

**Harmony Tree International Speech Festival (HTISF)**  
2025-2026 Set Pieces for Asia Division

**FINAL**

**Monologue**  
*Born in 2007-2009*

**Choice A**  
**Time Limit:**  
**5 minutes**

## Opening Night

*By Caroline Petherbridge*

*(DYLAN is about to make a stage debut and is standing in the wings of the stage waiting.)*

**DYLAN:** This is it! Opening night! The moment I have been waiting for. The moment I have been working towards for months. My debut as a performer. I'm about to tread the boards! To become a thespian! It may only be a small role, but I'm beginning the journey of my dreams. And one day, who knows? I could be playing the lead!

Any minute now... wait for my cue line... wait for it... oh! I need the toilet. Is there time? No, of course there isn't. Just ignore it - it's only first night nerves. Okay, here it comes... cue line...entrance!

*(Walks out onto the stage with a flourish. There is a pause. Opens mouth and then closes it again.)* Oh no. I've gone blank. What's my first line? Oh come on! ... I know it, for goodness sake, I've been rehearsing it for long enough! It's ... it's...*(holds head and starts to panic)* Nothing! I can't remember a thing! Oh no, this can't be happening. Okay, just say something - anything, anything at all from this scene! As long as I say something it will be alright - get things moving - give the other actors something to work with.

They' are all staring at me! Do they think that's going to help? Don't they realise that's just going to make it worse? Ooh, my head is starting to swim. Oh no, I might faint. No! I've got to hold it together! Breathe... Something will come to me in a minute.

Hey, what's happening? They are carrying on without me! They've skipped my lines and they're carrying on...as if I'm not even here. How dare they! They didn't even give me a chance! Don't they realise this is my big moment?

I have to take back control of the situation. It's not too late. I'll just have a quick look at my script - I left it just over there in the wings. All I have to do is casually move - over - to ... Hey! Who turned the lights out? Blackout? You mean it's all over... But I didn't even...

Wait a minute - the audience is clapping. They want to show their appreciation. Well, I'd better give them what they want. After all, it would be rude not to! *(Bow lavishly)*

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## Little Women

*By Louisa May Alcott, an adapted version*

*(In Paris. Artist's studio. Amy is looking through her own paintings and sketches and has a disturbed expression on her face. Laurie enters. His lot in life is always to be apologising to one March sister or another.)*

**AMY:** *(Not turning around even when Laurie greets her)* I don't want to see you. *(Laurie apologises to her, but she is still not turning.)* Have you been drinking? *(Laurie admits but asks her to cut him some slack.)* Well, someone has to be hard on you. *(Laurie asks about starting her art work. Amy finally turns)* Never. I'm not going to.

I'm a failure. Jo is in New York, being a writer, and I'm a failure. Rome took all the vanity out of me. And Paris made me realise I'd never be a genius. I'm giving up all my foolish artistic hopes. Talent isn't genius, Laurie, and no amount of energy can make it so. I want to be great, or nothing. I won't be a common-place dauber, so I don't intend to try anymore.

What women are allowed into the club of geniuses anyway? Maybe The Brontes, that's it. And it's the men who always declare genius. They are cutting down the competition. It's very complicated but I do think that male or female, I'm a middling talent.

*(Laurie requests her last portrait be of him. Amy laughs.)* All right. Now that I've given up all my foolish artistic hopes, what am I going to do with my life? Perhaps I could polish up my other talents and be an ornament to society. *(Laurie teases Amy about Fred Vaughn possibly proposing to her)* Don't make fun of me! No I'm not engaged! Well, if he does go down properly on one knee, mostly likely, yes. He's rich, richer than you, even. I've always known that I would marry rich. Why should I be ashamed of that? Well, I believe we have some power over who we love, it isn't something that just happens to a person.

The poets might disagree. Well I'm not a poet, I'm just a woman, and as a woman I have no way to make money, not enough to earn a living and support my family. Even if I had my own money, which I don't, it would belong to my husband the minute we were married. If we had children, they would belong to him not me. They would be his property. So don't sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition, because it is. It may not be for you but it most certainly is for me.