

2026 JOHN BELL SCHOLARSHIP MONOLOGUE LIST



**SHAKESPEARE
BELL**

Henry 5 (2025)
Photo: Brett Boardman
Actor: Harrison Mills

JULIUS CAESAR

ACT 1, SCENE 2 [EDITED]

Cassius is a Roman senator. Here he speaks to Brutus, a fellow senator, about Julius Caesar, the ruler of Rome. Cassius is concerned that Julius Caesar has risen above his station and now poses a threat to the republic. In fact, the Roman people have started treating Julius Caesar like a god. In this speech, Cassius tells Brutus stories of Caesar's physical weakness, arguing that he is merely a mortal man like them, not a god.

CASSIUS

Well, honour is the subject of my story.
 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;
 But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
 Caesar cried 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'
 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;
 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.

Tiber – a river that runs through the centre of Rome, its main waterway

accoutred – clothed

we did buffet it – they fought against the rough waves as they swam

bade – commanded or requested

Titinius – a Roman officer

bear the palm – the palm branch was a symbol of victory and glory

JULIUS CAESAR

ACT 2, SCENE 1 [EDITED]

Portia is married to Brutus, a Roman Senator who has decided to join the conspiracy against Julius Caesar and assassinate him. Portia does not know anything about her husband's plans, but she has witnessed the moral turmoil Brutus is in through his recent behaviours. She senses that something is wrong and, in this speech, urges her husband to trust her and tell her what is causing him so much grief and distress.

PORTIA

You've ungently, Brutus,
 Stole from my bed: and yesternight, at supper,
 You suddenly arose, and walk'd about,
 Musing and sighing, with your arms across,
 And when I ask'd you what the matter was,
 You stared upon me with ungentle looks;
 I urged you further; then you scratch'd your head,
 And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot;
 Yet I insisted, yet you answer'd not,
 But, with an angry wafture of your hand,
 Gave sign for me to leave you: so I did;
 It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep,
 And could it work so much upon your shape
 As it hath much prevail'd on your condition,
 I should not know you, Brutus. Dear my lord,
 Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.
 Is Brutus sick? and is it physical
 To walk unbraced and suck up the humours
 Of the dank morning? No, my Brutus;
 You have some sick offence within your mind,
 Which, by the right and virtue of my place,
 I ought to know of: and, upon my knees,
 I charm you, by my once-commended beauty,
 By all your vows of love and that great vow
 Which did incorporate and make us one,
 That you unfold to me, yourself, your half.

wafture – a waving gesture, flourish

prevail'd – influenced, have power over

unbraced – not fastened, loosened

humours – dampness, moisture

JULIUS CAESAR

ACT 3, SCENE 2 [EDITED]

Mark Antony's friend and ruler of Rome, Julius Caesar, has just been assassinated. Brutus, one of the conspirators responsible for Julius Caesar's death, has just addressed the Roman public in a speech explaining their reasons for the murder. The public is convinced and on Brutus' side. Next, Mark Antony addresses the crowd. In this speech, Antony, a skilled orator, very carefully and cleverly sways public opinion back towards Caesar and against the conspirators.

MARK ANTONY

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them;
 The good is oft interred with their bones;
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--
 For Brutus is an honourable man;
 So are they all, all honourable men--
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
 But Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 Bear with me;
 My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
 And I must pause till it come back to me.

interred – buried, entombed

grievous – extremely serious

captives – people who have been taken prisoner

coffer – a box for storing money or valuables

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

ACT 4, SCENE 1 (EDITED)

Beatrice is the cousin of Hero, who has been publicly accused of infidelity by her fiancé, Claudio. At their wedding, Claudio (under the impression that Hero has been unfaithful to him) has publicly accused her and broken off their engagement. Hero, who has not been unfaithful, is confused and distraught. In this speech after the dramatic event, Beatrice implores Claudio's friend Benedick to avenge her cousin Hero's honour and kill Claudio. Yet Benedick refuses to fight his friend, angering Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio! You kill me to deny it. Farewell. I am gone, though I am here: there is no love in you: nay, I pray you, let me go. In faith, I will go. You dare easier be friends with me than fight with my enemy. Is Claudio not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands; and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour, – O, God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place. Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone. Princes and counties! Surely, a princely testimony, a goodly count; a sweet gallant surely! O that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into courtesies, valour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

kinswoman – female relation

bear her in hand until they come to take hands – support her/stand by her publicly until they were about to marry

unmitigated rancour – uncontrolled bitterness/hatred

gallant – a fine gentleman, man of fashion, showy, fancy

MACBETH

ACT 1, SCENE 5 [EDITED]

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth have agreed to murder King Duncan to take the Scottish crown. While a feast at their house is taking place, Macbeth leaves the table having second thoughts about the plan. Lady Macbeth goes looking for him and asks why he has left the dinner table. Macbeth tells her that he has changed his mind and no longer wants to murder Duncan. In this speech, Lady Macbeth confronts him for not sticking to their agreed plan, questioning his love, courage and manhood.

LADY MACBETH

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
Like the poor cat i' the adage?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you.

Esteem'st – highly regard, admire, respect

cat i' the adage – an adage is an old proverb or saying, here she refers to a well-known proverb about a cat that wants to eat a fish but is too scared of getting its paws wet to try to get it

durst – to dare, have the courage to attempt

break – reveal, disclose, impart

adhere – agree, suit, fit the circumstances

fitness – suitability, the right time

unmake – undo, destroy, make incapable

MACBETH

ACT 3, SCENE 1

At the beginning of the play, Macbeth and Banquo were each given prophecies by the Weird Sisters. Macbeth was told that he will one day be King of Scotland, and Banquo was told that he would be father to a line of kings. Now that Macbeth is king, he remembers the witches' prophecy for Banquo with some fear. Macbeth realises he must remove all possible threats to him, so that he can hold onto the crown and remain king. In this speech he struggles with the immediate threat posed by Banquo, and the knowledge that Banquo's children have been prophesied as future Scottish kings.

MACBETH

To be thus is nothing;
 But to be safely thus.--Our fears in Banquo
 Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
 Reigns that which would be fear'd: '
 There is none but he
 Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
 My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,
 Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters
 When first they put the name of king upon me,
 And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like
 They hail'd him father to a line of kings:
 Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
 No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
 Rather than so, come fate into the list.
 And champion me to the utterance!

dauntless – fearless, bold

doth – does

genius – in Shakespeare's time this word referred to someone's spirit, not only intellect

rebuked – criticised, restrained

chid – rebuke, disapprove

bade – commanded or requested

hail'd – proclaimed

sceptre – a royal staff held by a king or queen

gripe – grip, hold, grasp

thence – From there

unlineal – not of the same family or direct descendants

filed – defiled, polluted

THE TEMPEST

ACT 2, SCENE 2 [EDITED]

Ariel is a spirit and servant to Prospero, on a remote island. Prospero's enemies, including his brother Antonio who usurped Prospero's position as Duke of Milan, are sailing past the island. Prospero wants to take revenge on his enemies. Ariel, a spirit of the island, has, at the request of Prospero, created a massive storm and shipwrecked the travellers. Ariel describes the scene to Prospero and reports back to his master what has taken place.

ARIEL

I boarded the king's ship. Now on the beak,
 Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin
 I flamed amazement. Sometime I'd divide
 And burn in many places; on the topmast,
 The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,
 Then meet and join. Jove's lightning, the precursors
 O'th'dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
 And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks
 Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
 Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble,
 Yea, his dread trident shake. Not a soul
 But felt a fever of the mad, and played
 Some tricks of desperation. All but mariners
 Plunged in the foaming brine and quit the vessel,
 Then all a-fire with me. The king's son, Ferdinand,
 With hair up-staring – then like reeds, not hair –
 Was the first man that leaped, cried 'Hell is empty,
 And all the devils are here.'
 But they are, master, safe. Not a hair perished;
 On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
 But fresher than before. And, as thou bad'st me,
 In troops I have dispersed them 'bout the isle.
 The king's son have I landed by himself,
 Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs
 In an odd angle of the isle, and sitting,
 His arms in this sad knot.

beak – the front or prow of the ship

topmast, yards, bowsprit – specific parts of the ship (the masts and beams that hold the sails)

Jove's lightning – Jove is another name for Jupiter, King of the Gods, who has the power of lightning

precursors – things that come before

o'th'dreadful – of the dreadful

Neptune – God of the sea

dread trident – Neptune's three-pronged spear

mariners – Sea farers/sailors

brine – salt water, the sea

sustaining garments – clothes that held up well/weren't damaged

HAMLET

ACT 3, SCENE 3

Claudius has murdered his brother, the previous King of Denmark, to take the throne for himself. In becoming king, Claudius has also married Gertrude, Hamlet's mother and the queen. In this soliloquy, just as he is about to pray, Claudius confesses to the murder and weighs up the cost of his guilt against the things he has gained as a result of his dark deed.

KING CLAUDIUS

O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven;
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
 A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharp as will:
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
 And, like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Then I'll look up;
 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.
 May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
 O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay!
 Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
 Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!
 All may be well.

primal eldest curse – referring to the bible story of Cain who killed his brother, Abel

possess'd – retain, have in possession

bosom – heart, inner person

limed – trapped, ensnared

assay – attempt

sinews – muscles

ROMEO & JULIET

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Romeo and Juliet are teenagers from two warring families, the Montagues and the Capulets. At the Capulet's masked ball they meet for the first time and share a kiss, not knowing the identity of the other. Later that night Romeo jumps the orchard wall to visit Juliet at her window. He overhears Juliet speaking before he announces his presence. In this speech, Juliet speaks to Romeo about the speed and intensity of their feelings for one another.

JULIET

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
 Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
 For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight.
 Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
 What I have spoke, but farewell compliment!
 Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'
 And I will take thy word; yet if thou swear'st,
 Thou mayst prove false: at lovers' perjuries
 They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
 If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;
 Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
 I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay,
 So thou wilt woo, but else not for the world.
 In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
 And therefore thou mayst think my 'haviour light:
 But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
 Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
 I should have been more strange, I must confess,
 But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
 My true-love passion. Therefore pardon me,
 And not impute this yielding to light love,
 Which the dark night hath so discovered.

bepaint – colour
fain – gladly, willingly
perjuries – lies, false oaths
Jove – King of the gods
impute – attribute
dost – does
'haviour – behaviour
ere – before