



'Speak freely what you think'

Shakespeare on self-expression

Many of Shakespeare's characters talk about how vital it is to express yourself. For example, three women talk about how they refuse to be silenced:

Katherina from *The Taming of the Shrew* says:

My tongue will tell the anger of my heart
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break;
And, rather than it shall, I will be free
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.

Paulina from *The Winter's Tale* says:

If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister
And never to my red-looking anger be
The trumpet any more.

Emilia from *Othello* says:

No. I will speak as liberal as the air:
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak.

**Find these brief speeches
in *A Shakespeare*
(at 39:34).**



Explore

The columns below include lines of text from characters who are either struggling to speak or who feel strongly compelled to speak. In this activity, you'll explore both perspectives, comparing and contrasting them and reflecting on your own experiences of self-expression. Start by choosing one line from each column.

Lines spoken by characters who are struggling to express themselves	Lines spoken by characters who express themselves freely
Must I speak now?	When I think, I must speak.
Death ties up my tongue and will not let me speak.	I speak no more than everyone doth know.
I have no words; my voice is in my sword.	Look, what I speak, my life shall prove it true.
What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue? I cannot speak to her.	Most strange, but yet most truly will I speak.
My heart is great, but it must break with silence.	Mistake me not. I speak but as I find.
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.	How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night, Like softest music to attending ears!
Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave My heart into my mouth.	Those gracious words revive my drooping thoughts And give my tongue-tied sorrows leave to speak.
O, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth! Then with a passion would I shake the world.	O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound And crown what I profess with kind event If I speak true!

Make it yours

Try different ways of expressing your chosen lines to discover what they mean to you. Here are some options:

- **Use your voice:** speak the lines out loud.
- **Use your body:** find poses, gestures, or movements that express the lines.
- **Use your creativity:** make an original poem, story, piece of music, or work of art inspired by one or both of your lines.

Reflect

- Why did you choose your lines?
- Did your lines have anything in common with one another?
- How were your lines different from one another?
- How did you feel when you were expressing each of your lines?

So, who says these lines?

Here's who says each of the quotes on page 1, and in which play. (Tip: don't read this part before completing your exploration and reflection!)

Lines spoken by characters who are struggling to express themselves	Lines spoken by characters who express themselves freely
Must I speak now? (Flute in <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>)	When I think, I must speak. (Rosalind in <i>As You Like It</i>)
Death ties up my tongue and will not let me speak. (Capulet in <i>Romeo & Juliet</i>)	I speak no more than everyone doth know. (The Gardener in <i>Richard the Second</i>)
I have no words; my voice is in my sword. (Macduff in <i>Macbeth</i>)	Look, what I speak, my life shall prove it true. (Bolingbroke in <i>Richard the Second</i>)
What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue? I cannot speak to her. (Orlando in <i>As You Like It</i>)	Most strange, but yet most truly will I speak. (Isabella in <i>Measure for Measure</i>)
My heart is great, but it must break with silence. (Lord Ross in <i>Richard the Second</i>)	Mistake me not. I speak but as I find. (Baptista in <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>)
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue. (Hamlet in <i>Hamlet</i>)	How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night, Like softest music to attending ears! (Romeo in <i>Romeo & Juliet</i>)
Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave My heart into my mouth. (Cordelia in <i>King Lear</i>)	Those gracious words revive my drooping thoughts And give my tongue-tied sorrows leave to speak. (Margaret in <i>Henry the Fourth, Part 3</i>)
O, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth! Then with a passion would I shake the world. (Constance in <i>King John</i>)	O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound And crown what I profess with kind event If I speak true! (Ferdinand in <i>The Tempest</i>)