

The Good Audition Guides

SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUES FOR MEN

edited and introduced by

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Much Ado About Nothing

WHO 🗨️ *Benedick, a gentleman.*

WHERE 🗨️ *The orchard at the house of Leonato, the Governor of Messina, a province of Sicily.*

WHO ELSE IS THERE 🗨️ *Benedick is alone, a servant boy having just left on an errand.*

WHAT IS HAPPENING 🗨️ *His best friend Claudio has fallen in love with a girl called Hero. Benedick is amazed that someone who was so against love can so easily fall in love. He swears the same thing will never happen to him.*

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT 🗨️

- *Benedick needs someone to talk to, so he might 'find' the audience here to share his thoughts.*
- *Picture and dramatise Claudio and the changes that love has made in him.*
- *Decide why Benedick is so adamant that he will never fall in love and whether he really means it.*
- *As he talks of women being fair, wise and virtuous he could refer to individual women in the audience and demonstrate that they do not affect him, or appear to conjure them vividly in his mind's eye.*
- *Decide whether he begins to weaken towards the end as he lists the qualities that will be in the woman he might love.*
- *The last line indicates that he is about to be interrupted by Don Pedro ('The Prince') and Claudio ('Monsieur Love').*

WHERE ELSE TO LOOK 🗨️ *Richard (Richard III, p. 78) is immune to love though able to get others to love him. Berowne (Love's Labour's Lost, p. 38) once thought he would never fall in love.*

Benedick

“ I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife* – and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe.* I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour – and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to* speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier – and now is he turned orthography!* His words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. I will not be sworn but love may transform me to an oyster – but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well. But till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace.* Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. – Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.* ”

(Act 2, scene 3, line 8 onwards)

GLOSSARY

the drum and the fife – instruments of war and soldiery
the tabor and the pipe – instruments of love and romance
was wont to – used to
turned orthography – suddenly started to speak in a fancy way
grace – favour
arbour – bower, shady retreat

Henry V

WHO 🗨️ *King Henry.*

WHERE 🗨️ *A room in the Palace of Westminster, c. 1413.*

WHO ELSE IS THERE 🗨️ *The Dukes of Gloucester, Bedford and Exeter, the Earls of Warwick and Westmoreland, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Ely, the French Ambassador and others.*

WHAT IS HAPPENING 🗨️ *Ambassadors arrive from the French Dauphin (eldest son of the King) with a box of tennis balls, saying Henry should stay at home and play games rather than dare to fight for the disputed crown of France. Henry responds with a declaration of war.*

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT 🗨️

- *Henry has just become King. This speech is his first opportunity to demonstrate his fitness for kingship. He refers to the 'wild days' of his youth.*
- *He has two audiences: the French Dauphin through the ambassadors, and the English court. Use the speech to play to them both.*
- *There is a lightness and humour about the early part of the speech that develops into threats of war. It is possible that Henry grows into the role of King and the status that accompanies it during this speech.*

WHERE ELSE TO LOOK 🗨️ *Lewis (King John, p. 58) is defiant to an ambassador of a foreign power in the presence of his court.*

King Henry

“ We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us.
His present and your pains we thank you for.
When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,
We will in France, by God's grace, play a set

Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard.*
Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler*
That all the courts of France will be disturb'd
With chases.* And we understand him well,
How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,
Not measuring what use we made of them.
We never valued this poor seat of England,
And therefore, living hence, did give ourself
To barbarous licence – as 'tis ever common
That men are merriest when they are from home.
But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,
Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness,
When I do rouse me in my throne of France.
For that I have laid by my majesty,
And plodded like a man for working-days,
But I will rise there with so full a glory
That I will dazzle all the eyes of France –
Yea, strike the Dauphin blind to look on us.
And tell the pleasant Prince, this mock of his
Hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones, and his soul
Shall stand sore chargèd for the wasteful vengeance
That shall fly with them. For many a thousand widows
Shall this, his mock, mock out of their dear husbands,
Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down,
And some are yet ungotten and unborn
That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn.
But this lies all within the will of God,
To whom I do appeal, and in whose name
Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on
To venge me as I may, and to put forth
My rightful hand in a well-hallow'd* cause. ”

(Act 1, scene 2, lines 259–93)

GLOSSARY

hazard – danger (also a term from 'real' tennis and so an image of the crown being used as a ball in a game)

wrangler – opponent

chases – pursuit (also the points won in real tennis)

well-hallow'd – well-blessed