

***National***

***Youth Theatre***

***Monologues***

***75 Speeches for Auditions***

*Edited and Introduced by Michael Bryher*

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# Contents

Foreword	11
Introduction	15
Commentary Guidance	39
Exercises	43
<b>2:18 Underground</b>	51
by Laurie Sansom & the NYT company	
<i>Ariadne</i>	52
<i>Neil</i>	55
<b>The Astronaut Wives Club</b> by Al Smith	58
<i>Betty Grissom</i>	59
<i>Mary Engle</i>	62
<b>Balls</b> by Sarah Solemani	65
<i>Carly</i>	66
<b>Besieged: A Play About War and the Everyday</b>	70
by Aisha Zia	
<i>Anna</i>	71
<b>Black &amp; White</b> by Al Smith	75
<i>Corrina</i>	76
<b>Blood Wedding</b> by Federico García Lorca,	79
translated by Gwynne Edwards	
<i>Bride</i>	80
<b>Blue Moon Over Poplar</b> by Rebecca Lenkiewicz	83
<i>Peter</i>	84
<i>Shirley</i>	88

# Introduction

No matter who you are or where you're from, no matter what you look like or sound like, no matter what your background is or what school you go to – whether you love musicals, Shakespeare, TV, or even if you've never been to the theatre before, *you* could pursue a career as an actor. And perhaps reading this book might be the beginning of your journey. Welcome to the National Youth Theatre's volume of audition monologues.

At the National Youth Theatre (NYT), we know that auditions can be scary and nerve-racking, but they can also be exhilarating and sometimes even fun. We have put this book together to give you the tools to help you choose the right speech for you, so that you can prepare properly and be ready for anything that might happen in an audition room – and you may even enjoy yourself along the way!

It doesn't matter if you've never done any acting before; if you're a passionate, motivated person who is interested in the world around you, and you want to give it a try, go for it. There are speeches in this book that could work in all different types of audition, so have a look and see if you can find one that inspires you.

## What this book is for

The bad news is that there is no secret recipe for the perfect audition. There's no definitive list of dos and don'ts; it depends on who you are auditioning for, what the role is and whether it's for a play, musical or screen. The good news, however, is that there are lots of ways that you can prepare yourself so that no matter what situation you find yourself in, you can still do your best. This book will provide guidance and advice for navigating a variety of auditions including NYT, drama schools and castings, and whilst it is impossible to supply you with all the right answers, it will definitely help you to ask the right questions.

We've selected seventy-five monologues from plays that the National Youth Theatre has commissioned or produced over more than fifty years and from a wide variety of writers. Before each monologue is a commentary that will give you context from the play, as well as notes and advice about how you might approach the speech should you choose to perform it. You may feel that you want to do a speech differently from the way that's been suggested – that's fine! This book isn't intended to limit how you perform the monologues we've chosen, instead it should be a starting point so that you can feel confident approaching any speech.

There is also a section with exercises that you can use to deepen your understanding of the speech, as well as a glossary at the back (in case there are any words you don't understand).

## Back to Basics

### Different types of auditions

Let's go back to basics: an audition is an interview in which you will be asked to do some kind of performance.

If you're auditioning for **drama school** the process varies depending on where you've applied. Often you will be asked to learn and perform between one and four speeches each lasting somewhere between one and three minutes.

Two or three of these speeches should be taken from a modern play (some schools are happy with anything written after 1900 and some schools will want the play to have been written no earlier than 1990 – check the individual guidance) and one or two should be classical speeches by Shakespeare (or another Elizabethan/Jacobean playwright like Christopher Marlowe or Ben Jonson).

Some drama schools will give you a list of classical speeches to choose from, and others will let you choose yourself, but all of them will let you choose your own modern speech. It is always worth having a range of speeches that vary in tone to draw from; you might want to have one speech that allows you to be

# Commentary Guidance

Each monologue in this book is accompanied by a commentary that will help you understand the speech out of context. I've provided lots of basic information about the play, who wrote it, when NYT performed it and where it's set, but I've also suggested what the character might want in the speech and a few things to think about.

These notes aren't intended to tell you how to perform the speech, but they offer prompts to help you think about the character and their situation. They are only suggestions, however, so if you decide the character wants something totally different, that is fine – as long as you are being *specific*.

Here is a breakdown of what each section within the commentary contains:

■ **Character** Where the age and gender of the character has been supplied by the playwright, these are included here. You can use the information to help you choose a speech, but don't feel you have to portray a character of the same age and gender as you.

Where the playwright hasn't specified an age, I have given a short description of each character to give you an idea of who they are and how old they might be. Not all of the speeches in this book are spoken by characters under the age of twenty-five, but all of them have been performed by NYT members in the past, so you should be able to find enough speeches in here to suit your own playing age. At NYT, we are aware that everyone grows up differently, and just because you are fourteen it doesn't mean that you can't play a part that is older than you are (however, some drama schools will prefer that you pick a speech as close to your own age as possible, so keep this in mind).

Likewise, at NYT we don't mind what gender you identify as, and we are happy for anyone to play any gender. The most important

thing to consider is whether the speech is within reach for you, and that you pick a character you feel you can portray truthfully. The top priority is that you connect with the character.

■ **Location** I have given an indication of generally where and when each play is set. If the play is set in another historical period or geographical place, you may want to do some research to find out more about the world in which the character lives.

■ **Accent** If a speech was written to be performed in a specific accent, I have included it here. Sometimes a speech is written in a dialect, which means some of the words in the speech will be specific to that accent. For example, Betty in *The Astronaut Wives Club* says, ‘She had a book club and it was goin’ real swell’, and this might sound strange if performed in your own accent. Most of the speeches, however, can be performed in your own accent if you don’t feel confident attempting the one described here.

■ **Scene** This section gives a bit of background about where the speech comes in the play, who the character is, and what has prompted them to speak. Having read this section, you should be able to understand each speech the first time you read it – however, it doesn’t replace reading the whole play, which is essential if you decide to perform the monologue.

■ **Who is she/he talking to?** It is essential to think about who your character is talking to, and how they are trying to affect that other person or people. And make sure you have thought carefully about how any other character or characters (or the audience) might be receiving the speech.

■ **Where?** This section will give you an idea about the immediate surroundings of the character – whether they are inside or outside and what kind of space they are in – which should help you to imagine their physical world. You may want to think about the difference between someone speaking in a public place (for example, Freddie in *Consensual*) as opposed to a character speaking from a place they know well (like Boy in *Fluffy Rabbit*).

■ **What does she/he want?** It will really help you to think about what the character wants, as this will give you the vocal and emotional energy and focus to power through the speech. In this section, I have given several pointers for what I think the character might want, based on a close reading of the play, but don't take my word for it – read the play yourself, and see if you can make some of your own decisions.

■ **Things to think about** This section of the commentary gives a few extra hints and tips about how you might go about approaching the speech. I may draw attention to the language the character uses or suggest that you think about how the character changes throughout the speech. This section is designed to get you thinking deeply about the character and how you want to play them, but hopefully you will think of other questions to explore as well.

■ **Where to find the play** When you choose a speech, you should always read the entire play that it comes from, which will give you much more information about the character, their intentions, and their world.

Many of the speeches in this book are from plays that have been published, and the publisher's name is given in this section. Plays can be bought from specialist bookshops or online direct from the publisher (where you can often get a discount). When a play hasn't been published, you can access it on the NYT website:

[www.nyt.org.uk/monologues](http://www.nyt.org.uk/monologues)  
Password: nytspeeches