DRAMALLAMA PRESENTS

A Collection of

CLASSIC MONOLOGUES

for the

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

36 SPEECHES FROM PUBLISHED PLAYS · 431 BC TO 1921

Euripides · Plautus · Shakespeare · Webster · Molière · Farquhar · Sheridan · Schiller · Gogol · Ibsen · Chekhov · Wilde · Shaw · Synge · Galsworthy · Grimké · Glaspell · Gale

with beat breakdowns, rehearsal exercises and notes for teachers

EDITED BY SEAN CERCONE



dramallama



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36 speeches from published plays, 431 BC to 1921,
with rehearsal and teaching support

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About the editor

Sean Cercone is the founder and CEO of Dramallama and The Licensing House, which publish and license plays for educational theater. He is the former Artistic Director of the West Virginia Shakespeare Festival and holds an MFA in Acting from West Virginia University. He is also a playwright.

From the editor

These books are built the way a working rehearsal room works. Every entry asks the questions I trained on as an actor and used running a Shakespeare festival: Who is this person talking to? What do they want right now? What is in the way? How do they try to get it, and what changes by the last line? Those questions turn old language into live action, and they work the same way for a Greek tragedy, a Molière comedy or a one-act from 1920.

Running a Shakespeare festival also taught me what classical text needs from a young actor: the words on the page, exactly as the playwright wrote them, and enough help to own them. So every text here is printed as its edition prints it, with no cuts, and every entry gives students the words they need, the situation, a breakdown into beats and rehearsal games that get the piece on its feet. Teachers get a box of their own with the context, the content notes and the competition rules they need before they hand anything out.

Use these pieces in class, in showcases and in competition. Above all, use them to help your students discover that this writing was made to be played.

Sean Cercone

About these texts and your right to use them

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WHAT THIS BOOK ADDS.

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READ THE WHOLE PLAY.

Each entry gives a link to a free scan of the full play. Read the scene, and ideally the play, before you perform the speech.

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Quick start: find a piece in 60 seconds

1. **Know the job.** Class work, a showcase or a competition? For a competition, turn to the **Competition Guide** first: it tells you which events each speech fits and what the rules allow.
2. **Pick a character.** The **Quick-find table** lists every speaker, as the play writes them. Any student may play any role.
3. **Check the clock.** Every speech shows an estimated time. Festival limits are a maximum, so leave room for pauses.
4. **Match the level.** Foundational, Developing or Advanced describe the speech, not your students.
5. **Choose the tone.** Comic or dramatic, as the Quick-find table marks each speech.
6. **Teachers read first.** Before you hand out an entry, read its teacher box (the last section). It covers the whole play, content notes and staging.

HOW EVERY ENTRY WORKS

Section	Who it is for	What you get
1 Student handout	Students	The play, who is speaking and to whom, what the character wants, the words to know, the speech itself and its time
2 Breakdown and cut notes	Students	Beats, what changes, where the speech starts and stops
3 Verse work or Language work	Students	How the lines move: stress, rhythm, punctuation, images
4 Rehearsal	Students	Three prompts and a class game
5 For teachers	Teachers	Skill focus, scaffold, content note, assessment checklist, casting, festival use

Look for these on every entry. The colored **at-a-glance strip** under each title shows the time, cast, level, verse or prose, and tone. The highlighted **Competition notes** box shows where the speech fits and what to check before a festival.

Printing. One purchase covers one school. Every section but the teacher box prints as a student packet.

How to use this book

Every speech here comes from a published play. Every entry names the play, the playwright, the translator where there is one, and the exact edition and page. That matters at festivals and auditions, where you will be asked where your piece comes from. None of these is a "Dramallama monologue." They belong to their playwrights.

Every entry has five pages.

1. **Student handout.** The play, the edition, who is speaking, what just happened, the playable problem, the words you need, and the performance text, set apart in its own box.
2. **Breakdown and cut notes.** The speech in beats, what changes, what the play states and what it leaves to you, and exactly where the excerpt starts and stops.
3. **Verse work or language work.** How this particular speech is built and what that gives you to play.
4. **Rehearsal.** Three prompts and one exercise to get the speech on its feet.
5. **Teacher box.** Skill focus, likely difficulty, a scaffold, a content note, an assessment pointer, festival and audition use, and casting.

Pages 1 to 4 are written for students and can be printed and handed out. Page 5 is for teachers. Some teacher boxes discuss events in the full play that the student pages leave out on purpose. Read the teacher box before you hand out the entry.

The order is by date. The 36 entries run in rough order of when each play was written or first staged, in three parts of 12: before 1700, 1700 to 1880, and 1880 to 1930. The Indexes at the back sort them by tone, length, challenge, verse or prose, and playwright.

Times are estimates. Each entry gives a word count and an estimated time at 131 words a minute for verse and 140 for prose. Stage directions are not counted. Every piece is estimated at between 1:00 and 2:00. Time your own performance aloud, with your pauses, before a festival or an audition.

Two pieces for one slot. Many festivals ask for two contrasting pieces in a fixed time. The Pairing Guide at the back suggests partners for every piece that fits.

Check the rules. Each entry's Competition notes box was checked against the official 2026–27 rules on November 3, 2026. Rules change and chapters differ. Confirm the current rules for your festival or audition.

Choosing a piece

Challenge levels. Every entry carries one of three levels. They describe the piece, not the student.

- **Foundational:** a clear situation, a strong single want, and plain or quickly learned language. A good first classical piece. (7 pieces)
- **Developing:** more tactic changes, denser language or verse, or a situation that needs some background. (17 pieces)
- **Advanced:** sustained argument, heavy emotional demands, complex verse, or a play whose context needs careful teaching. (12 pieces)

Casting. Any student may play any role in this book. Each teacher box says when a character's age, gender, race or class is part of what the speech means, so that you and your students can talk about it. Festival rules generally don't allow changing pronouns or wording, so the texts stay as printed.

Accents. None is needed for any piece. Say the words in your own voice.

Content. Older plays are not automatically suitable for every student. Every teacher box has a content note covering both the excerpt and the play around it.

Quick-find table

#	Speaker	Play	Time	Tone	Verse or prose	Challenge	Character
1	Medea	*Medea*	1:52	Dramatic	Verse	Advanced	Woman or girl
2	Euclio	*The Pot of Gold*	1:43	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Man or boy
3	Helena	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*	1:39	Comic	Verse	Developing	Woman or girl
4	Constance	*King John*	1:40	Dramatic	Verse	Developing	Woman or girl
5	Arthur	*King John*	1:11	Dramatic	Verse	Developing	Man or boy
6	Phebe	*As You Like It*	1:55	Comic	Verse	Developing	Woman or girl
7	Spaconia	*A King and No King*	1:33	Dramatic	Verse	Advanced	Woman or girl
8	Queen Katherine	*Henry VIII*	1:59	Dramatic	Verse	Advanced	Woman or girl
9	The Duchess	*The Duchess of Malfi*	1:16	Dramatic	Verse	Advanced	Woman or girl
10	Mother Sawyer	*The Witch of Edmonton*	1:21	Dramatic	Verse	Developing	Woman or girl
11	Arsinoé	*The Misanthrope*	1:57	Comic	Verse	Advanced	Woman or girl
12	Frosine	*The Miser*	1:25	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Woman or girl
13	Serjeant Kite	*The Recruiting Officer*	1:12	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Man or boy
14	Mrs. Sullen	*The Beaux Stratagem*	1:29	Comic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl
15	Just	*Minna von Barnhelm*	1:25	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Man or boy
16	Lucy	*The Rivals*	1:34	Comic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl
17	Sir Peter Teazle	*The School for Scandal*	1:24	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Man or boy
18	Charlotte	*The Contrast*	1:35	Comic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl
19	Gertrude	*William Tell*	1:16	Dramatic	Verse	Developing	Woman or girl
20	Tell	*William Tell*	1:27	Dramatic	Verse	Developing	Man or boy
21	Osip	*The Inspector-General*	1:21	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Man or boy

22	Katerina	*The Storm*	1:11	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Woman or girl
23	Cheviot Hill	*Engaged*	1:28	Comic	Prose	Developing	Man or boy
24	Nora	*A Doll's House*	1:04	Dramatic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl
25	Sasha	*Ivanoff*	1:14	Comic	Prose	Foundational	Woman or girl
26	Mrs. Erlynne	*Lady Windermere's Fan*	1:36	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Woman or girl
27	Nicola	*Arms and the Man*	1:15	Comic	Prose	Developing	Man or boy
28	Arkadina	*The Sea-Gull*	1:16	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Woman or girl
29	Maurya	*Riders to the Sea*	1:24	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Woman or girl
30	Christy	*The Playboy of the Western World*	1:36	Comic	Prose	Developing	Man or boy
31	Falder	*Justice*	1:57	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Man or boy
32	Liza	*Pygmalion*	1:09	Comic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl
33	Rachel	*Rachel*	1:37	Dramatic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl
34	Tom	*Rachel*	1:51	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Man or boy
35	Allie Mayo	*The Outside*	1:37	Dramatic	Prose	Advanced	Woman or girl
36	Lulu	*Miss Lulu Bett*	1:20	Dramatic	Prose	Developing	Woman or girl

Competition Guide

Every speech in this book is a continuous, uncut passage spoken by one character, from a play published before 1931. That meets the strictest material rules we found: no combining characters, no splicing, no text changes.

WHERE THESE SPEECHES FIT

Event	Organization (season)	Fits?	The rules that matter
Monologue	EdTA Thespys (2026–27)	**Yes, as printed**	One piece, 3:00 or less; one chair; no props or costumes
Contrasting Monologues	EdTA Thespys (2026–27)	**Yes, as printed**	Two contrasting pieces, **3:00 or less combined**; check the times of both pieces
Dramatic / Humorous Interpretation	NSDA (2026–27); TFA (Texas)	With your own longer cutting	Up to 10:00. NSDA: +0:30 grace, one published source, no props, costumes or sets
Program Oral Interpretation	NSDA (2026–27)	As one source in a themed program	Up to 10:00; read from a manuscript

Names changed in 2026–27. EdTA now calls the acting categories Monologue, Contrasting Monologues, Two-Person Scene and Ensemble Acting. Older handouts may still say Solo, Duet or Group Acting.

BEFORE ANY FESTIVAL: THE FIVE-POINT CHECK

1. **Right event, right length.** Time the piece aloud with your pauses. Limits are maximums, and going over can disqualify.
2. **Words exactly as printed.** Thespys forbids changing "pronouns or scripted text" without the rights holder's written permission. Our texts are printed exactly; keep them that way, even when the casting crosses gender.
3. **Nothing but chairs.** No props, costumes or extra furniture at Thespys. Mime every object; each teacher box says how.
4. **Slate correctly.** Thespys: your name(s), troupe number and the title of the play, and nothing else. Never give this book's title.
5. **Bring the source.** Public-domain plays are eligible at Thespys without appearing on the Approved Materials List. NSDA asks for the original source (book or e-book, no photocopies) at district tournaments; confirm with NSDA whether an anthology meets that rule.

Rules change every season. Everything on this page was checked against each organization's official rules on November 3, 2026 (EdTA 2026–27 rulebook; NSDA 2026–27 manuals; TFA event pages). TFA details come from its event page; check them against the 2026–27 TFA Constitution. Confirm the current rules with your chapter, league or tournament before you enter.

PART ONE

Before 1700

Greek and Roman comedy and tragedy, Shakespeare, the Jacobean stage and Molière

1 Medea · *Medea*
2 Euclio · *The Pot of Gold*
3 Helena · *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
4 Constance · *King John*
5 Arthur · *King John*
6 Phebe · *As You Like It*
7 Spaconia · *A King and No King*
8 Queen Katherine · *Henry VIII*
9 The Duchess · *The Duchess of Malfi*
10 Mother Sawyer · *The Witch of Edmonton*
11 Arsinoé · *The Misanthrope*
12 Frosine · *The Miser*

1

STUDENT HANDOUT 1 OF 5

Medea

Medea by Euripides, translated by Gilbert Murray · Medea's scene with Creon, speech lines 1–29 (numbered within the speech; this edition prints no line numbers) · first performed 431 BC

TIME 1:52 CAST Solo LEVEL Advanced TEXT Verse TONE Dramatic

"'Tis not the first nor second time" *(editor's title, from the first line)*

Text: *The Medea of Euripides*, translated into English rhyming verse with explanatory notes by Gilbert Murray, George Allen & Sons, London, 1910 (title page: "Eighth Thousand"), pp. 18–19. Full play: archive.org/details/medeaofeuripides1910euri

Original dramatic excerpt · the complete speech, unaltered · High School · Challenge: Advanced · Verse (rhymed couplets)

★ **COMPETITION NOTES**

Excerpt from a public-domain play, in a translation that is itself public domain in the United States (published 1910). Credit both Euripides and the translator wherever your event asks for the source. Perform the text as printed; don't change pronouns or wording.

- **Thespys Monologue / Contrasting Monologues (2026–27):** fits as printed. One chair, no props, no costume. Contrasting Monologues means two pieces that together run **3:00 or less**, timed from your first word.
- **NSDA Dramatic or Humorous Interpretation; TFA DI/HI:** legal source material, but those events run up to 10 minutes. Build a longer cutting from the full play.

Full rules: Competition Guide, p. 12. Rules change yearly; confirm with your festival.

Who, where, what just happened. Medea is a princess from Colchis, far to the east of Greece. Years ago she helped Jason win the Golden Fleece and left her own country for him. Now they live in Corinth with their two young sons, and Jason has left her to marry the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth. Creon has just arrived at her door with armed guards. He has ordered Medea and both her sons out of the country today, and he will not leave until he sees it done. She asked him what her crime is. He answered plainly: he is afraid of her. She is known as a wise-woman, "full of lore In unknown ways of evil," and he has heard that she threatened the bride, the groom, and the father who gave the bride away. He would rather earn her hatred now than "weep in blood" later.

The playable problem. Medea needs Creon to stop being afraid of her, at least long enough to let her stay. She has to make her reputation sound like a misunderstanding and her anger sound like it belongs to Jason alone.

244 words · 29 lines · about 1 minute 52 seconds (estimated; time it aloud)

Words worth knowing

- Medea (meh-DEE-uh). Creon (KREE-on). Colchis (KOL-kis).
- fame: reputation, what people say about you.
- whose eyes are wholesome: who sees clearly, who has any sense.
- wont (WUNT): custom, what people usually do.
- erst: once, formerly.
- privily (PRIV-ih-lee): privately, secretly.
- a wise-woman: a woman with knowledge of herbs, healing and spells. Creon used the same word a moment ago.
- divers (DYE-verz): various, many different.
- pen me in: shut me in, as an animal is shut in a pen.
- an eastern dreamer; of brand not theirs: a foreigner from the east; not their kind.
- meseems (mee-SEEMZ): it seems to me.
- thine houses' happiness: the happiness of your family, your royal house.
- issues: children.

PERFORMANCE TEXT

'Tis not the first nor second time, O King,
That fame hath hurt me, and come nigh to bring
My ruin. . . . How can any man, whose eyes
Are wholesome, seek to rear his children wise
Beyond men's wont? Much helplessness in arts
Of common life, and in their townsmen's hearts
Envy deep-set . . . so much their learning brings!
Come unto fools with knowledge of new things,
They deem it vanity, not knowledge. Aye,
And men that erst for wisdom were held high,
Feel thee a thorn to fret them, privily
Held higher than they. So hath it been with me.
A wise-woman I am; and for that sin
To divers ill names men would pen me in;
A seed of strife; an eastern dreamer; one
Of brand not theirs; one hard to play upon . . .
Ah, I am not so wondrous wise!—And now,
To thee, I am terrible! What fearest thou?
What dire deed? Do I tread so proud a path—
Fear me not thou!—that I should brave the wrath
Of princes? Thou: what hast thou ever done
To wrong me? Granted thine own child to one
Whom thy soul chose.—Ah, *him* out of my heart
I hate; but thou, meseems, hast done thy part
Not ill. And for thine houses' happiness
I hold no grudge. Go: marry, and God bless
Your issues. Only suffer me to rest
Somewhere within this land. Though sore oppressed,
I will be still, knowing mine own defeat.

(*him* in line 23 is printed in italics in the edition. Line numbers are ours.)

BREAKDOWN AND CUT NOTES 2 OF 5

Medea · *Medea*

Beat	Lines	What Medea is trying now
1	1–7	Treat his fear as an old, familiar injustice. Clever people always get punished for it; this is nothing personal.
2	8–12	Turn it into a rule about the world: fools call learning vanity, and the learned feel threatened. Then land it on herself.
3	13–17	Repeat the names they call her, then undercut them all: she is not so wise as people say.
4	17–22	Go straight at Creon. Ask what he fears, tell him not to fear her, ask what he has ever done to wrong her.
5	22–26	Give him the verdict he wants: he did nothing wrong. Her hatred is for Jason only. Bless the marriage.
6	26–29	Make the one small request. Let her stay. She will be quiet.

What changes: she starts by defending her reputation in general terms and ends asking for one thing, a place to live. Every beat makes the request smaller and her manner humbler. Creon says nothing during the speech. His armed guards and his silence are the obstacle.

What the source states and what it implies. Stated: Creon fears her skill and her threats; she says she hates only Jason and asks to stay. Stated later in the same scene: after Creon grants her one day and leaves, Medea tells the women of Corinth she would never have "grovelled to this man" except to win her end. Implied, and yours to decide: how much of this speech she means while she is saying it. The speech can be played as pure strategy, as half-true, or as a real plea she later turns into a weapon.

Cut notes: no cuts. This is Medea's complete reply to Creon's order. It runs from her first line after his speech to the line before Creon answers ("Thy words be gentle"). The speech crosses a page break between line 24 and line 25. The edition prints no footnote markers in this passage.

VERSE WORK 3 OF 5

Medea · *Medea*

Murray translated Medea into rhyming English verse. In this speech each line has ten syllables with the stress on every second one (da-DUM five times), and the lines rhyme in pairs: King/bring, eyes/wise, arts/hearts. Say each line below aloud, tapping the beat, then ask what the rhythm tells you.

Line	Marked stress (CAPS = stressed)	What to notice
1	'tis NOT · the FIRST · nor SEC · ond TIME, · o KING	Perfectly regular. She opens calm and measured, the voice of someone who has heard this before.
7	EN vy · deep-SET . . . · so MUCH · their LEARN · ing BRINGS	The line starts on a stressed syllable, and the dots sit in the middle of it. The meter holds the pause; you don't need to add one.
19	what DIRE · DEED? DO · i TREAD · so PROUD · a PATH	"Dire deed" puts two stresses side by side. The line slows down right where she asks what crime he imagines.
26	i HOLD · no GRUDGE. · GO: MAR · ry, AND · god BLESS	Three stops in one line. "Go" lands hard. Is it a blessing or a dismissal?
29	i WILL · be STILL, · KNOW ing · mine OWN · de FEAT	"Knowing" flips the beat in the fourth foot. This is also the only line in the speech without a rhyme partner.

Watch the rhyme. Rhymed couplets can turn into a sing-song if you hit every rhyme word. Find the lines where the thought runs past the rhyme (lines 7–8, 11–12, 21–23) and let the sense carry you through. Find one couplet where you want the click of the rhyme to land, and use it.

Try this: read the speech once stopping only at full stops and question marks. Then read it stopping at every comma, semicolon and colon. The second version shows you how carefully she is choosing words.

REHEARSAL 4 OF 5

Medea · *Medea*

Three rehearsal prompts

1. Creon has guards and has already given the order. Have a partner play him, standing, with one job: start to leave whenever he stops believing her. Use each beat to stop him going.
2. In lines 13–16 she lists the names people call her. Try the list once as if mocking each name, once as if quietly admitting each one is true. Which version makes line 17 (“Ah, I am not so wondrous wise”) work for you?
3. Later in the scene Medea says she only humbled herself to win her end. Run the speech once as if she means every word right now, and once as if every word is calculated. Mark the lines that are hardest to play in each version. That’s where the interesting choices are.

Exercise: the verdict. A partner sits as Creon. After each beat, Creon silently shows a thumb up, down or sideways. Medea must start the next beat by responding to what she just saw. Then run the speech with Creon making the same choices with his face only.

FOR TEACHERS 5 OF 5

Medea · *Medea* READ BEFORE HANDING OUT THE ENTRY

SKILL FOCUS: persuasion of a listener who holds all the power; playing a strategic speech without signaling the strategy; handling rhymed verse.

LIKELY DIFFICULTY: moderate to high. Murray's word order is often inverted ("Come unto fools with knowledge of new things, They deem it vanity"), and the rhyme can pull students into a sing-song read. The bigger challenge is restraint: the speech works best if Medea stays controlled until line 17.

SCAFFOLD: paraphrase lines 1–12 together in modern English first; students often find the first argument is the hardest to follow. Then read the speech in couplets, with two students alternating lines, before one student takes it whole.

CONTENT NOTE: none in the excerpt beyond the threat of exile. The play is another matter. Later in *Medea*, she sends the princess poisoned gifts that kill her and Creon, and then kills her own two sons; the opening scene also recalls how she brought about the death of King Pelias. The speech does not require playing that ending, but students should know it, and teachers should decide how much of the plot to discuss with a given group. No student should be asked to draw on personal experience of violence or betrayal.

ASSESSMENT POINTER: can the audience see six different moves, and does the last line land as a request rather than a collapse?

FESTIVAL AND AUDITION USE: a demanding classical verse piece in translation, good for students who want weight and control. At about 1:52 it suits a 2-minute single-piece slot. For two-piece festival slots, see the Pairing Guide at the back of the book. Thespys accepts plays in translation; this 1910 translation is public domain in the United States, but old translations are not addressed directly in the rules, so check with your chapter.

CASTING: any student may play Medea. The speech turns on her being a foreign woman with unusual learning in a Greek city, and a mother; the teacher can decide how much that matters for a given performer.

2

STUDENT HANDOUT 1 OF 5

Euclio

The Pot of Gold (*Aulularia*) by Plautus, translated by Henry Thomas Riley · Act V, scene ii in Riley's division (Riley titles the play "Aulularia; or, The Concealed Treasure") · date of first performance unknown

TIME 1:43 CAST Solo LEVEL Foundational TEXT Prose TONE Comic

"I'm ruined! I'm done for!" *(editor's title, from the first line)*

Text: *The Comedies of Plautus*, literally translated into English prose, with notes, by Henry Thomas Riley, Vol. I, George Bell & Sons, London, 1880, pp. 412–413. Full play: archive.org/details/comediesofplautu01plauuoft

Original dramatic excerpt · the complete speech, unaltered · High School · Challenge: Foundational · Prose

★ COMPETITION NOTES

Excerpt from a public-domain play, in a translation that is itself public domain in the United States (1880). Credit both Plautus and the translator wherever your event asks for the source. Perform the text as printed.

- **Thespys Monologue / Contrasting Monologues (2026–27):** fits as printed. One chair, no props, no costume. Contrasting Monologues means two pieces that together run **3:00 or less**, timed from your first word.
- **NSDA Dramatic or Humorous Interpretation; TFA DI/HI:** legal source material, but those events run up to 10 minutes. Build a longer cutting from the full play.

Full rules: Competition Guide, p. 12. Rules change yearly; confirm with your festival.

Who, where, what just happened. Euclio is an old miser with a pot of gold, and he guards it so anxiously that he still lives like a poor man. Today he has already moved it twice, first to a temple and then to a lonely grove outside the city wall. What he doesn't know: Strobilus, a slave, watched him from a tree, dug up the pot as soon as he left, and has just carried it into a house nearby. Euclio has gone back to the grove and found the hole empty. He runs in, tearing his hair and wringing his hands. The only people he can see are us.

The playable problem. Euclio wants his gold back, right now, and the audience is all he has. He begs them for help, accuses them of stealing it, picks one face to trust, and gets nothing from any of them.

241 words · about 1 minute 43 seconds (estimated; time it aloud)

Words worth knowing

- Euclio (YOO-klee-oh). Plautus (PLAW-tus). Aulularia (ow-loo-LAIR-ee-uh): Latin for "the pot play."
- Whither: where, to where.
- going blindfold: going blind, unable to see where he's headed.
- white clothes and chalk: Romans whitened their togas with chalk to look respectable. Euclio says the thieves in the audience are dressed up as honest people.
- You I'm resolved to believe: I've decided to believe you (and only you).
- wofully: woefully. Old spelling; say it the normal way.
- plight: condition, state.
- my inclinations: my own wishes and appetites.
- The italics are printed in the edition. Treat them as a clue to try, not an order to hit the word.

PERFORMANCE TEXT

I'm ruined! I'm done for! I'm murdered! Whither shall I run? Whither not run? Stop *him*—stop *him*. Whom? who? I don't know. I see nothing! I'm going blindfold; and, in fact, whither I am going, or where I am, or who I am, I can't in my mind find out for certain. (*To the* AUDIENCE.) I beseech you, give me your aid (I beg *and* entreat of you), and point me out the person that has taken it away. What's the matter? Why do you laugh? I'm acquainted with you all; I know that there are many thieves here, who conceal themselves with *white* clothes and chalk, and sit as though they were honest! (*To one of the* SPECTATORS.) What say you? You I'm resolved to believe; for I perceive, even by your looks, that you are honest. Well then, none of these has got it? You've been the death of me! Tell me, then, who has got it? You don't know? Oh, wretched, wretched me! I'm done for! wofully undone! In most sorry plight I go; so much groaning, and misfortune, and sorrow, has this day brought upon me, hunger and poverty, *too*. I'm the most utterly ruined of all men upon the earth! For what need of life have I, who have lost so much gold that I *so* carefully watched? I pinched myself, and my inclinations, and my *very* heart! Now others are rejoicing at this, my loss and my misfortune! I cannot endure it. (*He runs about, crying and stamping.*)

(Words in italics are printed in italics in the edition. Stage directions are in parentheses and are not counted in the word total.)

BREAKDOWN AND CUT NOTES 2 OF 5

Euclio · *The Pot of Gold*

Beat	Starts at	What Euclio is trying now
1	"I'm ruined!"	Run after the thief. Then find a direction. Then find his own head.
2	"I beseech you"	Ask the audience for help, politely.
3	"What's the matter?"	Catch them laughing and turn on them: they are all thieves in disguise.
4	"What say you?"	Pick one person and make them his ally.
5	"Well then, none of these has got it?"	Question the ally about everyone else. Get nothing.
6	"Oh, wretched, wretched me!"	Give up on help. Count his losses out loud to anyone who will listen.
7	"Now others are rejoicing"	Hear the laughter again, and lose control of his body.

What changes: he comes on hunting a thief and ends hunting sympathy. The laughter he hears is the turning point both times (beats 3 and 7). By the end he is sure the whole world is enjoying his loss.

The engine of the joke: the audience knows exactly who has the gold, because Strobilus told them a moment ago. Euclio is begging the only people in the theater who could help him, and they are the ones laughing. A real audience gives the actor real cues. "Why do you laugh?" works best when somebody actually is.

Cut notes: no cuts. This is Euclio's complete speech. It begins with his entrance (Riley's scene ii) and ends where Lyconides enters (scene iii). The entrance direction ("Enter Euclio, tearing his hair and wringing his hands") is described in the setup, not printed in the text. Riley's footnote markers after "chalk" and "heart" were removed, and his footnotes are not reproduced; the note on "white clothes and chalk" is summarized in Words worth knowing. The speech crosses a page break after "brought upon me,".

LANGUAGE WORK (PROSE) 3 OF 5

Euclio · *The Pot of Gold*

Count the punctuation. The speech has 12 exclamation marks and 11 question marks. Mark each one. For every question, decide who it is aimed at: himself, the whole audience, or one person.

Threes. “I’m ruined! I’m done for! I’m murdered!” “So much groaning, and misfortune, and sorrow.” Euclio piles up three of everything. Make each item a new idea, not a louder version of the last.

The pivot. “You I’m resolved to believe.” The word order puts “You” first. That one word is where he picks his ally. Find the person before you say it.

The money list. “I pinched myself, and my inclinations, and my very heart!” This is the one place he tells us what the gold cost him. It can be the funniest line in the speech or the saddest. Try both.

REHEARSAL 4 OF 5

Euclio · *The Pot of Gold*

Three rehearsal prompts

1. Perform it for three or four classmates who are told they may react however they like. Say “Why do you laugh?” only to someone who is actually laughing or smiling. If nobody is, find another reason for the line.
2. In beat 4, choose one spectator. What do you see in their face that makes them honest? Make it specific. Then try a run where you change your mind and switch to a different person halfway through beat 5.
3. “I’m done for!” comes twice, at the very start and in beat 6. Make them different. One idea: the first is about the thief, the second is about himself.

Exercise: the lost keys. The teacher hides a small object in the room. The student searches for 30 seconds without speaking, really looking. Without stopping the search, the student starts the speech. Keep searching for as long as the text lets you.

FOR TEACHERS 5 OF 5

Euclio · *The Pot of Gold* READ BEFORE HANDING OUT THE ENTRY

SKILL FOCUS: direct address; playing a comic objective; listening and responding to a live audience.

LIKELY DIFFICULTY: low to moderate. The vocabulary is easy. The challenge is variety: students tend to pick one level of panic and hold it for the full speech. Seven beats need seven different energies, and good comedy here is not just volume.

SCAFFOLD: have students mark all 23 question and exclamation marks and assign each a target (self, audience, one spectator). Then rehearse with a small live audience before solo work.

CONTENT NOTE: none in the excerpt. In the play, Euclio's daughter (Riley spells her Phaedra) was raped by Lyconides before the play begins; Riley's translation says he "debauched" her "in a drunken fit." She gives birth offstage in Act IV. The scene right after this speech is a comic misunderstanding: Lyconides confesses about the daughter while Euclio thinks he is confessing to the theft. Teachers should know this before assigning the full play.

ASSESSMENT POINTER: can the audience tell, at every moment, who Euclio is talking to? Are the seven beats distinct?

FESTIVAL AND AUDITION USE: a farce piece that lives on direct address, strong for classrooms and showcases. In competition, check whether the rules allow a performer to treat the judges or audience as a scene partner. At about 1:43 it fills more than half of a 3-minute slot. For two-piece festival slots, see the Pairing Guide at the back of the book. Thespys accepts plays in translation; this 1880 translation is public domain, but old translations are not addressed directly in the rules, so check with your chapter.

CASTING: any student may play Euclio. He is an old man, and age can be shown through rhythm and focus. Avoid an "old man" caricature of shaking and wheezing.