This writing activity developed from my teaching of Carol Ann Duffy’s poetry at GCSE and A level. I have used it at the end of a period of paired discussion and sharing of ideas about Duffy’s characters, the language she creates for them and the way she uses the language in the situations she puts them in (poems could include Stealing, Havisham, Fraud, Like Earning a Living and The Biographer). I wanted students to experience using language in ways that the poet does. In turn this would inform their own responses to her work.

Choose a character
Print out the grid of characters overleaf and cut into separate cards. Each character has been chosen to have a distinct vocabulary, workplace and/or history which the student can draw on. Ask each student to choose a card. Make sure you choose a card too and take part in the drafting. The details on the card can be kept secret or shared with others in the group – depending on how you want to handle the writing stages.

Create touchpoints
Hand out copies of the activity sheet. Ask the students to compile lists of words, phrases, actions, items of equipment or processes, images, and places which could be connected with the character. Encourage them not to reject any ideas at this stage. They could make suggestions for each other’s lists.

Find a motive
Next, the students should think about why the character might be speaking in a poem. Explore possibilities together. For example, has the referee just shown someone the red card? Has the politician been involved in a scandal?

Form a draft
Ask the students to edit their lists of words and ideas, drawing their attention to the poet’s tip. As they develop their drafts they should begin to focus on a structure and think about Duffy’s sentence and line structures, her use of very short sentences, etc.

After twenty minutes of drafting, encourage sharing of work in progress with a partner. Pass the drafts on several times if they are comfortable with this. Make sure drafts are read aloud. Ask students to focus on:

- what they like about the drafts
- points of comparison with Duffy’s writing
- two suggestions for the draft
- two questions.

Polish and perform
Encourage the students to redraft and polish their work and finally to perform the monologues they’ve written.

Writing a Monologue
By Sue Dymoke
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bookie</th>
<th>Undertaker</th>
<th>Former Child Star</th>
<th>Referee</th>
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<tr>
<td>Game Show Host</td>
<td>Jilted Lover</td>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>Gossip Columnist</td>
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<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>Marathon Runner</td>
<td>Chef</td>
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<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Call Centre Worker</td>
<td>Market Stall Holder</td>
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WRITING A MONOLOGUE

1. Choose a character. Compile lists of words, phrases, actions, items of equipment or processes, images, and places connected with the character you’ve chosen.

2. Now think about why the character might be speaking in a poem. What is the present situation for that person? What could have happened previously? Jot your ideas down below and underline those with the most potential.

3. Begin to edit your lists of words and ideas, focusing on a structure for your monologue.

4. After 20 minutes, share your work in progress with a partner. Redraft and polish. Perform your monologue!

POET’S TIP
Group words, link ideas together and say words aloud to test out different combinations.

NAME: