

Dramatic Monologue: Grades 7-8

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All the World's a Stage

William Shakespeare

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. †

From **The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin**

Benjamin Franklin

It was about this time I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employ'd in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct....I included under thirteen names of virtues all that at that time occur'd to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully express'd the extent I gave to its meaning.

These names of virtues, with their precepts, were:

1. Temperance

Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

2. Silence.

Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.

3. Order.

Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

4. Resolution.

Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

5. Frugality.

Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; *i. e.*, waste nothing.

6. Industry.

Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. Sincerity.

Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. Justice.

Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. Moderation.

Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. Cleanliness.

Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

11. Tranquillity.

Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. Chastity.

13. Humility.

Imitate Jesus and Socrates. †

From Camelot

Lerner and Loewe

When I was a lad of eighteen, our King died in London and left no one to succeed him; only a sword stuck through an anvil which stood on a stone. Written on it in letters of gold it said: "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil is rightwise King bom of all England." Many chaps tried to dislodge it, and none could. Finally a great tournament was proclaimed for New Year's Day, so that all the mightiest knights in England would be assembled at one time to have a go at the sword.

I went to London as squire to my cousin, Sir Kay. The morning of the tournament, Kay discovered he'd left his sword at home and gave me a shilling to ride back to fetch it. On my way through London, I passed a square and saw there a sword rising from a stone. Not thinking very quickly, I thought it was a war memorial. The square was deserted, so I decided to save myself a journey and borrow it. I tried to pull it out. I failed. I tried again. I failed again. Then I closed my eyes and with all my force tried one last time. Lo, it moved in my hand. Then slowly it slid out of the stone. I heard a great roar. When I opened my eyes, the square was filled with people shouting: "Long live the King! Long live the King!" Then I looked at the sword and saw the blade gleaming with letters of gold.

That's how I became King. I never knew I would be. I never wanted to be. And since I am, I have been ill at ease in my crown. Until I dropped from the tree and my eye beheld you. Then suddenly, for the first time, I felt I was King. I was glad to be King. And most astonishing of all, I wanted to be the wisest, most heroic, most splendid Kiilg who ever sat on any throne. (There is a moment of silence) If you will come with me, Milady, I will arrange for the carriage to return you to your father. †

Henry V

William Shakespeare

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. †

From **The Invisible Man**

H. G. Wells

GRIFFIN: It's horrible enough, but I shall tell you the whole story. First, though, you must get me some food, and light the fire. I'm tired, I'm hungry, and I'm cold. Yes, yes, I shall tell you the whole story. But you must promise not to tell a soul. You will make a bargain with me, Dr. Kemp. Do not forget for an instant that though you cannot see me, I can see you all the time. One false move--one sign of giving warning to anyone--and you are as good as dead. There, I see by your face you understand. Now: get me some food. I must eat. Then, I shall tell you my story. You shall hear me out. Yes, Dr. Kemp, you shall hear me out to the bitter end. You may remember that at the College I was much interested in the problems of light. As an albino, I suppose, I was naturally attracted to the subject of pigments. I began to do some experiments in changing the color of various substances. Finally, quite by accident, I hit on a method of rendering any inert object--a piece of wood, a bit of meat, even a lump of coal--absolutely as colorless, as transparent as water. Suddenly I had a brilliant idea: if I could transform inert matter, why not a living animal? A human being? In short--why not make myself invisible? I worked at it for years--and at last I succeeded. I will not bore you with the details of my experiments. I am too tired, and besides, they are all written down in my notebooks, and you shall read them. I was forced to leave those precious notebooks behind in Iping, when I made my escape; but with your help, I shall recover them.

[Pause.] I have had many adventures as an invisible man ... but it is not going as I had planned. I am invisible only when I am undressed; with clothes on, I can be seen as easily as you. Do you know what it is like to run through the streets and fields on a night like this, without a stitch on one's back? I may die of cold. Ah yes, you nod your head. I had not thought the thing through, I confess. While I was still experimenting, I saw only the advantages of the thing. But there are disadvantages, I can tell you. I cannot rest until I am sure that no one will discover me. I cannot eat unless I am alone, for I would be found out by the spoon floating in mid-air. In short, I am confounded at every turn. Dogs nip at me; they pick up my scent, even if they don't see me. There is no end of trouble. That is why this is such a stroke of luck, my running into you. Just think, man. I need an accomplice. With you in on my secret, I can take refuge in your house. I can sleep in your bed, eat at your table, warm myself by your fire, and none will be the wiser. I made a huge mistake, Kemp, in trying to carry the thing through alone. Alone, there is so little I can do. But with a confederate, a thousand things are possible! †

From **The Merchant of Venice**

William Shakespeare

“The quality of mercy is not strained.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown.
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings,
But mercy is above this sceptered sway.
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings.
It is an attribute to God himself.
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this-
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.” †

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (Jefferson Smith)

Sidney Buchman

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights – that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the People to alter or to abolish. I always get a great kick outta that part of the Declaration of Independence. Now, you're not gonna have a country that can make these kind of rules work, if you haven't got men that have learned to tell human rights from a punch in the nose. It's a funny thing about men, you know. They all start life being boys. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if some of these Senators were boys once. And that's why it seemed like a pretty good idea to me to get boys out of crowded cities and stuffy basements for a couple of months out of the year and build their bodies and minds for a man-sized job, because those boys are gonna be behind these desks some of these days. And it seemed like a pretty good idea, getting boys from all over the country, boys of all nationalities and ways of living — getting them together. Let them find out what makes different people tick the way they do. Because I wouldn't give you two cents for all your fancy rules if, behind them, they didn't have a little bit of plain, ordinary, everyday kindness and a little lookin' out for the other fella, too. That's pretty important, all that. It's just the blood and bone and sinew of this democracy that some great men handed down to the human race, that's all! But of course, if you've got to build a dam where that boys' camp oughta be, to get some graft to pay off some political army or something, well that's a different thing. Aw no! If you think I'm going back there and tell those boys in my state and say: 'Look, now fellas, forget about it. Forget all this stuff I've been tellin' you about this land you live in — it's a lot of hooey. This isn't your country. It belongs to a lot of James Taylors.' Aw no! Not me! And anybody here that thinks I'm gonna do that, they've got another thing comin'. That's all right. I just wanted to find out whether you still had faces. I'm sorry, gentlemen. I-I know I'm being disrespectful to this honorable body, I know that. I- A guy like me should never be allowed to get in here in the first place. I know that! And I hate to stand here and try your patience like this, but either I'm dead right or I'm crazy.

†

The Story of My Life Excerpt from Chapter IV

Helen Keller

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

On the afternoon of that eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch, and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was. "Light! Give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Some one took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me.

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them pin, hat, cup and a few verb like sit, stand, and walk. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water, but I persisted in confounding the two.

In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it the first opportunity. I came impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I know then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living words awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that mother, father, sister, teacher were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me "like Aaron's rod, with flowers." It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come. †

From **The War of the Worlds**

H G Wells

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment. The planet Mars, I scarcely need remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun is barely half of that received by this world. It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than our world; and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its surface must have begun its course. The fact that it is scarcely one seventh of the volume of the earth must have accelerated its cooling to the temperature at which life could begin. It has air and water and all that is necessary for the support of animated existence. Yet so vain is man, and so blinded by his vanity, that no writer, up to the very end of the nineteenth century, expressed any idea that intelligent life might have developed there far, or indeed at all, beyond its earthly level. Nor was it generally understood that since Mars is older than our earth, with scarcely a quarter of the superficial area and remoter from the sun, it necessarily follows that it is not only more distant from time's beginning but nearer its end.... And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys *The War of the Worlds* 7 of 293 and lemurs to us. The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that this too is the belief of the minds upon Mars. Their world is far gone in its cooling and this world is still crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals. To carry warfare sunward is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that, generation after generation, creeps upon them. †

From **You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown**

I think lunchtime is about the worst time of day for me. Always having to sit here alone. Of course, sometimes, mornings aren't so pleasant either. Waking up and wondering if anyone would really miss me if I never got out of bed. Then there's the night, too. Lying there and thinking about all the stupid things I've done during the day. And all those hours in between when I do all those stupid things. Well, lunchtime is among the worst times of the day for me. Well, I guess I'd better see what I've got. Peanut butter. Some psychiatrists say that people who eat peanut butter sandwiches are lonely...I guess they're right. And when you're really lonely, the peanut butter sticks to the roof of your mouth. There's that cute little red-headed girl eating her lunch over there. I wonder what she would do if I went over and asked her if I could sit and have lunch with her?...She'd probably laugh right in my face...it's hard on a face when it gets laughed in. There's an empty place next to her on the bench. There's no reason why I couldn't just go over and sit there. I could do that right now. All I have to do is stand up...I'm standing up!...I'm sitting down. I'm a coward. I'm so much of a coward, she wouldn't even think of looking at me. She hardly ever does look at me. In fact, I can't remember her ever looking at me. Why shouldn't she look at me? Is there any reason in the world why she shouldn't look at me? Is she so great, and I'm so small, that she can't spare one little moment?...**SHE'S LOOKING AT ME!! SHE'S LOOKING AT ME!! (he puts his lunchbag over his head.)** ...Lunchtime is among the worst times of the day for me. If that little red-headed girl is looking at me with this stupid bag over my head she must think I'm the biggest fool alive. But, if she isn't looking at me, then maybe I could take it off quickly and she'd never notice it. On the other hand...I can't tell if she's looking, until I take it off! Then again, if I never take it off I'll never have to know if she was looking or not. On the other hand...it's very hard to breathe in here. **(he removes his sack)** Whew! She's not looking at me! I wonder why she never looks at me? Oh well, another lunch hour over with...only 2,863 to go. †