINAL

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 winged Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment 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 looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed 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.

MODERN

HELENA

It's amazing how much happier some people are than others! People throughout Athens think I'm as beautiful as Hermia. But so what? Demetrius doesn't think so, and that's all that matters. He refuses to admit what everyone else knows. But even though he's making a mistake by obsessing over Hermia so much, I'm also making a mistake, since I obsess over him. Love can make worthless things beautiful. When we're in love, we don't see with our eyes but with our minds. That's why paintings of Cupid, the god of love, always show him as blind. And love doesn't have good judgment either—Cupid, has wings and no eyes, so he's bound to be reckless and hasty. That's why they say love is a child. because it makes such bad choices. Just as boys like to play games by telling lies, Cupid breaks his promises all the time. Before Demetrius ever saw Hermia, he showered me with promises and swore he'd be mine forever. But when he got all hot and bothered over Hermia, his promises melted away. I'll go tell Demetrius that Hermia is running away tomorrow night. He'll run after her. If he's grateful to me for this information, it'll be worth my pain in helping him pursue my rival Hermia. At least I'll get to see him when he goes, and then again when he comes back.

About the Character — Helena

A young woman of Athens, in love with Demetrius. Demetrius and Helena were once betrothed, but when Demetrius met Helena's friend Hermia, he fell in love with her and abandoned Helena. Lacking confidence in her looks, Helena thinks that Demetrius and Lysander are mocking her when the fairies' mischief causes them to fall in love with her.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

ORIGINAL

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy.
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.
The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension.
We are their parents and original.

MODERN

TITANIA

These are nothing but jealous lies. Since the beginning of midsummer, my fairies and I haven't been able to meet anywhere to do our dances in the wind without being disturbed by you and your arguments. We haven't been able to meet on a hill or in a valley, in the forest or a meadow, by a pebbly fountain or a rushing stream, or on the beach by the ocean without you disturbing us. And because you interrupt us so that we can't dance for them, the winds have made fogs rise up out of the sea and fall down on the rivers so that the rivers flood, just to get revenge on you. So all the work that oxen and farmers have done in plowing the fields has been for nothing, because the unripe grain has rotted before it was ripe. Sheep pens are empty in the middle of the flooded fields, and the crows get fat from eating the dead bodies of infected sheep. All the fields where people usually play games are filled with mud, and you can't even see the elaborate mazes that people create in the grass, because no one walks in them anymore and they've all grown over. It's not winter here for the human mortals, so they're not protected by the holy hymns and carols that they sing in winter. So the pale, angry moon, who controls the tides, fills the air with diseases. As a consequence of this bad weather and these bad moods the seasons have started to change. Cold frosts spread over the red roses, and the icy winter wears a crown of sweet summer flowers as some sick joke. Spring, summer, fertile autumn and angry winter have all changed places, and now the confused world doesn't know which is which. And this is all because of our argument. We are responsible for this.

About the Character — Titania

The beautiful queen of the fairies, Titania resists the attempts of her husband, Oberon, to make a knight of the young Indian prince that she has been given. Titania's brief, potion-induced love for Nick Bottom, whose head Puck has transformed into that of an ass, yields the play's foremost example of the contrast motif.