



NT Education Workpack

Measure for Measure

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SHAKESPEARE'S
MEASURE FOR MEASURE

A NATIONWIDE TOURING PROJECT BY THE NATIONAL THEATRE
Includes an introductory event and a 100 minute version of the play

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Designer
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Composer & Musical Director
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in collaboration with
THE LONDON BUBBLE
THEATRE CO.

Royal National Theatre
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Funded by
THE
ARTS
COUNCIL
OF ENGLAND

Measure for Measure
by William Shakespeare

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www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

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The play

Synopsis of the main plot

Vincenzio, Duke of Vienna, announces that he is going to leave his city and travel to Poland. He hands over power to his severe deputy Angelo, whose “blood is very snow-broth”, and tells him to enforce the laws against immorality that have been allowed to lapse under his rule. Actually the Duke remains in the city, disguised as Friar Lodowick in order to observe Angelo’s reign.

One of Angelo’s first decisions is to reinstate an old law against men who have sex outside wedlock. Its first victim is a young gentleman called Claudio who is sentenced to death for making his intended wife, Juliet, pregnant. On the way to prison Claudio meets his friend Lucio and begs him to find his sister Isabella, who is about to enter a nunnery. She could plead eloquently with Angelo on his behalf.

Escalus, Angelo’s deputy, publicly supports Angelo, but in private deprecates Angelo’s severity. Angelo declares that he himself is ready to be judged by the same law (II.ii). Isabella enters, arguing that while she does not excuse her brother’s crime, Angelo should be merciful. Angelo insists that the law can make no exceptions. However, he is so struck by Isabella, particularly by her purity, that he asks her to return the next day. When she has left, he is confused by the sexual attraction he feels towards her.

The Duke, disguised as Friar Lodowick, goes to visit Juliet in prison and learns that she truly loves Claudio, who is to be executed the next morning.

Saskia Portway
& Peter Nicholas
photo Sean Patterson



Isabella returns to Angelo for a second meeting. He tells her that if she will have sex with him he will pardon her brother. Isabella is horrified and threatens to expose him, but Angelo is confident that no one will believe her.

The disguised Duke visits Claudio in prison and prepares him for death. Isabella arrives and tells Claudio about the offer Angelo has made, and although initially Claudio agrees that Isabella cannot capitulate, during the course of the conversation he faces the reality of his imminent death and begs his sister to do what Angelo asks. She refuses. The Duke overhears their conversation and stops Isabella as she leaves; he has a plan to save Claudio’s life and Isabella’s honour. He suggests that she agrees to Angelo’s demand, but that in a ‘bedtrick’ she is replaced by Angelo’s spurned love, Mariana. Mariana was previously contracted to marry Angelo but after the partial loss of her dowry their engagement was broken. The Duke believes that if under the cover of darkness Angelo mistakenly sleeps with Mariana thinking it is Isabella, then Angelo and Mariana’s union will be consummated and Angelo will have to marry her.

The plan goes ahead successfully, but Angelo orders Claudio’s execution nevertheless. The Duke saves Claudio’s life by instructing the Provost (Head of the Prison) to substitute Claudio’s head with that of another prisoner. The Duke, still disguised, tells Isabella that her brother is dead. He advises her to appeal to the Duke, who will be arriving the following day.

Initially the Duke appears to take Angelo’s side, but he summons the Friar (ie himself), who speaks out against the corruption of the city. After a scuffle with Angelo, Friar Lodowick’s disguise is pulled aside to reveal the Duke. Realising he has been discovered, Angelo confesses and asks to be killed. The Duke sentences Angelo to death, but first he must marry Mariana. Isabella and Mariana beg for Angelo’s pardon. The Duke reveals that Claudio is still alive, and pardons both him and Angelo. Lucio is instructed to marry the mother of his illegitimate child. The cycle is complete when the Duke asks Isabella to marry him, although we do not know her answer.

The play

Note on the sub-plot

The Pompey/Mistress Overdone sub-plot is often considered to reflect the main action. These scenes provide a great deal of bawdy humour and illustrate the chasm between public morality and the private behaviour of the noble classes. However, the following could be noted:

Neither Pompey's nor Overdone's crimes are seen as deserving the death penalty.

Pompey is offered the "salvation", in Jacobean terms, of becoming an assistant executioner.

Pompey's judgement that "If you head and hang all that offend that way but for ten years together, you'll be glad to give out a commission for more heads" is only questioned by Angelo.

The Duke condemns only one character to death – Barnadine, a self-confessed murderer – but he is pardoned by the Duke at the end.

The National's production of *Measure for Measure*

Measure for Measure starts with a traditional folk motif, as the ruling Duke disguises himself as a Friar in order to walk amongst his people and observe them freely (rather as Henry V wanders amongst his army). In the National's production, much of the Duke's dialogue in the first scene has been cut and replaced with action underscored by live music. This decision, taken by the director Jonathan Petherbridge, establishes an intense and gripping

atmosphere. The opening sequence has an almost film-noir or Hitchcockian feel.

Shakespeare's main source for *Measure for Measure* is believed to be an unperformed play of 1578 by George Whetstone, *Primos and Cassandra*. Shakespeare's divergence from the source is significant. Whetstone's Isabella is a virtuous maid but she is not about to abjure all freedom and contact with the external world. Claudio has been accused of rape and he is not betrothed to Juliet (in *Measure for Measure* Claudio and Juliet's marriage only lacks formal ratification from the church). By making Isabella more holy and by lessening Claudio's crime, the situation in *Measure for Measure* is less black and white than in *Primos and Cassandra*. It seems that Shakespeare is encouraging the audience to avoid quick assumptions about guilt or innocence. Instead they are encouraged to question the concepts of justice and law as they appear in the play.

The setting of the play is the city of Vienna. Here the laws have become lax and sexual immorality is rife. The playwright paints a colourful picture of the city, with rich detailed description of the brothels ("naughty houses"), and of the larger than life characters who inhabit them. There is a Dickensian inventiveness in the names of these characters: Mistress Overdone, Kate Keepdown, Elbow, Master Rash, Master Caper, Master Threepile the Mercer.

Jonathan Petherbridge made the setting for the NT production non-specific. He did not want the audience to dismiss the play's arguments about morality and the State with 'That might happen there, but it is okay because it's not like that here'. The indeterminate setting is combined with an 'up close and personal' promenade-style production. The director wanted the audience to be close enough to the action to feel part of it, and as a result to feel implicit in the decisions taken.

Struck by how the play is largely concerned with the poor health of a city, Jonathan Petherbridge believes that the play presents a homeopathic remedy for this unhealthy state. (People who practice homeopathy believe that you have to make yourself sicker in order for the body's natural defenses to kick in and restore your health). 'The city of Vienna is bound to get worse when the extreme Angelo takes over. Yet without Angelo's extremism the Duke could not have observed

Participants/audience
photo Sean Patterson



The play

anonymously the real condition of his city, or understood his part in its downfall' argues Petherbridge. The Duke, through making things worse, is able to solve the problems (temporarily at least) of his city.

Frank Kermode, in his book on Shakespeare's language, suggests the following:

'The mysterious shifts and tricks of the Duke in *Measure for Measure* are more worrying and have called for heavy defensive work from critics who do not like their Shakespeare ever to be wrong or careless.... He begins the scene (I.iii) by professing his own immunity to sexual desire, and he picks Angelo because he seems to be a man of the same sort, or because he wants to find out whether that is so. This mixture of ultimately incompatible motives leads in the end to the spoiling of the play.'

Jonathan Petherbridge argues for a different conclusion:

'The Duke, at the beginning of the play knows that he, and his city, are in poor health – that things are out of balance and locked. Unconsciously he knows something has to change. He may be passionately committed to making the state healthy but he cannot be cruel to be kind, he is frozen. A parent who loves their children too much and sees that they need boundaries. His decision to withdraw is an irrational response – almost a breakdown. When he leaves he hands over to a hardliner, someone who will break the deadlock. It is while the Duke is disguised that he sees the consequences of his rule,

how men are subjugating women and how the male principle dominates, and the consequences for future generations. This ignites his anger. At the end of the play the Duke becomes far more direct: he has gathered strength from his time in disguise. Whilst he is the Duke he has had to retain his composure. In disguise he is given the direct cause and the anonymity to lose his temper. In the last scene we see a resurgence of anger when he condemns Angelo to death. He has discovered his ability to lead strongly and to make judgement, but has he now lost his sense of mercy? It is at this point that Mariana, aided by Isabella, reminds the Duke of his nurturing and merciful side. You could argue that she saves the Duke himself, by stopping him from carrying out his threat to kill Angelo. She saves himself from scarring himself mentally. He, and hopefully the state, move towards a balance. It is no accident that Shakespeare has the most powerful male, propose to the most powerful female. It is no accident the Duke completely loses it with the most misogynistic and feckless male on stage – Lucio.'

Peter Nicholas, Mark Theodore
& Charles Abomeli
photo Sean Patterson



Character studies

Charles Abomeli discusses playing Angelo

“On first view Angelo is a young zealot, driven by absolute moral righteousness. When he realises he is mortal, of flesh and blood, and plagued by the emotions and desires that others suffer, he doesn’t know how to react. His actions become those of a scared and desperate man.”

Angelo is revealed to the audience as a hypocrite; and you could say he behaves like a coward. He seems terrified that others will discover his weaknesses. Is he scared of weakness?

“I believe there is something in his history that colours the way he treats his life and his ambitions. It is as if he has shut himself down completely, to everything apart from the destination he has in mind. He thinks it’s incredibly important and he is not afraid of using severe means to get there.”

There is great power to be gained when you are steadfast in your beliefs, when you do not question your own path but slavishly follow it because you are convinced it is correct. If you are challenged, physically or mentally, if you are forced to ask questions, to discuss, or justify, this can easily be perceived as weakness, as less solid or less all-encompassing. Is this what Angelo has decided?

“I think so, therefore when he has his temporary blip, i.e. when he falls for Isabella, he puts the blame on her. It is almost as if he believes that she has cast a spell over him, which he has to break. Why the emphasis on fault in his soliloquy (II.ii)? What he is feeling is natural, perhaps even quite beautiful.

He then decides to channel his feelings into the job in hand. As he does with every other aspect of his life, he turns it into a straightforward transaction. I will release your brother if you release me from your spell. It is as if she is just an obstacle to overcome. It is something about *her* that makes him feel this way, and after one night of passion his feelings will be gone”.

When does he decide on the ‘transaction’?

“We had a huge debate about this in rehearsals, I think it is on the ‘blood thou art blood’ line, this signifies him giving in to his carnal desires.”

And why does he decide to negate the ‘transaction’ and kill Claudio anyway?

“Angelo believes that Claudio will seek revenge. He has been wronged twice, firstly by being put in prison (and Juliet has been too) and threatened with death, and secondly by Angelo essentially raping his sister. Angelo understands how angry Claudio will be when he discovers this. He is afraid.”

But luckily the Duke saves Claudio. At the end of the play, when Angelo is discovered, he pleads for his own execution. Has he given up? Does he truly want to die?

“He can’t see a way forward. He realises that he is defeated, but as with Claudio, he does not really want to die, he just can’t envisage a way out. He is desperate.”

Charles Abomeli
& Suzann McLean
photo Sean Patterson



Character studies

Isabella

On the most simplistic level, Isabella's role within the play is both to make her brother recognise his cowardice and to expose Angelo's hypocrisy (which leads to his reconciliation with Mariana). Her primary motivation is a strong sense of morality, based on strict Christian principles. There appears to be no hint of self-interest. This largely sets her apart from female characters in other Shakespeare comedies. We have to assume that the Duke's proposal of marriage is a shock to Isabella. There is no evidence to suggest that she wishes to marry. You could conclude that her character is better suited to the contemplative world of the nunnery than to the fluctuating influences of the city outside.

Claudio asks Isabella (through Lucio) to talk to Angelo, perhaps because he knows that she is capable of impassioned intellectualism and that this is the only counter for the zeal of Angelo's new broom. Claudio is aware of the power of his sister's virtue. He sees that she embodies a "prosperous art" with which she can "play with reason and discourse".

When Lucio reaches Isabella, she is about to enter the nunnery. His arrival immediately thrusts her into a situation in which she has to act. She is forced to plead with a severe man who is Head of State. It is no wonder that initially she seems a little tentative. But after declaring her abhorrence for Claudio's crime, she pleads that the vice be condemned but not the perpetrator. When Angelo points out her lack of logic, she acknowledges that

the law is 'just but severe' and seems ready to abandon her suit.

However, persuaded by Lucio – "To him again, entreat him" (II.ii) – she continues. The mainstay of her argument, similar to that of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, is that mercy is greater than the temporal power that Angelo exerts.

Her passionate, rigorous plea ends by asking Angelo to look into his own heart: "ask your heart what it doth know/That's like my brother's fault." (II.ii). Bearing in mind Angelo's feelings for Isabella at the end of this scene, this parting shot is very perceptive. In Angelo's soliloquy, we discover that Isabella's eloquence and commitment to her cause have stirred him to feel the selfsame emotions for which he condemns Claudio.

In this National Theatre production the audience are actively involved in all the moral questions of forgiveness, charity and mercy. Perhaps it is through Isabella's final guidance that they can reach their conclusions about the play:

Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be
If He, which is the top of judgement, should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made. (II.ii)

Suzann McLean
photo Sean Patterson



For discussion

1.

“Shakespeare was occasionally careless about detail, but each of these twin plays (*Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*) has not only an occasionally slipshod text but also more plot errors and inconsistencies than usual. Many of these are trivial, and we are made aware of them only by long and intense critical scrutiny. Some, like the mysterious shifts and tricks of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, are more worrying and have called for heavy defensive work from critics who do not like their Shakespeare ever to be wrong or careless... He begins the scene (I.iii) by professing his own immunity to sexual desire, and he picks Angelo because he seems to be a man of the same sort, or because he wants to find out whether that is so. This mixture of ultimately incompatible motives leads in the end to the spoiling of the play.”
Frank Kermode in *Shakespeare’s Language*

“A Play For Today. A play about government, the mystery of state, its workings, whether satisfactory or not. We appreciate in this century better than before how much Shakespeare’s mind reflected upon the problems of society, of government and order. They were naturally much in mind at this moment of take-over by James I from Elizabeth.”
AL Rowse in *Prefaces to Shakespeare’s Plays*

Both of these critics make interesting points about *Measure for Measure*. Do they conflict with your observations about the play? Do you find them

Anthony Washington
& Katarina Olsson
photo Sean Patterson



helpful? Do you believe that the play remains contemporary?

2.

It is generally thought that the play’s title comes from St Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount: “With what measure ye mete, / it shall be measured to you again”.

The title suggests that this is a play that discusses morality. Unlike Jesus on the mount, it does not ‘preach’, but invites us to discuss the concept of justice. Various arguments about morality and justice are put forward:

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, ’twere all alike
As if we had them not. (I.i)

That we were all, as some would seem to be,
Free from our faults, as faults from seeming free!
(III.ii)

He who the sword of heaven will bear
Should be as holy as severe. (III.ii)

Why all souls that were, were forfeit once,
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be
If He, which is top of judgement, should
But judge you as you are? (II.ii)

Using these quotations as starting points, discuss the meaning of the title. You may wish to ask the following questions:

What do you think is the play’s message? It may be ambiguous.

What does *Measure for Measure* teach us about the nature of justice and mercy?

Does the play advocate a certain kind of justice?

3.

How do you perceive the Law? Is it an important tool that enables society to decide what is right and wrong? Or, is it a weapon, which gives too much power to those who control it?

Read the following quotation, to help with your discussion.

For discussion

"I had always vaguely understood that the connection between law and justice was strictly semantic, that in fact questions of right and wrong were not material to the conduct of law, which was primarily concerned with legalities and illegalities.

The law if you were a criminal was something to elude; if a solicitor something to outwit; if an ordinary citizen something to avoid"
Charles Marovitz in *Recycling Shakespeare*

4.

Angelo finds himself unable to live up to the moral code that he has set for his city. Despite the fact that he recognises that he is being tempted, he is powerless to save himself:

Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue. (II.ii)

Is it imperative that those people who make the laws, should follow them themselves?

5.

Similarly, what if you change your mind, if you are a lawmaker who sets the statute only to be challenged at a later date by an individual case. In the *Observer* article below, The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf, finds himself for the first time in his career being challenged for holding reactionary views. These views are concerned with laws regarding sex offenders. He suggested in an interview that Roy Whiting, who served a four-year sentence before murdering Sarah Payne, should be subject to an indefinite preventative imprisonment. He implied that a form of civil detention, where it does not have to be proved that the person actually committed the crime, should be introduced. This comment by Lord Woolf flies in the face of his previous beliefs, and more importantly of the law of the land which indicates that people should only be locked up for what they have done and not what they might do.

In groups, read the article together and form arguments for and against Lord Woolf's view.

Following on from this, form a 10-point argument for and against Angelo's execution at the end of *Measure for Measure*.

None So High

Profile: Lord Woolf by David Rose

A champion of human rights, he wants to lock up dangerous people before they commit a crime. Should he heed Denning's warning that the law is above even the highest in the land?

THE LORD CHIEF Justice, Lord Woolf, had a nasty new experience last week. For the first time in his 47-year career, he found himself on the receiving end of public attacks from penal reformers, civil libertarians and the rest of the liberal establishment; cast as dangerous reactionary, whose right-wing views were better left unsaid.

His offence was an interview, recorded before he departed for a holiday abroad, with Radio 4's *Today* programme. Discussing the case of Roy Whiting, who served a four-year sentence for assaulting a child before he murdered Sarah Payne, Lord Woolf says that men like him should be subject to indefinite, preventative imprisonment. He suggested 'a form of civil detention, without having to prove that a person has committed an actual crime... we would have to think about coming to the conclusion that there are [sic] small, a very small minority of people in the community, against whom the public are entitled to be protected'.

Lord Woolf's liberal critics were in no mood to accept a plea in mitigation. For John Wadham of Liberty, 'what the Lord Chief Justice has proposed flies in the face of our long-held constitutional protection, and international human rights... People should only be locked up for what they have done, not for what some expert, even Lord Woolf, thinks they might do'. Paul Cavadino, director of policy at the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, warned it was 'hugely difficult' to assess the threat posed by an individual who had not been convicted, and was probably 'unworkable in practice'.

This is, of course, the same Lord Woolf whose inquiry report on the 1990 Strangeways prison riot make an eloquent and cogent case for a humane penal system, who has continued to speak out for penal reform ever since, facing down successive Home Secretaries; and also the man who, having campaigned more vociferously than any other judge to incorporate the European Convention of Human Rights into British law, helped to draft the 1988 Human Rights Act which made that dream a reality. Yet it is difficult to see how detaining paedophiles without trial would not violate that Convention – just as Home Secretary David Blunkett's new law allowing the detention of suspected but uncharged terrorists does. And that measure, rather conspicuously, Lord Woolf opposed.

For discussion

Resolving these apparent contradictions will have to await the Lord Chief's return from holiday. Meanwhile, it is safe to state that few of his predecessors would deliberately have sparked such a furious debate in such a sensitive area, let alone by speaking to the media, rather than from the Bench. Then again, if there is a single theme running through his long and disparate career, it is this: time and again, he has moved the judiciary centre stage, enhancing its role both in the courts and across our broader polity. According to the Liberal Democrat peer Lord Lester, his fellow human rights campaigner and co-sponsor of the Act, Woolf has made 'a greater contribution than any other judge in the past 100 years'.

HARRY KENNETH WOOLF was born in 1933 in Newcastle, to a rich and happy Jewish family, second generation immigrants who had done well in the building trade. Educated at Fettes College in Edinburgh (later alumni include Tony Blair) and University College, London, he has claimed that as a young man, he devoted more attention to playing rugby than law.

He also dabbled in politics – as a Butlerian Conservative. Marriage in 1961 to Marguerite Sassoon, now a JP, brought his Parliamentary ambitions to an end, largely because he did not wish his family to endure the sacrifices entailed by elections and late-night sittings. The couple's three sons, all lawyers, are said to be extremely close.

There was nothing meteoric about Harry Woolf's early career. Called to the Bar in 1954, he spent years on the treadmill of the criminal courts. This may have been an excellent preparation for becoming Lord Chief Justice, part of whose job is to be in charge of criminal appeal, but much of it was hackwork, and there was little to indicate his eventual rise to such eminence. It was not until 1974 that he got his big break appointment as 'Treasury junior', retained as counsel for the last Labour government, mainly in cases where its aggrieved subjects wished to challenge official decisions through judicial review. Five years later, Woolf was a High Court judge.

IN THE 1970'S, judicial review was in its relative infancy. Although it has ancient roots, the idea of using the courts to try to reverse government policy still seemed novel, and the judges tended to operate within strict, self-imposed limits. The arc of Woolf's career since spans an era of exponential growth in the number of cases brought, and also a dramatic enlargement of the scope which the judiciary feels it has to intervene. The boundary between executive and judiciary has moved. This is a process in which Woolf has been at the forefront.

Recently, he has tried to downplay his evolving constitutional radicalism, suggesting that at heart he has always been a 'traditionalist'. It was not ever thus. He told me in an *Observer* interview in 1993: 'The new higher judges are used to intervening in political areas. Once you've done it once, it's easier to do it again. I for one have gone through an education. I am more prepared to see a role for the judiciary in areas where once I would not have... I do believe we [still] need to extend a little further.'

Appointed a Law Lord in 1992, following the Strangeways report, by 1996 he was Master of the Rolls, head of the civil Court of Appeal. There, says one legal source, 'one often had the sense he was groping instinctively for what he thought was the just result, reaching for it viscerally, rather than conducting a rigorous legal analysis'. For example there was the case of Diane Blood, who wished to impregnate herself with sperm taken from her late husband as he lay unconscious and dying.

Woolf's judgement, whose logic is impossible to follow, was that the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority was wrong to prevent the insemination, because when it did so it had not ruled (as it later did) that she should not have removed the sperm at all. Here, not for the only time, was Woolf as Ur-Judge, King Solomon, happily quashing an official body stacked with experts on legally tenuous grounds, because he simply thought they were wrong. 'Extend a little further' indeed.

No less significant are his sweeping reforms of the civil courts. Judges – centre stage here again – now oversee the warring parties in litigation from an early stage, thus cutting costs and keeping cases manageable. For once, the lawyers – many of whom opposed the changes – have been the losers. 'It's meant the end of litigation from an early stage, thus cutting costs and keeping cases manageable. For once, the lawyers – many of whom oppose to changes – have been the losers. 'It's meant the end of litigation as a tactical weapon,' says one leading London solicitor. 'The days of just firing off writs for the hell of it are over.'

Even Woolf's opponents, such as Tory Home Secretaries, tend to forgive and even admire him. Few people in public life can be so well-liked: 'He's a model judge because he makes the loser think he's had a fair hearing,' says Lord Lester. 'That's a wonderful quality. He's a mensch.'

YET AS LIBERALS contemplate the enlargement and *de facto* politicisation of the role of judges which Woolf represents, last week's frisson over paedophiles ought to make them pause. There is a tendency in Britain to see an activist judiciary as necessarily liberal, tending inevitably to stand up

For discussion

against overmighty government, and in favour of human rights.

In the 1960s, when the United States Supreme Court was busy desegregating the South and stopping executions, a similar view was popular in America. The court's decisions since – such as stopping vote counts in Florida, and allowing men whose lawyers slept through their trials to go to the electric chair – demonstrate the depth of that fallacy. With charm and persuasion, Lord Woolf has helped bring about a silent revolution. Its inheritors may not be as enlightened.

Observer, 30 December 2001

6.

Below are listed a number of arguments/opinions that individual characters express in *Measure for Measure*. They are listed in scene order. A quote is also given.

Split your class into groups and ask them to take one or more arguments/opinions each.

Firstly, ask your group to discuss the arguments, and their attitudes toward them.

Secondly, ask each group to present the arguments to the rest of the group in the form of a performance, this could be an advert, a television chat show, a protester on the street etc.

Thirdly, ask each group to present the counter argument.

a) I.i

The Duke declares that even though he is the head of state he prefers to live his life privately:

I love the people,
But do not like to stage me in their eyes.

What does the Duke mean? Do you think this is a strange attitude? Is it appropriate for a leader?

b) I.iii

The Duke declares that as it was he who let the immorality laws lapse, he cannot restore them.

Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope,
'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them?

Do you consider this to be a reasonable argument?

c) II.i

Escalus defends Claudio, and asks Angelo whether he might not have offended in the same way? He replies:

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall.

Is this an adequate response?

d) II.ii

Isabella argues that rulers should show mercy because God is merciful to all sinners, and all men are sinners. She asks if Angelo is so much better than Claudio?

Go to your bosom
Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know,
That's like my brother's fault.

Can society really be governed in this way?

e) II.iii

The Duke meets Juliet. Juliet says she's as much to blame for her pregnancy as Claudio, but the Duke argues to the contrary – her sin is even greater:

Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.

How do you think attitudes have changed? Would a man be able to say that in England today?

f) II.iv

Claudio has broken the law by making Juliet pregnant. Isabella is willing to admit that some offences are more serious than others. Would her sin – of sex outside marriage – be diminished since her motivation is to save Claudio's life?

Might there not be charity in sin
To save this brother's life?

What do you think of this statement? Remember that Isabella has taken a vow of chastity.

For discussion

g) III.i

Claudio suggests that Isabella should save his life by sleeping with Angelo. Isabella disagrees.

Claudio Death is a fearful thing.
Isabella And shamed life a hateful.

Does Claudio have any right to ask Isabella to break her vow of chastity for his sake? Do you think Isabella should oblige?

h) III.ii

The Duke says that even the greatest and most virtuous people cannot escape being slandered:

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape. Back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes.

Do you think this is true? Does this remain the case today? Think of the way public figures are treated by the media.

i) V.i

The Duke says that, as Mariana is neither a virgin, a widow nor a wife, she does not exist:

Why, you are nothing then: neither maid, widow or wife!

How do you think our perception of women has changed?

j) V.ii

The Duke argues 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth':
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure.

What would happen if this was how we governed society? Would the death penalty be restored, for example?

Peter Nicholas

photo Sean Patterson



Practical exercises

1.

Storytelling – Tableaux (Frozen Pictures)

Below are structures for seven sample tableaux – scenes that together delineate some of the main plot points of *Measure for Measure* (feel free to make up more of your own).

Split your class into groups and ask them to take a scene each. They should create a tableau for each thought/action or key line.

They could also introduce simple, character-based movements. One character within the tableau could make a very clear physical action, and then over a count of 5 all the other characters should react to it. The effect is of a slow-motion, moving picture.

Act I:

THE GAME'S AFOOT – The Duke appoints Angelo his deputy

The Duke with Escalus – Angelo enters – The Duke makes him 'at full ourself' – Angelo is reluctant – The Duke insists – Angelo agrees – Angelo and Escalus exit together.

Act II:

YOU ARE TOO COLD – Isabella pleads for her brother's life

Isabella and Lucio meet Angelo – Isabella as a 'woeful suitor' – Angelo rejects her suit – Lucio eggs her on – Isabella pleads again – Angelo is 'struck' by her – Angelo tells Isabella to return tomorrow.

THE CAD – Angelo propositions Isabella

Angelo is troubled – Isabella enters – Angelo propositions her – Isabella fails to understand – Angelo makes his intentions plainer – Isabella understands and leaves (to tell her brother).

Act III:

DEATH IS A FEARFUL THING – Isabella visits her brother in jail

The disguised Duke is preparing Claudio for death - Isabella enters - She tells her brother what Angelo has asked - At first, he agrees that Isabella must not submit to Angelo - Then he asks that she does - Isabella is horrified – The Duke intervenes.

SOME HOME TRUTHS? – The Duke meets Lucio

Pompey is being taken to prison – Lucio enters and refuses to help Pompey - The disguised Duke and Lucio talk – Lucio gives his opinion of the Duke 'a very superficial, ignorant, unweighty fellow' – The Duke disagrees – Lucio exits.

Act IV:

THE PLOT THICKENS – Isabella talks to Mariana

Mariana alone – the disguised Duke enters – Isabella enters – The Duke tells Isabella to tell Mariana – She does so – Mariana agrees to play her part.

Act V:

ALL IS REVEALED – The Duke 'returns'

Isabella appeals to the Duke for justice – Angelo says she is 'mad' – Isabella accuses Angelo of being a 'murderer, virgin-violator' etc – Angelo denies it – Mariana tells her story – Angelo admits everything – Isabella pleads for his life – Claudio is revealed to be alive – The Duke declares his love for Isabella.

2.

Storytelling – Mini Scenes

Below is the whole of the main story of *Measure for Measure*, pared down to (approximately) 150 lines. Either using this version (or ask your students to create their own) split your class into groups and ask each group to work on one, or more scenes each.

Using the lines of text, they should create a short performance of each mini scene. When performed together, you should have a simple outline of the entire story.

The lines of text may only be part of the performance; additional action may expand on the text and add to the telling of the story. However no other dialogue should be added (unless they create their own mini scenes), so as to ensure that a short, easily remembered version of the main story of the play is performed.

Practical exercises

I.i

The Duke and Escalus

Duke I say, bid come before us Angelo
For you must know, we have with special soul
Elected him our absence to supply;
Lent him our terror, drest him with our love,
And given his deputation all the organs
Of our own power. What you think of it?

Escalus If any in Vienna be of worth
To undergo such ample grace and honour,
It is Lord Angelo.

I.ii

Claudio, The Provost and Lucio

Claudio Bear me to prison, where I am committed.
Provost I do it not in evil disposition.
But from Lord Angelo by special charge.
Lucio Why, how now, Claudio? Whence comes this restraint?
What's thy offence, Claudio? What is't murder?

Claudio No
Lucio Lechery?
Claudio Call it so.
You know the lady; she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order.
Lucio With child perhaps?
Claudio Unhappily, even so.
And the new deputy now for the Duke –
Awakes me all the enrolled penalties.
This day my sister should the cloister enter,
Implore her in my voice, that she makes friends,
To the strict deputy: bid her assay him.
I have great hope in that. For in her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect
Such as move(s) men.

I.iii

Duke and Friar Thomas

Duke I have delivered to Lord Angelo
My absolute power and place here in Vienna.
Now, pious sir,
And he supposes me travell'd in Poland.
You will demand of me why I do this.
We have strict statutes and most biting laws,
Which for this fourteen years we have let slip.
F. Thom It rested in your Grace
To unloose this tied up justice when you pleas'd.

And it in you more dreadful would have seem'd,
Than in Lord Angelo.

Duke I do fear too dreadful.
Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope.
And to behold his sway,
I will, as 'twere a brother of your order,
Visit both prince and people.

I.iv

Lucio and Isabella

Lucio Gentle and fair. Your brother kindly greets you.
Not to be weary with you, he's in prison.
He hath got his friend with child.
Isabella My cousin Juliet?
Lucio She it is.
Isabella O let him marry her!
Lucio The Duke is very strangely gone from hence
And with full line of his authority,
Governs Lord Angelo; a man whose blood
Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
The wanton stings and motions of the sense;
He, to give fear to use and liberty,
Which have for long run by the hideous law
As mice by lions, hath picked out an act
Under whose heavy sentence your brother's life
Falls into forfeit.
All hope is gone,
Unless you have the grace by your fair prayer,
To soften Angelo.
Isabella I'll see what I can do.

II.ii

Isabella and Angelo

Isabella Must he needs die?
Angelo Maiden, no remedy.
Isabella Yes: I do think that you might pardon him,
And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy.
Angelo I will not do't.
Isabella But can you if you would?
Angelo Look what I will not, that I cannot do.
Isabella But might you do't, and do the world no wrong,
If so your heart were touch'd with the remorse,
As mine is to him?
Angelo He's sentenc'd, 'tis too late.
Isabella You are too cold.
Angelo I will bethink me. Come again tomorrow.

Practical exercises

II.iii

The Duke and Juliet

Duke Juliet,
Love you the man that wronged you?
Juliet Yes, as I love the woman that wrong'd him.
Duke So then it seems your most offenceful act
Was mutually committed?
Juliet Mutually.
Duke Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.
Juliet I do confess it, and repent it, father.

II.iv

Isabella and Angelo

Angelo Which had you rather, that the most just law
Now took your brother's life ; or to redeem him,
Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness
As she that he hath stain'd?
Isabella My brother did love Juliet,
And you tell me that he shall die for't.
Angelo He shall not, Isabel, if you give me love.
Isabella Better it were a brother died at once,
Than that a sister, by redeeming him
Should die for ever.
More than our brother is our chastity.

III.i

Isabella, Claudio and The Duke

Isabella Dost thou think, Claudio,
If I would yield him my virginity
Thou mightst be freed?
Claudio O heavens, it cannot be.
Isabella What says my brother?
Claudio Death is a fearful thing.
Isabella And shamed life a hateful.
Claudio Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.
Isabella Thy sin's not accidental, but a trade;
'Tis best that thou diest quickly.
Duke Vouchsafe a word, young sister, but one word; a
remedy presents itself. Have you not heard speak of
Mariana? She should this Angelo have married. Go you
to Angelo; answer his requiring with a plausible
obedience. Only refer yourself to this advantage: first,
that your stay with him may not be long; that the
place may have all shadow and silence in it. We shall

advise this wronged maid to stead up your
appointment, go in your place.

IV.ii

The Duke and The Provost

Provost Lord Angelo, belike thinking me remiss in mine office,
awakens me with this unwonted putting on.
Duke Pray you let's hear.
Provost [Reads] Whatsoever you may hear to the contrary, let
Claudio be executed by four of the clock...
Duke Claudio, whom here you have warrant to execute, is
no greater forfeit to the law than Angelo, who hath
sentenced him. I crave but four days' respite.
Provost Pardon me, good father ; it is against my oath.
Duke Were you sworn to the Duke, or to the Deputy? Look
you, sir, here is the hand and seal of the Duke. The
contents of this is the return of the Duke.

IV.iii

The Duke and Isabella

Isabella Peace, hoa, be here
Duke The tongue of Isabel. She's come to know
If yet her brother's pardon be come hither;
But I will keep her ignorant of her good,
To make her heavenly comforts of despair
When it is least expected.
Isabella Hath yet the deputy sent my brother's pardon?
Duke He hath releas'd him, Isabel, - from this world.
Isabella Oh I will to him and pluck out his eyes!
Duke You shall not be admitted to his sight.
Isabella Unhappy Claudio! Wretched Isabel!
Injurious world! Most damned Angelo!

V.i

The Duke, Isabella, Angelo, Mariana, The Provost and Claudio

Isabella Justice, O royal Duke! Vail your regard
Upon a wronged – I would fain say maid.
Angelo My lord, her wits I fear me are not firm.
She hath been a suitor to me for her brother,
Cut off by course of justice.
Isabella By course of justice!
Angelo And she will speak most bitterly and strange.
Isabella Most strange : but yet most truly will I speak.
That Angelo's a murderer, is't not strange?
That Angelo's an adulterous thief, is't not strange?
An hypocrite, a virgin-violator,
Is it not strange, and strange?
Mariana [Unveiling] This is that face, thou cruel Angelo,
Which once thou swor'st was worth the looking on.

Practical exercises

This is the hand which, with a vow'd contract,
Was fast belock'd in thine : this is the body
That took away the match from Isabel
And did supply thee at thy garden-house,
In her imagined person.

Duke [To Angelo] Hast thou or word, or wit, or impudence,
That yet can do the office?

Angelo No longer session hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be mine own confession.
Immediate sentence, then, and sequent death
Is all the grace I beg.

Duke Then Angelo, thy fault's thus manifested.
We do condemn me to the very block
Where Claudio stooped to death, and with like haste.

Mariana Oh my most gracious lord!

Isabella Most bounteous sir:
Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd
As if my brother lived.

Provost This is another prisoner that I saved [Unmuffles Claudio]
As like almost to Claudio as himself.

Duke [To Isabella] If he be like your brother, for his sake
Is he pardon'd ; and for your lovely sake
Give me your hand and say you will be mine.
Well Angelo, your evil quits you well.
Look that you love your wife : her worth, worth yours.
She, Claudio, that you wrong'd, look you restore.
Joy to you, Mariana, love her, Angelo.
Dear Isabel, I
I have a motion that imports you good ;
Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline,
What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.

“Yet to understand motives is not wholly to forgive effects. In *Measure for Measure* the tragicomic solution was brought about through the direct, explicit, and continuous intervention of “the demi-god of authority”. The vast speculative themes were knit together, the complex characters guided towards the middle path of virtue, through the transcendent wisdom of a Jacobean paragon. But the price to be paid was a substitution of precept and example for inner development and spontaneity.”

J.W Lever – *The Arden Measure for Measure*