

Contemporary Monologues for Teenagers: Female

Forty fantastic female speeches for teenagers, all written since the year 2000, by some of the most exciting and acclaimed writers working today.

Whether you're applying for drama school, taking an exam, or auditioning for a professional role, it's likely you'll be required to perform one or more monologues, including a piece from a contemporary play. It's vital to come up with something fresh that's suited both to you – in order to allow you to express who you are as a performer – and to the specific purposes of the audition.

In this invaluable collection you'll find forty speeches by leading contemporary playwrights including Andrew Bovell, Nadia Fall, Vivienne Franzmann, James Fritz, Stacey Gregg, Arinzé Kene, Cordelia Lynn, Lynn Nottage, Chinonyerem Odimba, Evan Placey, Jessica Swale and Tom Wells, from plays that were premiered at many of the UK's most famous and respected venues, including the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, Manchester Royal Exchange, Royal Court Theatre, Bush Theatre, and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and VAULT Festival.

Drawing on her experience as an actor, director and teacher at several leading drama schools, Trilby James introduces each speech with a user-friendly, bullet-point list of ten things you need to know about the character, and then five ideas to help you perform the monologue.

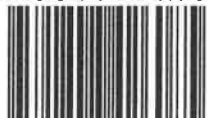
This book also features an introduction to the process of selecting and preparing your speech, and approaching the audition itself.

'Sound practical advice for anyone attending an audition... a source of inspiration for teachers and students alike' *Teaching Drama Magazine on The Good Audition Guides*



The Good
Audition
Guides

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Contemporary Monologues for Teenagers: Female



The Good Audition Guides

TRILBY JAMES

Trilby James read Drama at Bristol University before completing the three-year acting course at RADA. She graduated in 1990 and over the years has worked extensively as an actor in theatre and television. In 2000 she also began working as a freelance director and teacher at several leading drama schools including ALRA, Arts Educational Schools, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, East 15, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art where she is now an Associate Teacher. She continues to work across courses, directing third-year performances as well as teaching first and second-year students, MA students and running workshops for shorter programmes. She is a script reader and dramaturg for Kali Theatre Company and has directed several play-readings for their 'Talkback' seasons.

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The Good Audition Guides

CONTEMPORARY
MONOLOGUES
FOR TEENAGERS:
FEMALE

edited and introduced by

TRILBY JAMES



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A NICK HERN BOOK

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Introduction

☞ WHAT THIS BOOK OFFERS

Whether you are taking theatre studies at school level, auditioning for drama school or simply enjoying an after-school drama group, a contemporary monologue that has been specifically written for your own age group, and reflects the concerns of young people, will be a great starting point. The forty monologues in this volume are from plays that have been written post-2000. The characters range in age from fourteen to nineteen. There is a wide variety of character types and styles of writing from which to choose. They are all drawn from the extensive list of new plays published by Nick Hern Books.

A Warning:

Some of the plays are specifically about the abuse of teenage girls and may not be suitable for readers under sixteen. In the theatre these parts would have been played by young adult actors, so in this volume they come with the following trigger warning: 'This play deals with adult themes. It has content and language that some readers might find disturbing or offensive.'

☞ CHOOSING YOUR MONOLOGUE

I have often likened finding the perfect monologue to finding the perfect pair of jeans. It is rarely a case of 'one size fits all'. You might have to try on several pairs, in different shops, before you find the cut that works for you, but once you have, you will feel confident in the knowledge that you are looking and feeling your best. So it is with audition speeches. You need to find pieces that suit you, that you cannot wait to get in to and that will feel even better with wear.

If you are auditioning for a youth theatre:

- You will be judged on your potential and your willingness to be open, honest and free. Nobody is looking for a polished or over-rehearsed performance. It is best therefore to choose pieces that allow you to express yourself and for a panel to see something of who you really are.
- Choose something close to you in age and type. Something to which you can relate. Something that inspires you, from a play that speaks to you.

If you are auditioning for drama school:

- And have also been asked to prepare a classical speech, choose a contemporary monologue that will provide contrast. For example, you may have a Shakespearean monologue that is pensive or tragic, so opt for something comic. Similarly, if your classical speech is light in tone, choose a companion piece that shows off a more serious side.

If you are already at drama school:

- And you are looking to extend your range, you will want to choose a monologue that stretches you. Perhaps you are studying a particular accent or type of character quite different from yourself.
- Or you are looking for showcase material, think about how you wish to present yourself. Consider whether you are right for the part you have chosen and whether, if you had a chance to be in a production of the play, you could be easily cast in the role.

If you are auditioning for a specific role in a professional production (and have been asked to prepare an additional piece that is not from the play for which you are being seen):

- Choose something close to the part for which you are auditioning.
- Consider the language of the piece and whether you are after something heightened and obviously theatrical, or whether you require something more intimate and realistic.

If you are looking to extend your showreel:

- It may sound obvious, but think about what sort of speeches would be best suited to the varying demands of radio, film or television.

☞ PREPARING YOUR MONOLOGUE

- Learn your speeches well in advance of the actual audition. Should you forget your lines, the panel will be able to tell whether it is out of nervousness or insufficient preparation.
- Read the whole play. You may be asked questions about it or be required to improvise around it.
- Undertake all necessary research. Make a study of the historical, social and political world of the play. Be sure to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words and references.
- Accents: By and large it is best to avoid accents unless you are really good at them or want an opportunity to practise them. If a character's accent is not native to you, you may like to try playing it in your own accent. However, watch out for speeches that have been written with a strong dialect or idiom and where the essential rhythm of the piece needs to be maintained.
- Remain flexible in the way you perform/stage your monologue. Be prepared to be redirected in an audition.
- Talking to the audience: If your character is talking to the audience, make a decision about who the audience are to you. Are they your friend and your confidante? Are they more like an analyst with whom you feel safe to reveal your innermost thoughts? Are they a sort of sounding board? Are they judging you? Do you need to explain yourself or to convince them in some way? It is still advisable not to look at the actual panel in this case, but imagine an audience just above their heads and direct your speech there.

- Using props: There are no hard-and-fast rules about the use of stage properties at an audition. However, common sense suggests that, if you can easily carry an object in your pocket (e.g. a letter, a ring, a handkerchief, etc.), by all means bring this to an audition. If the object to which you refer is large, imagine it is there, or, if necessary, mime using it. Some might even argue that miming props is simpler, and in certain cases much more practical. In any event, you need not worry about being 'marked down' by your decision either to use real objects or to mime using them. What is important is that they do not become burdensome and get in the way of your acting.
- What to wear: Again there are no set rules about this, but I would suggest that to help you make a connection to your character you try to dress like them. If the character is formal or from another time in history, a dress or skirt as opposed to jeans and a T-shirt will make a huge difference. Similarly there is a very different feel when you wear hard shoes as opposed to trainers. When I was at drama school, our acting teacher used to refer to 'costume' as 'garments', and we would be encouraged to rehearse in appropriate clothing. In this way we thought of costume not as a thing that got added at the end, but as something that was as personal to us as our own everyday wardrobe.
- Try not to get stuck in a mode of delivery. It is useful to consider that, unless a character is making a political or after-dinner speech, chances are they have no idea they are going to speak for such a long time. They may make a statement, perhaps as a response to a specific question; then having made that statement they might need to qualify it. They might then be reminded of something else they wish to add and so on. In this way, a monologue can be regarded as a series of interrelated thoughts. Communicating a character's thought processes is fundamental to any acting technique. In the case of an audition, it takes the pressure off having to deliver a load of text. It allows you to stay fresh, to be in the moment and to make spontaneous choices. Before you start, all you need

worry about is the trigger – the reason for saying what you do. Then have the courage to take it thought by thought and allow yourself to be surprised. In this way the monologue should feel slightly different every time.

- It is vital that you use your imagination to envisage all that the character sees and describes. If you are still seeing the page on which the speech is written, you know you are doing something wrong. Provide images for yourself so that in your mind's eye you quite literally lift the speech from the page.
- Timing/editing: Most speeches at audition should last no longer than two minutes. Some of the monologues in this volume are slightly longer, some shorter. Some I have cut, and some I have edited from dialogue with another character, and some have been augmented by joining two or more passages which appear separately in the original text. I have inserted this empty bracket symbol [...] to show where a cut has been made. Once you have read the whole play, you may have ideas of your own about what and what not to include.

☞ THE AUDITION

You will find there are many useful books on the market that make a complete study of this subject, from what to wear to how to enter and exit a room. These are some of the basics:

- Manage your nerves. Try to put the increased adrenaline you are experiencing to good use. Approach the audition with a positive sense of excitement, something to which you have been looking forward as opposed to something you have been dreading. Nervous energy, if correctly channelled, can help at an audition. Conversely you should avoid being under-energised. If you are someone who reacts lethargically to increased stress, you may need to do a good warm-up before you arrive.
- Take ownership of the situation. Before you begin, take a moment to imagine the space you are in as the location of

the monologue. The best auditions are those in which the actor successfully transports the panel from 'Studio One' (or whatever the room you are auditioning in is called) to an urban street, a clearing in the woods, a grand room in a stately home, etc. Take time to think about where you will place the other character/s in the scene and, before you speak, allow yourself a moment to hear what has been said to you or to imagine what has just happened that prompts you to say the things you do. Do not rush the speech. Take your time. In the case of a drama-school audition, remember that you will be paying for this privilege!

- Empower yourself. There is no good reason why the panel should want you to fail. If you are auditioning for a youth group or a drama school, consider that the panel are willing you to do well, even if they are not necessarily giving that impression. If you have been asked to be seen for a specific role, it is because the director is serious about you for the job. It is possible that the panel are equally anxious about the impression they may give you. Remember, you only have control over your part of the audition process. There is no point speculating, worrying about whether they will want you in their group, grant you a place in their school or offer you the part. Just take care of your side of things, and be safe in the knowledge that, whatever happens, you tried your best.

📖 HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For each of the monologues I have provided a bullet-point list of ten things you need to know about the character. These will include their age and where they come from, a bit about their background and what sort of personality they have. In some instances these facts are already contained within the monologue. Then I have suggested five things to help you perform the monologue. These will include objectives to play and ideas about how to connect to your character. They will also touch on the subjects already covered in this introduction such as using props, talking to the audience, accents and what

to wear, etc. You will also need to read the whole play so that you can build a bigger picture. As you become increasingly familiar with your monologue, you will soon develop ideas of your own and may even find yourself in disagreement with my notes. Acting is a very personal thing, and no two actors, like any two people, will think exactly alike. I hope that this book will be a source of inspiration and ultimately get you thinking for yourself.

The Monologues

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Happy reading!

A Hundred Words for Snow

Tatty Hennessy

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RORY:

- Rory is fifteen years old.
- Her full name is Aurora, which she hates.
- She is an only child.
- She comes from a middle-class family.
- She lives in London.
- At this point in the play she is still a virgin.
- Her father has recently died following a car accident.
- He was a geography teacher at Rory's school.
- Rory was very close to her dad.
- Rory is clever, articulate and very funny.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Although she is grief-stricken, Rory can see a kind of black humour in what has happened. See if you can strike the balance between what is sad and very funny about the monologue.
- She is feisty and swears a lot. To what extent does this brashness help her to mask or to control her feelings of complete devastation? People react to death in very different ways, and grief can appear at very different times. Perhaps Rory is still in shock. Explore the possibility that the full impact of her father's death has not yet hit her: It was an accident, and unlike losing a parent who has been ill for a while, there has been no time for her to get used to the idea. Also, consider that her anger at the way the funeral was conducted, and at the mourners' reactions to it, is also part of her grieving process.

- Think about what you will use for the urn. As with all objects or props (see note on using props in the introduction), how you handle the urn will make a difference to the tone of the speech. Make a decision about how you will present the urn to the audience. It is, after all, a moment of great black comedy.
- Imagine what Rory's mum and dad look like. If you don't want to personalise her parents by using your own (which is understandable), make sure you have strong images in your mind so that you can really picture them. Perhaps there is even a male geography teacher at your own school or college that you could think of for Rory's dad. Imagine also the crematorium. If you have never been to one look up pictures online or better still visit one. It may sound a bit morbid, but they have a particular atmosphere, and it is important that you capture the uniqueness and peculiarity of the situation.
- As an only child, Rory has no sibling to share the pain, and her mother is so devastated that she cannot really help Rory at this point in the play. All this makes Rory very lonely. Read the whole play to see what happens when Rory attempts to take her dad's ashes to the North Pole.

NB This play offers several other monologues from which to choose.

Rory

“ My name is Rory.

Yes, I know that's a boy's name.

Yes that is my real name.

Yes, really.

Oh, alright. Full name. If you really need to know; Aurora.

Yes. Aurora.

Mortifying.

I swear the only people who like weird names are people with names like Bob or Sue or Tim. You like it? Try living with it.

It's weird to think Mum wanted me to be the kind of person who'd suit the name 'Aurora'. I wouldn't want to meet that person, would you? Sounds like a right bint.

I've totally forgiven her, as you can tell. Joking.

Nobody calls me Aurora. Call me Rory and we'll get on fine.

And this – (*The urn.*)

Is Dad.

Say hello, Dad.

Dad doesn't say anything.

He's shy.

RORY gives us a small smile. She's testing us.

Used to be a lot more talkative. Didn't you, Dad? Lost a bit of weight, too.

Balances the urn on her outstretched hand.

It's weird a whole person's in there.

This is Dad's story, really.

He died. Obviously. Car accident. Walking home from school. He's a teacher. At my school. I know. Mortifying. And a geography teacher. The worst. Sorry, Dad, but it's true. They didn't let me see the body before we got him cremated. I say 'we' but I didn't have anything to do with it, and actually if you ask me I think he'd've hated being inside a shitty urn for eternity but nobody did ask me did they so here he is. The funeral was fucking awful. The coffin like, slides behind these red curtains, and all I could think about was how many other people must've been burned in there and how unless they're really good at sweeping there's probably little bits of other people still in there with him and I wondered who they were and what their family thought about when the curtain shut. Mum did a reading but she was a total state, like, crying so much she couldn't even get the words out which was actually a blessing cos the poem she'd chosen was rubbish. He would've

hated it. And all my dad's work friends which basically meant all my teachers coming to ours for sandwiches and relatives I never see saying empty things like 'oh well, wasn't it a lovely service' and I'm like actually my mum cried so much she couldn't string a sentence together and then they burned my dad in a fire so lovely isn't really the word for it, Aunt Carol.

I didn't say that. Obviously. I made the tea. People can't talk to you if you're busy making tea. And if they try you just say 'Sugar?' like that and they get distracted. I went to stand in the garden, just, breathe a bit and fucking Mum's out there. Crying. Again. Leaving me to talk to everyone by myself. Very responsible. ”

Amongst the Reeds*

Chinonyerem Odimba

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GILLIAN:

- Gillian is sixteen to seventeen years old.
- She is Vietnamese and speaks with a strong accent.
- She has recently given birth.
- Gillian was sent to the UK by her father, who trusted her uncle to provide an education for her. However, this did not happen, and she ended up not only sexually abused, but also a surrogate mother for a much older couple.
- When she ran away from her uncle she became increasingly attached to the baby and wanted to keep it for herself.
- She was befriended by a girl called Oni who is also an illegal immigrant. She and Oni have been living in a makeshift home in a disused office space. They have been in hiding.
- Once the baby was born, Gillian came out of hiding in the hope that the authorities would take care of her and her baby.
- Gillian is very trusting. She likes to see the good in people. This makes her vulnerable.
- She wants to be a good mother and a valuable member of society, but she will be rejected back in Vietnam, and in the UK she is the victim of an immigration system that is stacked against her.
- At only sixteen/seventeen, Gillian has been denied the normal life of a young girl growing up.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Gillian is determined to explain the truth about her situation. She believes that she will be looked after. See if you can find

* Published in the volume *House + Amongst the Reeds*

that trusting and hopeful quality at the very start of the monologue. How does that change as the monologue develops?

- Think about the official she is talking to. Make a decision about whether it is a man or a woman. What does he/she look like? What is the interview room like? How bright are those lights? Despite the fact that she is the real victim, she is being made to feel like the criminal.
- Think about all the other characters she refers to in the monologue. See if you can get a strong image in your mind of what they look like and about how they might make you feel.
- Gillian has only recently given birth. Think about not only the emotional but also the physical state she is in. Before you start the monologue imagine the sound of your baby's cry. Let it go right through you as if it is piercing your heart. It is often said that a mother can tell her child's cry from the sound of another's.
- She has come to the authorities for help, but they have taken her baby away. She is naturally distressed. Think about the overwhelming sense of shame she is feeling. Not only has she been coerced into having sex, she is now terrified of what her father will think of her.

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Gillian

“Where is my baby? Is she still here? I hear her cry.

I hear her cry and I am sure she crying for me.

Can I see her?

You know what I call her?

You have to call her by her name.

Stop her crying. Make her happy.

Her name is Victoria Beatrice.

Me and Oni choose it.

Gillian...

My name is Chi Anh Nguyen.

A strip light comes on –

GILLIAN holds her hands up to shield her eyes from the light –

Beat.

Please don't turn the light on.

I can see you without the light.

Please.

You don't understand the darkness is where I can see everything.

I don't want you to look at me this way...

No not boyfriend. Not boy. He doesn't have blue eyes. He is not young like me. A man.

A man that Uncle know. My uncle who my father trust to look after his daughter. He trust Uncle. His best friend for so long.

My father who put his girl on a plane to UK. My father trust Uncle to put me in study, look after me. He did for first few months but then when college ask for visa again in new term, he say he can't find passport. Then he say he have to get new passport. He doesn't care. Like he plan it. I say I want to go home but now this time my uncle start to say I have to do something for his friend. He say his friend good man. Him and his wife want baby but she is old, and so hard in UK to get baby. He say they pay a lot. Enough for new passport, and for me go back to study.

I have to stop school. The man come, and he come every day for many weeks. He come to the house all the time after work.

He try to be kind. He bring flowers and chocolate and sometimes he stay to talk after.

He always bring test for baby. Then one day test show two lines. He buy me takeaway food and give Uncle a car.

I grow big. I am very sick. Every day eat and sick. One day Uncle say man give him money to buy me clothes to look nice so we go shopping in centre with Uncle. I look in mirror and I can see it. Bump. It is getting bigger. I want it. I don't know. Maybe I don't want it...

I go to toilet and I see where you wash hands is window. I see the window and start climbing. I run so fast it feel like there is no ground. I don't see where until I stop.

Beat.

And before I am speaking to my father all the time on telephone. Uncle speak to him say visa coming soon. Now I don't tell my daddy. I can't tell him. My uncle tell him I leave my study and run away. He tell him that I am bad girl. Have many boyfriend.

How my father look at me now? Like prostitute?

Beat.

I want to be good for baby. I want to look after her now, Oni will help me.

Oni. Oni? My friend?

Me and my friend stay there together? She was there with me? She will tell you. She is a good person. Like my father...

Are you good person? Will you help me and baby? ”

Amongst the Reeds*

Chinonyerem Odimba

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ONI:

- Oni is seventeen.
- She is from Nigeria and speaks with a Nigerian accent.
- She was brought to the UK by her aunt who promised her a better life. However, when she arrived, she was treated like a slave and badly beaten.
- She ran away from her aunt and is applying for leave to remain in the UK, but she is not going to be successful.
- She is terrified of being deported back to Nigeria where her family will disown her.
- While she waits for legal status she is living in a makeshift home in a disused office block.
- She earns a bit of cash by doing black women's hairstyles.
- She has befriended a girl called Gillian, who is staying with her. Gillian is also living illegally in the UK. Gillian is Vietnamese and is heavily pregnant.
- Oni is kind, compassionate and caring. She wants to be a valuable member of society, but she will be rejected back in Nigeria, and in the UK she is the victim of an immigration system that is stacked against her.
- At only seventeen, Oni is both wise and old beyond her years.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Oni is scared, but she is also brave. See if you can find both these qualities when performing the monologue.
- Notice how determined she is. She is desperate for help, and refuses to give in.

- She has experienced hardship and immense cruelty. Think about how lonely she must be with nowhere safe to go and no one safe to turn to.
- Think about the official she is talking to. Make a decision about whether it is a man or a woman. What does he/she look like? See if you can imagine what her auntie and cousin look like. Think about how her mother might look and what her life is like back home in Nigeria.
- A Scotch bonnet is a kind of chilli. It is so hot that it burns.

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Oni

“ My name is Beatrice Oni Agbede.

You can see it dere. I am juss waiting for you to give me leave to remain. My solicitor told me to come here. She said that you have news for me about my application.

You believe me now don't you? You believe that I am not an adult now don't you?

Did you speak to de headmistress at St Mary's School. Did she tell you what a good student I used to be. Har favourite. She will have told you by now what year I was dere, maybe she even send de papers wiff my barth date?

I use my last one pound for bus juss to get here...

What is it?

Why are you looking at me like dat?

It is de same way dey look at me dat day afta I go to police. But now you are looking at me like dis?

Beat.

What do you mean? Why do you want me to sign dere?

Ask my school ageen. If I had my passport I would show you but she has taken everything from me.

Short beat.

What about my application? You can see dat can't you?

I ask you for help. You are meant to be helping me now. I tell dem, my solicitor, the officers everythin' about Auntie. I tell I run from har house. Scared for my life. I tell dem street no good but when someone hit your head wiff high-heel shoe, burn you wiff iron and...

And I ask them —

Do you know what Scotch bonnet feel like in your eye?

Who saw me? Who saw me enter dis country? Who saw me living in dat back room for months? Dis place dat is full of people you nevar see.

Please. I did not want to run away and do dis shame. She bring me here promising my modder she will look aftar me. She said dat to har. My kind auntie. Instead she find every excuse to beat me. Becuss har daughter's hair was not neat enough for school, becuss it is not clean enuff behind de toilet becuss beçuss...

Please. Please you can't do dis!

If I go back I will shame my family. Do you not understand? If I go back dere is nothing for me to imagine any more. Everything will be over for me. I have wasted my only chance to do something good.

Please will you get someone. I know someone will have to believe me. I don't mind what odder tests you want to do. Please.

Please. I have never kissed ar boy. Never. I am ar virgin. You can do test. I am juss ar girl. I am ar good girl. ”

August: Osage County

Tracy Letts

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT JEAN:

- Jean is fourteen.
- She is from the Midwest in America.
- She is an only child.
- She is a vegetarian.
- She is eccentric.
- She likes to shock, but it is important to note that the use of 'bad language' is common in the family.
- She is a film buff and loves old black-and-white movies.
- She is precocious. She likes talking about sex and pretending that she is older/more mature than she actually is. At one point in the play she even lies about her age and says that she is fifteen.
- She is lonely. Decide to what extent she smokes dope to hide her unhappy feelings.
- She craves attention. Again, make a decision about how this need for an audience makes up for the fact that her parents aren't always there for her.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- The speech is very funny (enjoy the playfulness with which Jean communicates), but it is also sad, because her attempts to prove that she can cope with what is happening to her are just a front.
- Think about her voice and her physicality. Perhaps she has a particular way of speaking that makes her sound older than she is (or, that she *tries* to sound older), and similarly, she might move

- Jean is talking to Johnna the housekeeper. Johnna is twenty-six and is a Native American. She is the closest person in age to Jean. See if you can visualise what she looks like.
- Jean is lonely and is desperate for company. Notice how quickly she gets on to the subject of her parents and all that is troubling her.
- Make a decision about whether you will mime using a pipe, or use a real object (see note on using props in the introduction). Remember, that owing to our public smoking ban, you will have to pretend to light and smoke it!

Jean

“Hi. [...] Am I bugging you? [...] No, I thought maybe you'd like to smoke a bowl with me? [...] Okay. I didn't know. Am I bugging you? [...] Okay. Do you mind if I smoke a bowl? [...] 'Cause there's no place I can go. Y'know, I'm staying right by Grandma's room, and if I go outside, they're gonna wonder— [...] Mom and Dad don't mind. You won't get into trouble or anything. [...] Okay. You sure?”

From her pocket, JEAN takes a small glass pipe and a clear cigarette wrapper holding a bud of marijuana. She fixes the pipe.

I say they don't mind. If they knew I stuck this bud under the cap of Dad's deodorant before our flight and then sat there sweating like in that movie *Maria Full of Grace*. Did you see that? [...] I just mean they don't mind that I smoke pot. Dad doesn't. Mom kind of does. She thinks it's bad for me. I think the real reason it bugs her is 'cause Dad smokes pot, too, and she wishes he didn't. Dad's much cooler than Mom, really. Well, that's not true. He's just cooler in that way, I guess.

JEAN smokes. She offers the smoldering pipe to Johnna.

(Holding her breath.) You sure? [...] No, he's really not cooler. *(Exhales smoke.)* He and Mom are separated right now. [...] He's fucking one of his students which is pretty uncool, if you ask me. Some people would think that's cool, like those dicks who teach with him in the Humanities Department because

they're all fucking their students or wish they were fucking their students. 'Lo-llii-ta.' I mean, I don't care and all, he can fuck whoever he wants and he's a teacher and that's who teachers meet, students. He was just a turd the way he went about it and didn't give Mom a chance to respond or anything. What sucks now is that Mom's watching me like a hawk, like, she's afraid I'll have some post-divorce freak-out and become some heroin addict or shoot everybody at school. Or God forbid, lose my virginity. I don't know what it is about Dad splitting that put Mom on hymen patrol. Do you have a boyfriend? [...] Me neither. I did go with this boy Josh for like almost a year but he was retarded. Are your parents still together? [...] Oh. I'm sorry. [...] Oh, fuck, no, I'm really sorry, I feel fucking terrible now. [...] Oh God. Okay. Were you close with them? [...] Okay, another stupid question there, Jean, real good. Wow. Like: 'Are you close to your parents?' [...] Yeah, right? So that's what I meant. Thanks. ”

NB You will have to imagine Johnna's responses to Jean's two questions, 'Are your parents still together?' and 'Were you close to them?', in order for the speech to flow. Where there are now brackets [...] to denote a cut, the unedited text reads as follows:

JEAN. Are your parents still together?

JOHNNA. They passed away.

JEAN. Oh. I'm sorry.

JOHNNA. That's okay. Thank you.

JEAN. Oh, fuck, no, I'm really sorry, I feel fucking terrible now.

JOHNNA. It's okay.

JEAN. Oh God. Okay. Were you close with them?

JOHNNA. Yeah.

JEAN. Okay, another stupid question there, Jean, real good. Wow.

Like: 'Are you close to your parents?'

JOHNNA. Not everybody is.

JEAN. Yeah, right? So that's what I meant. Thanks.

Bird

Laura Lomas

This play deals with adult themes. It has content and language that some readers might find disturbing or offensive.

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LEAH:

- Leah is fourteen.
- In the play she is speaking from a dilapidated flat in Hartington Street, Derby (an area that is known for its poverty and social deprivation). Therefore the monologue would work well in any accent that reflected a similar environment.
- The play deals with the sexual abuse of vulnerable young girls, and Leah is extremely vulnerable.
- Leah is very trusting, and it is in her nature to see the best in people.
- Leah is in love with an older man called Sammy. Sammy lies to her. He says he wants to move to London with her so that they can live together, but later on in the play she will admit to us that he already has a partner and a child. Although she doesn't want to acknowledge it, he's only interested in her for sex and for pimping her out to other men. 'Sammy' is not even his real name.
- Sammy keeps her down by giving her weed, alcohol and sleeping pills, and she is bruised from where he physically and sexually mistreats her.
- Leah's mother is dead. They were very close. Leah misses her; without her mother to support and guide her, Leah is lost.
- She lives with her stepdad and younger sister, Charlie. Since the death of her mother, life at home hasn't been the same. Sammy has promised to take Charlie with them to London, but this is another lie.
- She has a best friend called Carla, who talks non-stop. However, Carla doesn't approve of her relationship with Sammy, and the girls fall out.

- Even though she is still a child, Leah is desperate to appear like an adult. She loves it when Sammy refers to her as a 'woman'. It makes her feel good about herself, and she can forget about her pain. Like a lot of emotionally vulnerable people, Leah likes to appear tough. This outer shell is a mask or protection from the hurt she feels inside.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- The whole play is a monologue and Leah is very aware of her audience. This extract comes from the very beginning of the play. She talks directly and openly to us. Don't be afraid to engage with your audience. Think about how lonely Leah is and why speaking to us is so important to her. She really needs us on her side.
- Leah has become completely dependent on Sammy. Even though a huge part of her knows he is lying, she doesn't want to believe it. She is in denial. Perhaps you know that feeling of pretending to yourself that everything is okay, even when, deep down, you know it isn't. Also, without overplaying it, think about how she is unable to think clearly because of all the alcohol and pills she takes.
- She likes to appear tough, but it is pretty obvious that she isn't. See if you can capture that 'hard on the outside/soft on the inside' quality.
- Have a very strong image in your head about what Sammy looks like. How does he dress? Perhaps she has convinced herself that he is better looking than he actually is. Although you have never met Sammy's dad, imagine what he might look like. Sinfen is a suburb of Derby. If you decide to change where Leah comes from, you will need to substitute another place name for authenticity.
- Think about where you are and the state of the flat. What does it look like? How does it smell? How does it make you feel to be here on your own?

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Leah

“ I know what you're thinking.

Pause.

Don't look at me like that, course I know. I always know, I ain't stupid.

Beat.

You don't think I know? You don't think I see it? Way you give me them eyes...

Thinking 'why don't she just leave? Door's over there'.
Thinking 'look at her, all dressed up, waiting for her boyfriend to come, as if he's gonna come, four in the morning as if he's even coming for her now', thinking I'm stupid, thinking I'm kiddin' myself, thinking I got nothing but air in my head, is that it? Is that what you're thinking?

Beat. LEAH looks a little bruised.

Yeah, well... you people don't know shit.

She walks over to her phone and picks it up.

Sammy ain't text me yet.

Beat.

It's okay, I ain't bothered. I only been here like one hour, it ain't a big deal.

She looks at her phone again. Looks back at us.

I was just walking round town for a bit...

And right... I ain't gonna lie, at first... at first I was upset... okay, at first I was thinking bad thoughts, an', an', an' -

At first I was thinking maybe I done something wrong, cus I couldn't remember. I couldn't remember, everything was so... in my head was so...

Her whole body tenses. Beat.

That's why I called him. To talk to him, hear his voice. Calm me... an' at first when he don't pick up, I was thinking shit -

what if something happen to him and the idea of it make me panic so bad I could feel my heart beating right in my throat.

That's why I come here. To get my head straight. Sort my thoughts out, stop 'em banging round my head like a fuckin' machine gun going off.

She looks around the room, looks back at us.

I sat on the bed and tried him again, and this time... The phone just go dead.

I know what you're thinking, that he switch it off on me? An' I was thinking it too, cus all of a sudden I start panicking and I'm sat there with my head in my hands, breathing, trying to keep calm, counting to like thirty.

That's when I remember.

'Bout his situation. How he's always like 'Leah, don't be callin' me late.'

Sammy live with his dad in one of them new houses down Sinfin. He don't like it, he wants to get away, he says he's tired of looking after him, he want his own life too, don't he?

Sammy say his dad is weird, say he don't like the phone, don't like people callin' him. Tell me once when him and his dad was in Asda Sammy's phone kept goin' an' his dad start stressin' so bad, he thought he was gonna have a heart attack, right there in the bread aisle, near the baguettes, he swear down.

Beat. She looks down at her phone.

I text him,

Said 'Hey Babe, I don't mean to keep calling you, but just to let you know... I'm here. I'm at the flat.

I'm waiting for you,

I hope you come get me soon.'

She pauses, summing up whether to tell us.

Then I put

'I'm sorry.'
 'I love you'
 and a kiss.

Beat. She shifts.

He ain't replied to me yet but it's only cus he's busy. ”

Blue Stockings

Jessica Swale

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TESS:

- The year is 1896.
- Tess is about eighteen.
- She comes from a middle-class family.
- Tess is in her first term studying science at Girton College, Cambridge. Girton was the first college in Britain to admit female students, and 1896 saw the first intake.
- Tess and her fellow female students experience immense opposition, particularly from the male students at Cambridge, who verbally abuse and bully them.
- Tess is known as a 'bluestocking'. It was a negative term to describe a woman who was educated and therefore unnatural and unmarriedable.
- Tess is described as 'a curious girl'. She very quickly got into trouble for expressing views that her male lecturers considered outrageous.
- Unlike some of the other girls, Tess is conflicted between her studies and remaining fit for marriage, and she is fully aware of the risks an education brings. A part of her longs for love and romance, and another part knows that being a wife and mother would not be enough for her.
- One day in the library she met Ralph Mayhew, a student at Trinity College. They exchanged notes and secretly agreed to meet in the orchard at night. Tess fell in love with Ralph and considered abandoning her studies. However, although Ralph professed to love her back, he had no intention of marrying her and is now engaged to someone else.
- Tess has a friend from home called Will. Will is a student at King's College. While Will is supportive of Tess's education, it is

hard for him to be seen to do so when he is in the company of other male students.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Consider the historical context. This is a time that saw the emergence of women as free-thinking individuals, in search of lives other than those of being a wife and mother. Make time to research the struggles of these women and how Girton College came to exist in the first place, and to understand the phenomenal bravery of those who fought for this right.
- Tess has only just heard from her friend Will that Ralph is engaged to someone else. The monologue that follows is therefore very raw. Tess is reacting to what must feel like a stab in the heart. She wasn't even aware that she and Ralph had finished. She is humiliated and betrayed, but above all she feels like a failure. Perhaps you can relate to this kind of heartache or have observed it in someone you know.
- Tess is talking to her friend and fellow student, Celia. Imagine Celia as someone *you* are close to. You could even try practising the piece out loud with that person.
- Tess's immediate reaction is to run away. The reason is two-fold. Firstly the thought of being anywhere near Ralph must fill her with dread, and secondly the idea of carrying on studying and being a 'bluestocking' will mark her for life. (In a short while, Celia will convince her otherwise, but for now she wants to quit.)
- Tess has not been averse to risk. How might this compare to your own desire to be in plays or even to be a professional actor one day? Have you felt resistance from anyone or do you doubt whether you will succeed? If you recognise these sensations they will be very useful in allowing you to connect to Tess's restlessness, her dream of an education and her fear of disappointment. Also what happens when love gets in the way? Have you ever not been able to think clearly or concentrate because you are too distracted?

Tess

“ There was a girl at home. Lived at the parsonage. Annabel. She'd spend a whole afternoon sewing a ribbon onto a bonnet, and she'd be content. Why wasn't that enough for me, Celia? You know, I'd climb the roof of Will's classroom just to listen. Once I lost my footing and they found me hanging by my underskirt, but I wouldn't let go of my notebook. I should have fallen and cracked my skull right then and there, I'd have been better off.

But no. I was stubborn. Forfeit any hope of reputation, of a good match, wreck Mother's nerves with worry, all for this, to be here. And then I meet a boy. A poet. A poet! In a library. And I fall for him like a rock. And suddenly I can't think because my mind is full of him. I read Keats and hear his voice. I look at Vermeer and there he is, in oils. And I love him with every thought and bone and sinew. And then he buys a ring. But it's not for me. And now. What am I now? He's caved out my heart, Celia. What do I do? I've got nothing left. ”

Bodies

Vivienne Franzmann

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE DAUGHTER:

- The Daughter is sixteen.
- She is called 'Daughter' in the script because when she appears on stage it is as a voice or presence from the future.
- In terms of the timeline of the play, she is yet to be born and therefore hasn't been named.
- She is the daughter of Clem and Josh. Josh is her biological father, but the egg comes from a donor in Russia, which, once fertilised, has been placed in the womb of a surrogate in India. (It's a bit complicated and you will need to read the whole play to understand more.)
- The Daughter is angry. At sixteen she is transitioning from girl to woman and is starting to question her identity.
- She argues a lot with Clem and is often unkind to her 'mother'.
- She swears a lot and is dismissive of her teachers.
- She is a fussy eater and worries about things like trans fats.
- Just before her birth, the law in India was changed, banning foreign couples from employing surrogates. However, she was 'conceived' before the new legislation, and was allowed to go to the UK.
- The surrogate in India sacrificed the wellbeing of her own daughter in order to provide for Clem and Josh. When she heard about the ban she tried to abort the baby before she was born. In many ways, the Daughter is symbolic of how the developed world exploits poor countries to serve their own selfish ends.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- The Daughter is talking to her mother, Clem. The Daughter is a kind of projection into the future. She appears as a warning of what might happen. Be aware of this 'out of time' quality while appearing as if you are living now.
- She says she wants to help Clem by protecting her from the difficult questions that one day she will have to answer. However, her tone is also accusatory. See if you can balance her desire to make Clem understand, with her own personal rage at not knowing who she is.
- The final line, 'Then you never would have – Bought me', should come as a real sting in the tail. The fact that money had to change hands, that her birth was part of a business transaction, seems to be the thing she detests the most. It is also reflective of Clem's guilt at how her surrogate had to sacrifice the wellbeing of her own children.
- See if you can picture what Clem looks like. You might like to imagine someone who looks very different from you. Perhaps there is a teacher at school or a friend of your mother's, or the mother of a friend of yours. Really imagine that you are talking to this person.
- Unless you yourself have been adopted or conceived with the aid of a donor, it may be difficult to understand fully the need for the Daughter to recognise where she has come from. Take time to consider the implications of such a situation. Most of us take our identity for granted.

Daughter

“ What part of me belongs to you?

—

Which bits of me are yours? I can tell you exactly what's Daddy's. The maths, the jokes, the spatial awareness and the art stuff.

—
 When are you going to tell me? Right from the start so it's not a shock? Or when you think I'm old enough to understand? Or maybe you'll let me find out myself by accident when I need my birth certificate. You know, bury the landmine and wait for me to stumble on it.

—
 You must have thought about how it will affect me.

—
 You must have.

—
 I'm trying to help you. Because I'll want to know. I'll want to know why I don't look like you. And why I don't act like you. Or think like you or feel like you. Why I feel a million miles away from you when you're supposed to be my mother. I'll look at you and I won't know who I am.

—
 Who am I?

—
 Look at me.

—
 Are you more like your mum or your dad?

—
 I said are you – [...] I think you're a daddy's girl like me. [...] But maybe not, because – [...] If you were a daddy's girl – [...] Then you never would have – [...] Bought me. ”

Broken Biscuits

Tom Wells

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MEGAN:

- Megan is sixteen years old.
- She comes from Withernsea, which is a small town near Hull, on the east Yorkshire coast.
- She lives with her mum, dad and older brother.
- It is the summer holidays, and she has just finished her GCSEs.
- She is not particularly good at school, but is hoping to scrape a pass so that she can go to sixth-form college.
- Megan describes herself as 'all fat, and gobby'. This is true, but although she sometimes speaks before she thinks, she doesn't mean anybody any harm.
- She is unhappy with the way she looks because she gets picked on and called names, and she would love just to be considered normal.
- There is the suggestion in the play that she is no longer a virgin. However, we get the impression that whoever it was she slept with is no longer interested in her and even ignores her.
- Her best friends are Ben and Holly. Ben is gay and Holly is a geek. All three of them struggle to fit in.
- Her dream is to start a band so that they will become cool, popular and no one will think they are losers.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- You will need to think of ways to create the drum kit if you don't have access to one. Why not try putting a few chairs of varying sizes together. If you can get some drum sticks that would help to create the impression. Follow the stage directions and place a large sheet over it so that you can play the 'reveal'.

- Think about her accent and the way she speaks. If you don't come from Yorkshire, try playing it in your own accent, but remember that she is loud, and excitable.
- Her main objective is to free herself (and Ben and Holly) from being 'losers'.
- Popularity is a big deal, especially at sixth-form college, and she genuinely believes that they can become cool, and therefore happy, by being in a band.
- The speech is very funny. It requires energy. Without rushing it, see if you can find the necessary rhythm and pace. Consider the way some sentences are really long and others are really short. She is super-excited and therefore erratic or even hyper.
- Have a strong sense of what Ben and Holly look like. Although Megan is in her own world and not very good at listening, it will help you to know where to focus your attention. You might like to imagine their reactions.

Megan

“ Get ready for your whole lives to completely change for ever.

MEGAN *pulls the sheet off to reveal a drum kit.*

TA-DAH! [...] I know.

She chucks the old sheet to one side. [...]

I know. [...] I can't actually play them yet. The drums. [...] I literally just saw them in the window, the hospice shop, saw them sitting there in the window, twenty quid, the lot, which I actually hung on a couple of days, talked them down to fifteen cos they're quite bulky, the woman in the shop wanted rid. Said people kept just going in, playing them dead loud, it was doing her head in. [...] Anyway, I was like: fifteen quid, I'm having them. Yoink. Goodbye being a shitty overweight nobody. Hello rhythm. [...] Got them home, which actually

took quite a lot of doing, I had to nick a trolley from Aldi, but I thought: it'll be worth it. It'll all be worth it when I get them set up, start bashing out some sweet sweet beats like a fucking, I dunno. Drummer. So I did. Got them back here, just in my room to begin with but then my mum was like: genius idea, Megan, why don't you try putting them in the shed? That way, we won't be disturbing you so much, probably won't even be able to hear you, hardly. And I was like: good call, Wendy. Good call. [...] I'm calling her Wendy for a bit, cos I'm mature and that. She's not enjoying it. But I'm just like: Wendy... Anyway, got them in here, cleared like a space and, yeah. That's it. So... [...] We're fucking, doing it! Aren't we though? A band! We're doing a band! Fist-bump. Fist-bump. ”

Brute*

Izzy Tennyson

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT POPPY:

- Poppy is fourteen years old.
- She comes from a middle-class background.
- She lives with her mum, dad and older sister. The family has recently moved back to England from Spain.
- When Poppy was in Spain she went to an expensive independent school. Now that she is back in England she goes to an all-girls state school in a provincial town. It has come as a shock to Poppy to have to start over in a new school where the girls already know each other. Friendship groups are tight, often brutal, and it is hard for Poppy to fit in.
- Back in Spain she preferred the company of boys and was good at football.
- Her father used to earn a lot of money. Now that he doesn't he spends most of his time sitting in the attic. Poppy says she hardly knows him.
- Her mother is also depressed. Poppy thinks it is because they have a lot less money than they used to.
- Poppy is dyslexic. She is highly articulate but doesn't do well at school. She describes herself as 'thick as shit', but strictly speaking this isn't true.
- When she was in Spain, Poppy was sexually assaulted by an old man who used to look after their dog. Poppy recognises that this event, along with the family upheaval, has led to her feeling isolated, angry and depressed.
- Poppy is highly observant, and self-reflective. She is emotionally intelligent, and although she doesn't always behave her best, she knows when she has overstepped the mark.

* Published in the volume *Groovy & Brute* by Izzy Tennyson

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- The whole play is one long monologue so there may be other sections that you would like to perform. This speech comes at the very start of the play and is Poppy's way of introducing herself to us. (See note on talking to the audience in the introduction.) In some ways it is a bit like a stand-up routine. Poppy is always honest, very funny and unafraid to show us her shortcomings and vulnerability. See if you can find this self-deprecating quality which makes the play so funny, touching and sad.
- Perhaps you have had a similar experience of starting at a school later than everyone else. With friendship groups already formed, it can be a very lonely and frightening experience. The title of the play, *Brute*, gives an indication of how cruel girls can be. Poppy also includes herself in that sort of unkind behaviour. You will need to connect to Poppy's feelings of isolation and also gratitude that there are some girls who have welcomed her.
- Take time to consider what life was like in Spain. It was a time when her dad was earning a lot of money. They had a big house, perhaps with a swimming pool – and the days would have been sunny and very hot in the summer. In many ways it would have been idyllic, but when you read on you will discover that Poppy was sexually molested in Spain. You can't actually play all of that, but in order to create some inner life for yourself you will need to understand how confused she is.
- Think about the significance of the dogs and how the move back to England is associated with their potential death. Perhaps the move from Spain to England feels like a mini death to Poppy as well.
- The monologue takes in a number of different people and locations and even time frames. Be clear about what has happened to you when and where, and use your imagination to picture all that she describes.

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Poppy

“ I keep forgetting I have dogs. You know? It’s weird, because I don’t really see the point of having them. Not any more. My mum sat down and explained to me, that there is a possibility, because they’re old, that they might die on the plane. In the boxes. I imagine them arriving to the house and we open the box that they were packaged in and there are just dead dogs in there. But I find it funny, because it would be so tragic. You know? I don’t know if it would just be easier if we just sort of just left them there. It was an option, you know, to leave them. Planes cause serious stress to animals. But my mum wouldn’t have that, because she really loves those dogs. She said it was selfish really, on her part. But you want them too don’t you? And I said yeah I do, I do want them. *(Pause.)* The thing is we might have killed them, you know.

POPPY starts getting dressed for school.

You know I don’t know one boy in England. I don’t know one boy in the whole of England. Not one. I used to be only with boys in Spain, at Newtons, my school. My mum loved that. Poppy and her boys. She used to give us lifts to football. I loved football, I was the only girl who played, and I used to be picked last, for the teams that is, but then, when I got better, I was actually really, really good, I got picked third. And that’s because you have to pick your strikers first, then defence. Mum said maybe Poppy, maybe that’s why you’re not having a good time at the moment, because you’ve always gotten on better with boys. Always...

Pause.

I’ve got a group now, who were in my form group, they were there all along. I had to sit with Natalie Danes and Becca Carr for a bit. They sat outside the science labs by the massive bins. But I just stopped meeting them, and they haven’t said anything. No I’m with Danielle, well Dani, who actually is the one who showed me around. On the first day.

So it’s fine. Dani’s proper nice though, she’s a bit like the gentle giant. She’s like massive, and everything is a bit

muddled, she’s like a jigsaw puzzle that hasn’t been put together properly. Everything is a bit out of proportion you know, like she’s got very broad shoulders and her boobs look like they’re too high up just under her collarbone, and really long legs so she towers over me. And her eyebrows are huge, like caterpillars, but her eyes are tiny and her mouth is really long. I wonder if it’s all going to come together at some point, because it’s not right at the moment. She’s so strong, like once she pushed me, like joking and I proper flew across the playground.

She likes David Beckham, and that’s how we got talking about it. I once got into a detention because I touched David Beckham’s car. He came to have a look at the school in Spain, to take his kids there, when he was playing in Real Madrid, and I was waiting by the road outside to get picked up and his car was parked there and my headmaster came out because I was standing next to it, and he thought I was waiting for Beckham, when I was just waiting for my mum. And I got a detention. I was leaning against the car, you see. Actually this didn’t happen to me it happened to my older sister but I tell it like it happened to me anyway. People like the story. She tells it better than me because she was actually there. So I sit with them now. Dani’s lot, well it’s more like Chloe’s lot. I’m with Chloe’s lot now. ”

Crushed Shells and Mud

Ben Musgrave

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LYDIA:

- Lydia is seventeen.
- She has been infected by a deadly disease that is ripping its way through the United Kingdom.
- Her parents have abandoned her, and she is being protected by a secret network of carers who help those with the virus.
- In order to keep her safe, they have moved her from place to place so as not to be discovered. She is now in a seaside village on the east coast of England in a safe house.
- At the start of the play she met Derek (to whom she speaks in the monologue). He is described as being 'not in her league'. From this we assume that she is attractive and sophisticated in a way that 'townies' or privileged people are.
- The disease has left her with a black mark on her upper body. It is the telltale sign that she has been infected.
- She has no idea whether she will live or die, and regularly has to inject herself with medicine.
- This uncertainty has made her less careful. She smokes, drinks and does drugs because she has nothing to lose.
- Because of her condition and fears for the future she is prone to mood swings. There are times when she feels positive and others when she feels bleak. Read the whole play to understand more.
- Because she has on the surface a 'fit' body, and has trained to be a dancer, it is doubly difficult for her to come to terms with what has happened.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- This is the first time in the play that we hear about what happened to Lydia. It comes quite late on in the story. Think, therefore, about the enormity of this 'confession'. Although vulnerable, she has come to trust Derek and feels safe with him.
- Imagine what Derek looks like. Perhaps you have experienced a similar relationship that wasn't initially passionate on your part, but has got stronger over time.
- It is unlikely that you will have experienced a similar trauma and/or been abandoned in this way. As the play is part fantasy, you will need to use your imagination to understand the gravity of the situation. It may help to remember when you were last ill and times it by a thousand!
- Take time to think about Robbie. What did he look like? Make a decision about why she pauses before saying 'he was my... particular friend'.
- Lydia is guilty. On some level she blames herself for acquiring the disease and for all that followed. See if you can capture this feeling of shame coupled with an intense rage and loneliness, then, read the whole play to discover its positive ending. When you are working on sad or tragic monologues it is important not to get down yourself. When you know what happens in the end, you will feel less sad about the world of the play.

Lydia

“ I read your story. [...]

The one about the trawlerman.
You remember you gave it to me?

When we first met? [...]

I loved it. [...]

I thought it was wonderful.

I felt like you'd really understood his feelings.

Like you'd got under his skin.

It was gorgeous. [...]

Pause.

Before Sussex.

I was at a dance academy in London.

We felt very free there, all of us.

Every day we had to have courage.

To be and feel how we wanted to be.

To touch others

To understand the bodies of others.

It wasn't wrong, it was lovely.

I felt that I was discovering things every day.

[...]

There was a boy called Robbie, and he was my... particular friend.

I was fifteen and he was seventeen, and I had sex with him.

Before the panic.

Before it emerged.

We weren't careful enough.

I was on the pill.

I didn't know that he'd slept with other girls before me!

We were just young!

Then he got very ill and died.

And other people at the academy.

And then I got very ill.

And my parents

Couldn't handle it.

And started to reject me.

And wouldn't come near me.

And wouldn't hug me.

And that's when it was born inside me.

Pause. She struggles with it.

And one day they were gone.

On a business trip, they said.

And they put me in a hospital.

And they didn't come.

And when the hospital made enquiries

It turned out my mother and father had left the country.

Pause.

Will you go swimming again, Derek? ”

Echoes*

Henry Naylor

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SAMIRA:

- Samira is seventeen.
- She is a British Muslim.
- She comes from Ipswich in Suffolk.
- She hates where she lives and longs to escape.
- She is intelligent, savvy and has a strong sense of humour.
- She is sensitive to the suffering of other Muslims, and genuinely wants to help them and make a difference to the world.
- She is courageous and dutiful.
- Her family are religious, but they are not fundamental in their beliefs.
- Samira on the other hand is easily influenced and would be prepared to make sacrifices for her beliefs.
- You will need to read the whole play to see what happens to her when she makes the dangerous journey to Iraq.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- The speech is part of a much longer monologue. This section comes at the very start of the play and sets up the story of how Samira became radicalised. Read the whole play – there may be other parts that you would like to perform. If you like this first section, think about why she needs to tell us what happened to her in the first place (and see note on talking to the audience in the introduction). Once you have read the whole play you will see that her story serves as a stark warning to other young Muslim women who may be attracted

* Published in the volume *Arabian Nightmares* by Henry Naylor

to becoming 'Jihadi brides'. Use this need to warn us as the impetus or objective for starting the monologue.

- Samira has a very direct way of talking and communicating. From the very first line she is up-front, feisty and challenging. Look at the way she calls us 'kuffar' – 'non-believers' or 'infidel'. See if you can capture her tone.
- The monologue is both funny and serious. The way she uses humour by joking about Ipswich and popular magazine culture helps us to understand what might attract an intelligent woman to something that seems more worthy and meaningful than worrying about what she looks like in a bikini. The humour also acts as a kind of line that draws us, the audience, in – providing a contrast to what is actually a very dark and serious story.
- Think about her friend Beegum. What does she look like? How does she speak? Perhaps you too have a friend who is really into politics or global issues. Do they ever make you feel shallow or ignorant? It is interesting to note that Samira can trace back the exact moment of her 'awakening' to selling her friend the mouse mat. What did that mouse mat look like? It may seem like a silly question, but it is these precise details and associations that will bring depth to your playing.
- Take time to visualise all that she mentions or describes. There are many well-known people that she talks about. Make sure you know who they are and what they look like. What might a 'Syrian basement' be like? You probably know what WHSmith is like. If you don't know Ipswich look up images on the internet. It was heavily bombed during the Second World War. Do you remember the dress that in some lights looked blue/black and in others white/gold? Research it if not – the debate became a viral sensation. You will also need to familiarise yourself with the ongoing wars and interventions in the Middle East.

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Samira

“ I know what you’re thinking:
 ‘Why would a Grade-A student suddenly upsticks to become
 a housewife in a Syrian basement?’

Ha. You kuffar don’t understand Faith, do you?

This is my choice: Paradise... or Ipswich.

The first: the shadow of God’s kingdom on earth.

The second: a land of chip papers and dogshit.

You choose.

Wasn’t always religious. Used to be shy, quiet.

A good student.

Until the day I sold Beegum a mousemat in WHSmith’s...

My Saturday job is manning the till, stacking the shelves, in
 the News and Magazines section.

...Embarrassing to have to serve my devout schoolfriend.

‘Man, how can you sell this shit?’ She waves her hand over the
 newsracks.

‘What’s wrong with it?’

‘Kuffar press is full of lies. Only times Muslims get
 mentioned is when they’re beheading people. Never anything
 about the Syrian refugees, or drone strikes killing babies.’

She may have a point;

the front pages are often about Kim Kardashian’s bottom.

‘So how come *you* know about refugees, and baby-seeking
 missiles?’

‘Internet.’

‘The internet?! There’s people on the internet says that dress
 is blue/black rather than white/gold.’

‘It is.’

‘How can you say that?? It’s white/gold.’

‘Blue/black.’

... ‘White/Gold.’

Lunchtime, I look up ‘Syrian refugees’ on my smartphone.
 There are three-point-eight million of them.

I pretend to tidy the shelves. Flick through a tabloid. Mostly
 the Election and Nigel Farage.

... The refugees only appear on page eleven. After an advert
 asking whether I’m Beach Body Ready.

In another, there are no refugees.

Instead, there’s a whole page of Katie Hopkins. Flapping her
 mouth like a bag lady.

As the customers come and lay their papers on the counter, I
 want to grab them and shout: ‘Are we not human to you?’

But what I actually say is: ‘...do you want the vouchers?’ ”

Echoes*

Henry Naylor

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TILLIE:

- Tillie is seventeen.
- She comes from an upper-middle-class background.
- It is the nineteenth century, and Tillie is a Victorian pioneer woman.
- She is described as 'strong and smart'.
- Tillie comes from Ipswich in Suffolk.
- She lives with her parents and has an older brother who has spent five years in India.
- In many ways Tillie is ahead of her time. She is educated and curious, and longs to leave the confines of her family and home.
- Tillie has a strong sense of right and wrong and hates any social injustice.
- She has high principles and believes in the might and rule of the British Empire, until she travels abroad and sees the brutality of the British at first hand.
- Tillie is immensely brave. Unlike the other women in her social circle, when her husband becomes violent, she refuses to obey his commands and rebels against his brutish behaviour.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Her accent and way of speaking is a crucial component. She is 'posh' and the language is heightened. You might describe her as being 'jolly hockey sticks!' Without turning her into a caricature, you can have fun with it. You will also notice the way the text is laid out as if it were verse. See if you can use

* Published in the volume *Arabian Nightmares* by Henry Naylor

the breaks in the line for emphasis, and to create space for her new thoughts.

- Tillie has left her home in Ipswich, Suffolk, in the hope of finding marriage to an Englishman who has been posted to a far-flung part of the British Empire. Such men were encouraged to marry girls sent out from England to prevent them from liaising and producing children with the 'natives'. In this sense, Tillie believes she is performing a duty and thereby satisfying 'Queen and Country'.
- What might the Lieutenant look and sound like? He is handsome and flirtatious. Perhaps you too have felt a similar attraction to someone based initially on their looks. See if you can picture him. You might like to base him on someone you know, or perhaps an actor you have seen in a film or play set at a similar time in history. I would suggest that you imitate his voice when he is talking to you.
- In comparison to the thrill of the handsome Lieutenant are the 'dullards' of Ipswich. How do you imagine Francis to look and speak? Again, you might like to base him on someone you know or a character from another story. It will be funny if you can imitate him too so that we get a sharp contrast between the two men.
- The speech is part of a much longer monologue, and Tillie is her own narrator. This section of the monologue comes at the very start of the play, and as you can see it goes backwards in time. You will need to make a clear break from describing the first meeting with the Lieutenant to what life is like back at home. So that when you say, 'Spinsters at twenty-five. My destiny', we know that you are not going to let that happen. Read the whole play to find out what happens to Tillie.

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Tillie

“ Three months at sea. The lump sugar is gone.
The eggs are rotten, and thrown overboard. India cannot
come too soon.

At dinner a handsome Lieutenant approaches. Winks
conspiratorially. And presents me with a fig. ‘Slipped the
storemaster a few coins.’

I smile gratitude.

Then bite the flesh. There’s a smell of rot, and the fizz of
ferment.

A maggot inside. Wrestling with its own being.

‘Oh. Oh, I’m so sorry,’ blushes the appalled Lieutenant.

He would crush it. But I stay his hand.

‘It is one of God’s creatures!... Insects. Hobby of mine – and
this one performs the most spectacular transformation in
nature. More wondrous than the caterpillar... Blind, now,
hopeless. But soon to grow wings, legs. Thousands of eyes.’

The Lieutenant snatches the fig, maggot and all, and crushes
it in a puffed fist. Red juice running through his fingers.

‘Flies are not suitable discourse for a lady.’

[...]

I must confess.

I was a maggot, once, writhing on a dungheap called Ipswich.

Blind, wingless, directionless.

Thrashing around, trying to find a man. For my Christian
desire is to produce children for the Empire.

But there are no men in Ipswich. Only a succession of
squinting dullards...

My latest suitor is Francis, the pasty son of a leather
manufacturer.

A ninny, who has taken exception to the railways.

‘Heed my words, these “railways” are but a fad. Some of these
vehicles travel in excess of twenty-five miles per hour.’

‘Why is that so objectionable, sir?’ I say.

He baulks. ‘What lady is going to want to travel at such
ferocious speeds? Think of the damage to their hairstyles.’

‘Ah, nullum bonum valebat perdere lapsas.’

‘Er, quite,’ he says.

I smirk. ‘It means: “Never let an adventure get in the way of a
good hairstyle”.’

My father’s jaw tense, as he bids Francis farewell.

‘A capital woman,’ says Francis, ‘Capital. If only she hadn’t
floored me with her Greek.’

My father shuts the door, his rage, palpable.

‘You are too spirited. How many men of means do you think
there are in Ipswich?’

I look out on to the square. See the governesses wrapped in
their threadbare gloves and carpet bags.

Spinsters at twenty-five.

My destiny. ”

Epic Love and Pop Songs

Phoebe Eclair-Powell

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DOLL:

- Doll is sixteen.
- She comes from an underprivileged background.
- Her appearance is rough because she doesn't take good care of herself, and her personal hygiene is not what it should be.
- She lives with her mum, who is permanently stressed out.
- Her dad left her mum for her mum's sister. So now her auntie is also her stepmother.
- Doll struggles to fit in. She is desperate to be popular, but she can be violent and people are scared of her.
- Doll says she is pregnant, but this is a lie. She has maintained the pretence by wearing a fake bump and taking pills to stop her periods.
- She hoped that telling people she was pregnant would get her some attention. But, if anything, it has made her situation worse. The other girls are competitive and hate the fact that Doll appears to have lost her virginity when they have been lying about losing theirs. In fact, she is still a virgin.
- Doll has one friend called Ted, who is a bit of a geek. Ted acknowledges that Doll can be violent: 'She did pull out a chunk of Samantha Hogan's hair', but tells us: 'I see something else, I see someone who needs looking after.'
- Doll is troubled. Her anti-social behaviour is a cry for help, and her tough outer shell is a cover for the hurt she feels inside.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Doll loves showing off. She craves attention, and this is her chance to shine. She is, cheeky, 'gobby' and a bit brash. It is a funny speech and you can have fun with it. (See note on talking to the audience in the introduction.)

- Think about the energy you will need to maintain. Doll is wired: her thoughts are like butterflies, flitting from one thing to the next. She is on a high, but be careful not to rush it.
- At this point in the play, we don't know that Doll is lying. You will have to convince us that what she says is true. The best way is to pretend that you really are pregnant and to think about an imaginary boyfriend who got you pregnant. You might like to try performing the speech with a fake bump, thinking of ways to disguise it before you reveal it. For instance, you could wear a baggy jumper that hides the bump and then take the jumper off to show the bump under a T-shirt that is closer fitting. Play around with it.
- Think about the other characters that she mentions. What do they look like? You will need a strong set of images in your head when you talk about your mum, dad, auntie and Ted.
- For all her bravado, Doll is immensely vulnerable. Be careful that she doesn't become a stereotype. Look for ways of finding the humour while still being connected to the sadness that she feels. The monologue is her way of making herself feel better.

NB This play offers a number of other monologues from which to choose.

Doll

“Hello, my name is Doll Evans and this is my show. And it is a one-woman show with supporting material – a backing dancer if you will – you know like one of them women that sing in a black dress at the back of the stage on *Britain's Got Talent* and wave their arms a bit – except my one's a man and he's called Ted Parker. But forget about him, because this is about me. And this is a list of things I like:

I like dunkin' biscuits in tea and then downing all the bitty bits in the bottom of the cup. I like watching *Dinner Date* on ITV3 because it reminds me that at least I'm not that much of a freak. I like wearing these pyjamas every night even though the towelling starts to smell of fanny really quickly, you know how it all rides up, well it does.

I go to Harris Academy and I'm in Year 10 don't ya know, yadda yadda I'm giving background, trust me it helps.

I'm really average is basically what I am trying to say,

I really, really am just that teenage girl you all know and won't sit next to on the back of the bus. That one. Music too loud brap brap I don't care, feet up on the seat, likes to link arms, laughs at everything and thinks 'you're well fit' is the best chat-up line ever. I'm her.

I live with my mum, cos well, that's the way it's always been, but my dad lives round the corner, with Auntie Cheryl who is both my aunt and my stepmum. Jezza Kyle ain't seen nuthin yet. Get me a double-page spread in *Take a Break*.

But no really it's fine. As my mum would say 'no really everyone I think you'll find IT'S FINE'. And then she chews on some more HRT and puts a nicotine patch on her nipple.

I think I'm what's pushing Mum over the edge at the moment to be honest.

Her blood pressure is well high and you can hear her teeth gnashing together in her sleep from my room. Except when she's like, crying.

I think it's because I'm pregnant.

Ta-dah.

I love a reveal don't you?

Trust me I'm not trying to be a bit-part in *Hollyoaks* it just sort of happened and then you think, 'well why not eh?' A little thing, round here, could be fun. I thought Mum would be more excited, she's always going on about me growing up and having nothing to live for blah blah, so now we both have something to live for – don't we?

I thought it was a great plan, but she was, well she was... I think it's cos I couldn't tell her who the father was. Sorry, but it's a secret – I might not even tell you guys. ”

The Fall

James Fritz

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TWO:

- The character known as Two is in her forties. However, the play was written to be performed by young people and so she can be played by someone your own age.
- She is married to a man known as One.
- They met when they were both young and have been together ever since.
- They have a son called Liam.
- They don't earn much money.
- They have always lived in rented accommodation.
- When One lost his job, Two got the idea that it would be good if they could sell his mother's flat to buy a place of their own. But One has never wanted to make his mother move out of her home.
- Two has never liked her mother-in-law.
- As Liam got older and they had more expenses, Two continued nagging One about selling the flat.
- When One's mother got so old and ill that she couldn't look after herself, Two suffocated her with a pillow.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Start by giving yourself a name. From what you know of her, what sort of person do you imagine Two to be? We know that she is pushy and selfish, although she would say that she is just looking out for her son. You must decide. See if you can fill in the gaps, using the opportunity to create a backstory and fully rounded character for yourself.
- She is talking to her husband, but she is not being honest when she says that her mother-in-law asked her to help her

kill herself. Read the whole play to find out the truth. Whatever actually happened, it is clear that she has convinced herself that it was the right thing to do, and, that to avoid going to prison, it is vital she gets her husband to go along with her 'story'. Observe the way she repeatedly says 'I love you'. She knows she has done a terrible thing, but is desperate for him to forgive her/understand her.

- It is really important that you engage with the idea that life is financially so much harder for her generation than it was for her parents. With the rise in student loans and overall living costs perhaps you too can relate to this. Two is angry at the unfairness of it all, and to a certain extent she has good cause to feel this way.
- You will need to use your imagination to go from being angry at the unfairness of it all to actually murdering someone. It is an extreme situation. The great thing about plays is that they can present the 'what-ifs' in life so that the audience can be made to think about difficult subjects. The play especially written for people your age is a reminder that you too will be old and vulnerable one day, so you should think twice about the way you treat the elderly. See if you can really picture all that she describes from the pills to the pillow to the fact that she says it was gentle. She is probably lying about how easy it was, so see if you can play a little film in your mind's eye of how you would have *liked* it to be in order to *justify* what you have done. You could at the same time imagine a scenario where the killing was far from gentle. Like all liars she has managed to superimpose her version of events over the facts.
- The monologue has an interesting structure. You will see how many full stops and short sentences there are. If you observe these full stops and don't just run on to the next line, you can create a space for a new thought to pop into your head. Perhaps she is struggling. Perhaps it is an indication that she is lying, that she is running out of ideas or excuses. It certainly shows us just how hard she is having to work to get her husband on side.

Two

“ Maybe you should sit down. [...]

It's not what you think so [...]

No listen. [...]

No!

Well.

I helped. [...]

She asked me. [...]

She asked me. To help her.

We were talking.

She didn't want to

Move

And

Since her fall

The pain

And

Our situation

Her flat

Those sharks

She knew

That this was best

So she asked me.

I'm sorry.

I love you.

For us.

For Liam.

Her flat.

It's meant for you.

Always.

That's what she said.

She asked me.

I'm tired she said.

I'm ready.

I said no

But
 She kept asking
 And.
 I love you. [...]

Pills.
 And I put a pillow
 Resting on her.
 I love you.
 She didn't fight.
 It was gentle.
 I promise.
 She knew.
 Every year in that home
 Would've been
 Worse for her.
 Worse for us.
 Worse for Liam.
 Worse for Liam.
 I love you.
 So.
 Since her fall.
 So much pain
 And
 She said
 Eskimos. [...]

When Eskimos get old they walk out into the snow and die.
 Choose their time.
 And I thought.
 If I was her.
 What would I want? [...]

It was very brave. [...]

She asked me.
 I love you.
 Please.
 She asked me. [...]

This flat. Her flat. We've got nothing else.
 It's a life raft.

I loved her.
 She was a good woman.
 Had a good life.
 But we couldn't afford.

This had to happen.
 For Liam.
 You understand that don't you?

You can hate me if you want. For the rest of our lives you can
 hate me.
 But think about him. He's what's important.
 Not us. Not your mum.

She asked me to do it.
 I need you to believe that.
 For all our sakes.
 Do you believe that? ”

Fast*

Fin Kennedy

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CARA:

- Cara is sixteen.
- She lives on a farm on the outskirts of a town.
- She 'rocks a sort of rural hippy look'.
- She lives with her mum who is into spiritual healing and yoga retreats, and her older sister Kirsty.
- Both Cara and Kirsty want to go to university.
- Cara's dad was a farmer.
- Their farm was an old-fashioned and traditional farm, and could not compete with the increase in industrial farming that was threatening their profits.
- Twelve months ago, Cara's father committed suicide.
- Cara discovered letters he had written to all the major supermarkets blaming them for driving him into debt.
- Since he died, Cara has lost her appetite. Her teachers are particularly worried about how grief is affecting her physically.

FIVE THINGS TO HELP YOU PERFORM THE MONOLOGUE:

- Since discovering her father's letters, Cara has become increasingly politicised about animal welfare and mass food production. Perhaps you share Cara's views or are passionate about another kind of cause. See if you can tap into this sense of injustice that drives the speech.
- Grief affects people in many different ways. Cara is angry about what happened to her dad, and also angry at her dad

* Published in the volume *The Domino Effect and Other Plays for Teenagers* by Fin Kennedy

for having left her. Without shouting, connect to this rage that she feels at her personal loss. It is at the root of her wider political views.

- Cara's friend Chris is recording Cara's speech on his phone. He is described as a 'vegan, eco-activist' and is very much on Cara's side. Think about what he might look like.
- If you don't already know about it, do some research into animal welfare – things like battery farms and fair trade – to discover what it is that Cara is objecting to. Really think about the snack machines and fast-food outlets. How do they smell? What does the food taste like? How do you feel after you've eaten crisps, chocolate and takeaway food? Cara is convinced that these things kill. (When one of Cara's classmates who likes this kind of food is diagnosed with diabetes, Cara's mission becomes increasingly real.)
- Think about the courage that Cara must have to want to meet with all the heads of the supermarket chains. Most sixteen-year-olds would be intimidated, but not her. See if you can connect to this feeling of strength, and play the monologue with confidence.

Cara

“Get your phone out. [...] I want you to film me. [...] (It's) A new campaign. I think you'll like it. [...] Just hit record. [...]

(To camera.) My name is Cara Leary. I'm in Year Eleven at Redford Secondary. Twenty-four hours ago I stopped eating. It was a sponsored fast for Oxfam, but I've decided to make it last. Twelve months ago, my dad lay down on some train tracks in the middle of the night. He was a farmer. For years he'd been screwed by the big supermarkets and fast-food chains who refused to pay him a proper price for his crops.

My dad was a quiet man, and never spoke about this. But I'm not quiet. And this is my protest. I will not be eating again

until Redford Secondary bans all snack machines on school premises. I will not be eating again until Redford Secondary uses only fairly traded UK produce in its canteen. I will not eat again until our local council clamps down on the thirty-seven fast-food outlets that exist within one square mile of our school. And I will not eat again until I get meetings with heads of all the major supermarket chains which have an outlet in our town. This fast started for charity. But charity begins at home. Join me, and help demand a living wage for UK farmers and their families. Enough is enough. The revolution starts here. ”