

SHAKESPEARE'S SPEECHES

Below are 4 major speeches from Shakespeare's plays. Two of them are from male characters, and two are from female characters. I've included contextual information before the speeches. Your job is to paraphrase these 4 speeches line by line either in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper.

King Henry V encourages his troops before the battle of Agincourt: Henry's army are tired and hungry. They face battle with the French army and they are badly out-numbered, and expect defeat. Henry starts by speaking to his cousin, but then speaks to the entire army, talking of the honour of this battle.

Westmoreland: O that we now had here But one ten thousand of those men in England
That do no work to-day!

King Henry V: What's he that wishes so?
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:
If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian.'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day: then shall our names
Familiar in his mouth as household words
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.

This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

John of Gaunt describes England

John of Gaunt's description of England is famous, but the end of the speech, less so!

John of Gaunt: This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear'd by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry,
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son,
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it,
Like to a tenement or pelting farm:
England, bound in with the triumphant sea
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds:
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.
Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,
How happy then were my ensuing death!

Macbeth (Act 1 Scene 7)

At this point in the play, Macbeth is wavering on his original plan to murder the king in order to obtain the crown. His wife, Lady Macbeth, responds to him here.

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' th' adage?
What beast was't then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
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. I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

Richard III (Act 1 Scene 2)

Lady Anne's husband, Henry VI, has just been murdered and his coffin is present in this scene. Below is her response to Richard III when he enters the room. Richard III is responsible for Henry IV's death.

Lady Anne: What, do you tremble? Are you all afraid?
Alas, I blame you not; for you are mortal,
And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.
Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell!
Thou hadst but power over his mortal body:
His soul thou canst not have; therefore begone.
Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble us not;
For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
Fill'd it with cursing cries and deep exclams.
If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.
O gentlemen! See, see dead Henry's wounds
Open their congeal'd mouths and bleed afresh.
Blush, Blush, thou lump of foul deformity,
For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells:
Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural
Provokes this deluge most unnatural.
O God! Which this blood mad'st, revenge his death;
O earth! Which this blood drink'st, revenge his death;
Either heav'n with lightning strike the murderer dead,
Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick,
As thou dost swallow up this good King's blood
Which his hell-govern'd arm hath butchered.

Othello is preparing to kill his unsuspecting wife. He has been duped into believing she has been unfaithful to him by Iago, which has tortured him because of their deep love for each other. Othello's soliloquy at the beginning of the final scene reflects his conflicting attitudes towards Desdemona; despite his belief that Iago was correct about Desdemona's infidelity, he cannot help but acknowledge her external beauty and his lingering love for her. Othello repeatedly switches from expressing his hatred for her to hinting at his slight disbelief that she could have committed such an unforgivable sin.

Othello:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,—
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!—
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light:
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again.
It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.
[Kissing her]
Ah balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after. One more, and this the last:
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

In the opening of this tragedy (*Othello*), on a warm night in Venice, we hear a conversation between Roderigo and Iago, the latter being one of literature's most notorious villains. In this scene, Roderigo tells Iago how upset he is by the fact that Desdemona, with whom he is in love, has eloped with Othello, the great Moorish general. Iago is a soldier under Othello's command, but he hates his leader and wishes revenge for the promotion of Cassio over himself as high-ranking lieutenant. He admits to Roderigo that he only continues in Othello's service because he wants to plot against him, and he encourages Roderigo to join in the plot as this will gain him the hand of Desdemona. In this scene, Iago begins to move into play the pieces of a conspiracy which will lead to ultimate tragedy.

Iago:

O, sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him:
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd:
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by them and when they have lined their coats
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;
And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:
In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.