

Harmony Tree International Speech Festival (HTISF)
2024-2025 Set Pieces for Asia Division

Dramatic Duologue
Born in 2009-2010

Choice A
Time Limit:
5 minutes

Two Weeks with the Queen

By Mary Morris

(Colin, an Australian boy, 14, has been sent to relatives in England, because his younger brother, Luke, is dying of cancer. His cousin, Alistair, the same age, is an inexperienced 'Mummy's boy' both awed and scared by Colin's assertiveness. The scene takes place in Alistair's parents' house in the London suburb.)

ALISTAIR: Colin?

COLIN: What?

ALISTAIR: Have you really ridden a trail bike, or were you pulling my leg?

COLIN: Straight up. Yamaha 250. Twin exhaust, cross-country gear ratios.

ALISTAIR: Brill.

COLIN: Yeah, it was alright till the brakes failed and I went over the cliff.

ALISTAIR: You went over a cliff?

COLIN: Yeah. But it's OK, the ocean was underneath, broke my fall.

ALISTAIR: The Pacific Ocean?

COLIN: Yeah. The surf wasn't too high, only 15 metres or so.

ALISTAIR: Brill.

COLIN: 'Course the sharks were a problem.

ALISTAIR: Sharks!

COLIN: White pointers. There were couple of them. Reminded me of the time I had to fight crocs off in the Territory.

ALISTAIR: Crocodiles?

COLIN: Twenty-footers. I gave them a wrestle for their money, but...

ALISTAIR: Do you know Crocodile Dundee?

COLIN: He's a mate of mine, gave me a few tips. See, a croc's got no brains. You can outsmart 'em. Not like sharks. Only way with sharks is to out-swim them.

ALISTAIR: You can out-swim sharks?

COLIN: All Australians can. Wouldn't be any of us left if we couldn't.
Alistair, don't you ever get bored?

ALISTAIR: No. Well, a bit. Sometimes.

COLIN: How would you like to help me save Luke's life?

ALISTAIR: I'm not allowed to give blood!

COLIN: You don't have to give blood. Listen, do you reckon the Queen's doctor would be the best doctor in the world?

ALISTAIR: Yes, pretty good, specially cos he'd have to do it without looking.

COLIN: Eh?

ALISTAIR: Well, he would, wouldn't he? I mean if the Queen was sick he couldn't just say, 'take your frock off your Majesty and let me look at your... er... your... you know, could he? I mean, not the Queen. Nobody could, could they? He'd have to guess what's wrong. He'd have to be good.

COLIN: Er... Yeah. Anyway, I wrote to her and asked her to let me get in touch with him, and she didn't write back.

ALISTAIR: When did you write to her?

COLIN: Nearly a week ago.

ALISTAIR: Well, there you are then. It'll be months before she gets round to it.

COLIN: She a bit slack?

ALISTAIR: No, not her. But hundreds of people write to her. She gets sackfuls of letters every day. Special vans full of letters for her.

COLIN: I've seen them. They've got Royal Mail written on them.

ALISTAIR: Er. Yeah. Takes a bit of time to answer all them letters.

COLIN: Well, I haven't got time, I'm going to have to get into the palace and talk to her myself. And you're gonna help me.

ALISTAIR: You want me to help you break into Buckingham Palace?!

COLIN: Someone has to give me a leg up.

ALISTAIR: Mum doesn't let me go into town by myself.

COLIN: You won't be by yourself, you'll be with me.

ALISTAIR: But you can't just climb into the palace, there'll be alarms and dogs and stuff.

COLIN: No there won't, well only corgis and they'll be asleep on the Queen's bed.

ALISTAIR: How do you know?

COLIN: It was in our papers at home. A few years ago, a bloke got into Buckingham Palace at night and next morning, when the Queen woke up he was sitting on the end of her bed, looking at her. He didn't have a single dog bite on him.

ALISTAIR: I remember that.

COLIN: If he can do it, we can.

ALISTAIR: They put him in a loony bin.

COLIN: Alright then! I'll do it myself.

ALISTAIR: I'll come.

COLIN: OK, we'll set the alarm tonight for 3:30 in the morning.

ALISTAIR: I'll stay.

COLIN: Don't be a wimp.

ALISTAIR: What if you get shot?

COLIN: OK stay then!

ALISTAIR: I'll come.

COLIN: Good one. 3:30 then. Let's go and buy a rope. *(They start to go.)*

ALISTAIR: But I'm not allowed out in the traffic.

COLIN: Alistair, anybody'd think a bus was gonna jump the kerb and weave through all the other shoppers, carefully avoiding rubbish bins and brick walls and flatten you!

ALISTAIR: Well, one could do, couldn't it?

COLIN: Alright, I'll go and buy the rope myself.

ALISTAIR: I'll come.

- The End-

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Choice B
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A Matchmaker Caught Off-Guard

By Jane Austen, Adapted by Maureen Blythe, from the novel Emma

(EMMA Woodhouse is proud of her skill as a matchmaker. She takes in hand the romantic interests of her friend HARRIET. First, she mismatches Harriet with Mr Elton, then she encourages what she thinks is Harriet's interest in Mr Churchill. Finally, and ironically, Harriet herself drops a bombshell which wakens Emma, for the first time, to the true object of her own inclinations.)

HARRIET: Miss Woodhouse — if you are at leisure, I have something that I should like to tell you, a sort of confession to make!

EMMA: You look quite serious, Harriet — I beg you to speak!

HARRIET: I am an altered creature, *in one respect*, and it is fit that you should have the satisfaction of knowing it. I am too much ashamed of having given away as I have done. I dare say you understand me?

EMMA: Yes, I hope I do.

HARRIET: It seems like a madness! I can see nothing at all extraordinary in Mr Elton now. I do not care whether I meet him or not, indeed I would go any distance round to avoid him. I am now going to destroy what I should have destroyed long ago. Cannot you guess what this box holds?

EMMA: Not the least in the world. Did Mr Elton ever give you anything?

HARRIET: I cannot call them gifts, but they are things I have valued very much.

EMMA: A small piece of - court plaster?

HARRIET: Now, you must recollect!

EMMA: No, indeed. I do not.

HARRIET: Dear me! I should not have thought it possible you could forget what passed in this very room about court plaster. Do you remember Mr Elton cutting his finger with your new penknife, and your recommending court plaster? And as you had none about you, and knew I had, you told me to take mine out and cut him a piece? And it was too large, and he cut it smaller? And he kept playing some time with what was left before he gave it back to me? In my nonsense I put it by, I could not help making a treasure of it.

EMMA: My dearest Harriet, you make me more ashamed of myself than I can bear! Yes, I remember it all now. Oh, my sins, my sins! And I had plenty of plaster all the while in my pocket. One of my senseless tricks - to recommend you to reach other. I deserve to be under a continual blush all the rest of my life.

HARRIET: I never suspected you had some at hand yourself, you did it so naturally.

EMMA: And you actually treasured this piece of plaster for his sake?

HARRIET: But here, here is something still more valuable - Because this is what really did once belong to him, which the court plaster never did!

EMMA: The end of an old pencil?

HARRIET: This was really his! One morning, perhaps you do not remember, he wanted to make a memorandum in his pocket book, and this was left upon the table as good for nothing. But I kept my eye on it, and as soon as I dared I caught it up!

EMMA: I do remember it; I perfectly remember it. But go on.

HARRIET: Oh, that's all. I have nothing more to show you - except that I am now going to throw them both on the fire, and I wish you to see me do it.

EMMA: Poor Harriet! Have you actually found happiness in treasuring up these things?

HARRIET: Yes, simpleton as I was. I am quite ashamed of it now.

EMMA: But, Harriet, is it necessary to burn the court plaster? It might yet be useful.

HARRIET: It has a disagreeable look to me. There it goes, and there is an end, thank heaven, of Mr Elton!

EMMA: Well, Harriet, whenever you marry...

HARRIET: I shall never marry.

EMMA: Never marry! This is a new resolution. I hope it's not in compliment to Mr Elton.

HARRIET: No - to one so superior to Mr Elton!

EMMA: Ah, yes! There was a not very distant time when you gave me to understand so much. So you do care for Mr Frank Churchill?

HARRIET: Him! Never! How could you so mistake me?

EMMA: But, surely, when the service he rendered you in protecting you from the gipsies was spoke of...? You even mentioned what your sensations had been when you saw him come forward to your rescue.

HARRIET: But I was speaking of something very different! It was not the gipsies — not Mr Churchill. I was thinking of — of Mr Knightley, of his coming and asking me to dance, when Mr Elton so rudely refused to stand up with me.

EMMA: Mr Knightley?

HARRIET: That was the service which made me begin to feel... how superior he was to every other being upon earth!

EMMA: Mr Knightley! Good God! This has been a most unfortunate, most deplorable mistake!