

Practice Texts — Public Domain

Choose one passage for a 30–45 s read-aloud. Each source is public domain.
(30–45 s ≈ 60–110 words)

Text A

Title: Sonnet 18

Author: William Shakespeare

Source: [Wikisource — Sonnet 18 \(Shakespeare\)](#)

Excerpt: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate: Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, and summer's lease hath all too short a date; Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, and often is his gold complexion dimm'd; And every fair from fair sometime declines, by chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd.

Text B

Title: The North Wind and the Sun

Author: Aesop (public domain English translations, e.g., V. S. Vernon Jones, 1912)

Source: [Wikisource — The North Wind and the Sun](#)

Excerpt: A dispute arose between the North Wind and the Sun, each claiming that he was stronger than the other. At last they agreed to try their powers upon a traveller, to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak. The North Wind had the first try; and, gathering up all his force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort; but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it round himself.

Text C

Title: Pride and Prejudice — Chapter 1 (1813)

Author: Jane Austen

Source: [Wikisource — Pride and Prejudice \(1813\), Vol. 1, Ch. 1](#)

Excerpt: It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

Text D

Title: Hamlet — Act 3, Scene 1 (excerpt)

Author: William Shakespeare

Source: [Wikisource — Hamlet, Prince of Denmark \(Shakespeare, 1904\) / Act III](#)

Excerpt: To be, or not to be: that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—No more; and by a

sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep; To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub.

Text E

Title: The Gettysburg Address (1863)

Author: Abraham Lincoln

Source: [Wikisource — Gettysburg Address \(Bliss version\)](#)

Excerpt: Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field... It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

Text F

Title: Meditations — Book 2, §1 (public domain translation)

Author: Marcus Aurelius (trans. George Long)

Source: [Wikisource — The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus](#)

Excerpt: When you rise in the morning, consider what you have to do, and say to yourself: The people with whom I have to deal today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. They are so because they cannot tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good and the ugliness of evil, and recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own... And so none of them can injure me.

Text G

Title: Psalm 23 (KJV 1611)

Author: King James Bible

Source: [KJV Online — Psalms Chapter 23](#)

Excerpt: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Public Domain sources: Shakespeare; Aesop (V. S. Vernon Jones, 1912); Austen 1813; Lincoln 1863; Marcus Aurelius (trans. George Long); KJV 1611.