



PCPA

PACIFIC CONSERVATORY THEATRE

MEASURE
FOR
MEASURE
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Photo by Luis Escobar

Copyright©2026PCPA



PACIFIC CONSERVATORY THEATRE
YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ARTS

Table Of Contents



Note to Teachers

Creative Team & Cast

About the Play

Who Was Shakespeare?

Classroom Activities



Note to Teachers



Hello, students and educators!

We are the Youth and Community Arts Team at Pacific Conservatory Theatre (PCPA). This Study Guide has been specially created as a companion to our classroom workshop about William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. This Study Guide features a variety of resources designed to foster a deeper understanding this Shakespearean classic. Our hope is that the activities and discussion questions provided will spark thoughtful conversation about the play and its themes. What does the play have to say about the intersection of justice and mercy? How does it help us to think more critically about political hypocrisy?

Additionally, this Study Guide offers a detailed look into PCPA's production of *Measure for Measure*, playing at the Severson Theatre from February 26th to March 15th. Please note that the materials in this Study Guide are appropriate for all students, regardless of whether they have seen the production or not.

Thank you so much for joining us on this journey!

Signed,

The PCPA Youth & Community Arts Team



PACIFIC CONSERVATORY THEATRE
YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ARTS



Creative Team

Director:	Emily Trask*
Scenic Designer:	Natasha D'Amico
Costume Designer:	Caroline Rein
Lighting Designer:	Alonna Hall
Sound Designer:	Molly Costello
Stage Manager:	Jennie White
Original Music:	Paul Marszalkowski

*Member of Actor's Equity



Cast

DUKE VICENTIO/MS. BARON:	Polly Firestone Walker
ESCALUS/ FRANSISCA/ MS. SCALIGER:	Kitty Balay*
ANGELO/ MS. ENGLER:	Molly Dobbs
CLAUDIO/ ELBOW/ STUDENT:	Dahlia Ridenhour
ISABELLA/ STUDENT:	Isabella Faith Scott
LUCIO/ ENSEMBLE/ STUDENT:	G So
MISTRESS OVERDONE/ JULIET/ STUDENT:	Torilynn Hicks
POMPEY/ ENSEMBLE/ STUDENT:	Jamie Collins
PROVOST/ ENSEMBLE/ STUDENT:	Molly Bell
MARIANA/ CLAIRE/ STUDENT:	Kelly Brenya

*Member of Actor's Equity



Understudies

ISABELLA/STUDENT:

Sophia Dixon

DUKE VICENTIO/MS. BARON:

Lucia Ferrer

ANGELO/MS. ENGLER:

Katie Hughes

ESCALUS/JULIET/MISTRESS

OVERDONE/MS. SCALIGER:

Donna Jean

CLAUDIO/ELBOW/CLAIRE/

MARIANA:

Josephine Rae Swanson

LUCIO/POMPEY/PROVOST:

Skylar Platt

*Member of Actor's Equity

Director's Note

I love Measure for Measure. And it makes me furious. I've been in a fantastic argument with this play since the first time I worked on it over twenty years ago. And I'm far from alone. Though it's one of Shakespeare's more rarely produced works, it's among his most hotly contested. It provokes intensely conflicting interpretations and arguments, and asks enormous questions about justice, power, mercy, gender, and consent. And then it has the nerve to refuse to answer them! I love this play because it refuses to behave. It wants to provoke you.

At Measure for Measure's heart is a brutal paradox that demands us to consider: What does mercy actually look like? Does power necessarily corrupt? What happens when the rules apply to everyone except those in charge? Though written in 1603, this play feels urgently current. And to maintain that immediacy, in our production, Measure for Measure is staged by St. Mary's Academy, an all-girls Catholic school -- a frame that not only allows us to mirror Shakespeare's own writing and single gender approach, but amplifies the play's hierarchies of doctrine, morality, and authority. All without rewriting Shakespeare.

As the frame dissolves, we're left with the Measure for Measure's dark comedy, dangerous edges, and purposeful provocation. I'm still arguing with it. And after this performance, I hope you are too.

Emily Trask, Director



The Characters

DUKE VICENTIO: The leader of Vienna who disguises himself as a friar and leaves Angelo in charge.

ANGELO: The duke's deputy and a man of strict standards. He is in charge while the duke is away.

ISABELLA: A young woman who is training to become a nun.

CLAUDIO: Isabella's brother who is sentenced to death for getting his fiancée pregnant.

LUCIO: An outspoken bachelor who slanders the duke.

JULIET: Claudio's fiancée. She is pregnant with their first child.

ESCALUS: A lord who advises Angelo to be less strict in his behavior.

POMPEY: A former pimp who now works as an executioner.

PROVOST: The prison-keeper who is responsible for carrying out Angelo's orders.

ELBOW: A confused constable who is always getting his words wrong.

MISTRESS OVERDONE: The keeper of a brothel who discovers that Angelo is going to shut down her business.

MARIANA: A young woman who used to be engaged to Angelo.

Synopsis



*contains spoilers

Vicentio, the Duke of Vienna, pretends to leave the city on business. In his absence, he appoints **Angelo** to the position of deputy and asks Angelo to rule while he's away. Duke Vicentio then disguises himself as a friar so he can spy on Angelo and the people of Vienna.

As deputy, Angelo starts harshly cracking down on laws that previously had been largely unenforced. This shocks his colleagues and upsets many of the citizens. He arrests a young man called **Claudio** for getting his fiancée, **Juliet**, pregnant and sentences him to death.

Claudio asks his sister, **Isabella**, to plead for his life. Isabella is young novice nun with a very strict moral compass. Still, she agrees to visit Angelo to ask him to spare her brother's life.

Isabella visits Angelo and speaks passionately to try and save Claudio. Angelo refuses, but tells her to come again the next day. When Isabella leaves, Angelo reveals in a soliloquy that he is attracted to her.

Angelo struggles with his feelings for Isabella. When she visits him again, he makes her an offer and says he'll spare her brother's life if she sleeps with him. Disgusted, Isabella refuses and threatens to reveal him as a hypocrite. Angelo says no one will believe her as he has the power and authority. She sadly realizes he is right.



Isabella visits Claudio and tells him she can't save him unless she sleeps with Angelo, which she won't do. Claudio is afraid to die and asks her to reconsider. The Duke, who is still disguised as a friar, overhears this and tells Claudio to prepare for death.

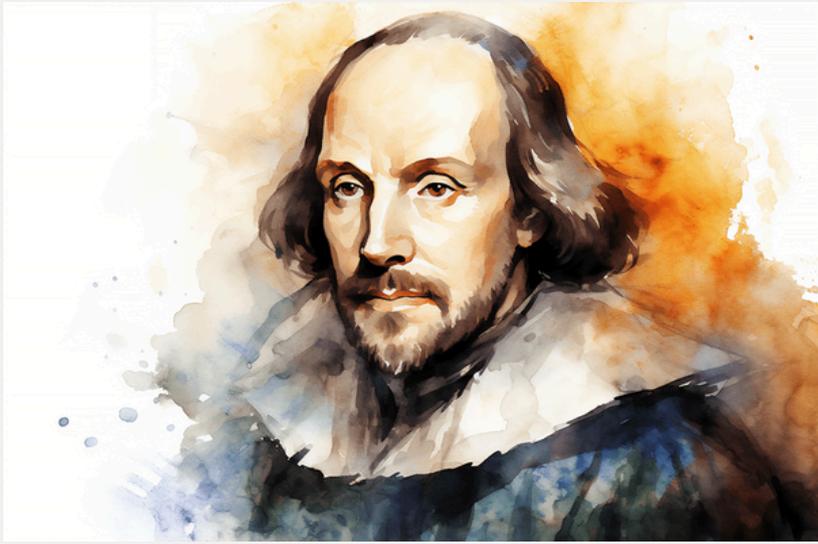
While dressed as the Friar, Duke Vicentio tells Isabella he has a plan to save her virtue and Claudio's life. He will arrange for a woman named **Mariana** to disguise herself as Isabella and sleep with Angelo instead. Angelo was previously engaged to Mariana, but abandoned her after she lost her dowry.

Angelo sleeps with Mariana, thinking she is Isabella, but still decides to execute Claudio and demands to see his head. Without telling Isabella, the Duke has a pirate's head sent to Angelo instead of Claudio's.

At the gates of the city, the Duke makes his official "return" and Isabella explains what happened to her. The Duke reveals that he was disguised as the Friar and is aware of what has happened.

Facing punishment, Angelo confesses to his crimes. However, Mariana begs for his life. The Duke grants her request to spare Angelo if he agrees to marry Mariana. Angelo accepts. The Duke reunites Isabella with her brother Claudio, and then decrees that Isabella will join him in marriage.





Who Was Shakespeare, Anyway?

William Shakespeare is one of the world's most famous and prolific playwrights. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, during England's Tudor Period. Born to John Shakespeare, a leather worker, and Mary Arden, a wealthy heiress, William was one of eight children.

When he was 18, Shakespeare married a woman named Anne Hathaway, and together they had three children. By 1592, Shakespeare was working in London as a writer and actor. He was a member of an acting troupe called Lord Chamberlain's Men (later known as the King's Men) who often performed for members of royalty. In 1599, the members of Lord Chamberlain's Men built a new theater called The Globe.

The Globe was a large, open-air theater where people of all social classes could come to see a show. The richest and most famous guests sat in the highest seats, while the poor could purchase standing room tickets for a penny.

Shakespeare worked as the primary dramatist at the Globe for almost 20 years, during which time he wrote about two plays per year. He wrote histories such as *Henry V* and *Richard III*, tragedies such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and comedies such as *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Although the exact number is unknown, he is believed to have written approximately 37 plays and 150 poems. Seven years after his death, Shakespeare's works were compiled together into one book, known as the First Folio.

Today, his works are studied in schools worldwide and an average of 410 Shakespeare plays are performed every year. Shakespeare's plays have had many movie adaptations, and he has more than 1,566 writing credits on IMDB! Although he lived long ago, the work of William Shakespeare continues to have a profound influence on modern language, art, and culture.

Activities



Discussion Questions

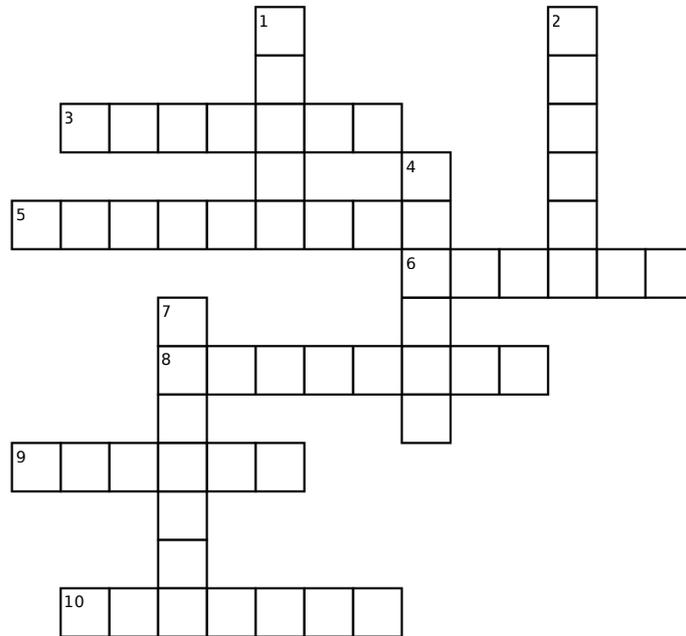
1. Do you think the Duke is a good ruler? Why or why not?
2. Should *Measure for Measure* be classified as a comedy? Why?
3. How does Isabella fight to save her brother? What boundaries does she set during her meeting with Angelo?
4. How do Isabella and Mariana trick Angelo?
5. What do you think Shakespeare is trying to say about leaders who don't follow their own laws?
6. Do you think the play ends happily? Why or why not? What would you change about the play if you could?

Student Activity: Freezeframe Storytelling

The following activity requires students to consider the journey of several key characters in *Measure for Measure*.

- Divide the class into groups of 4-6 students and assign each group one character: Duke Vicentio, Angelo, Isabella, or Claudio.
- Each group will work together to tell the story of *Measure for Measure* from the perspective of this character.
- They will tell the story without words, using only three freeze frames (tableaus)- one for the beginning, one for the middle, and one for the end. For example, if students choose Isabella, their first tableau might depict her meeting with Angelo, the second might show her visiting Claudio in prison, and the third might show her wedding to Duke Vicentio.
- Once students have created their three-image story, they can take turns alternating between tableau one, two, and three.

Measure for Measure Crossword



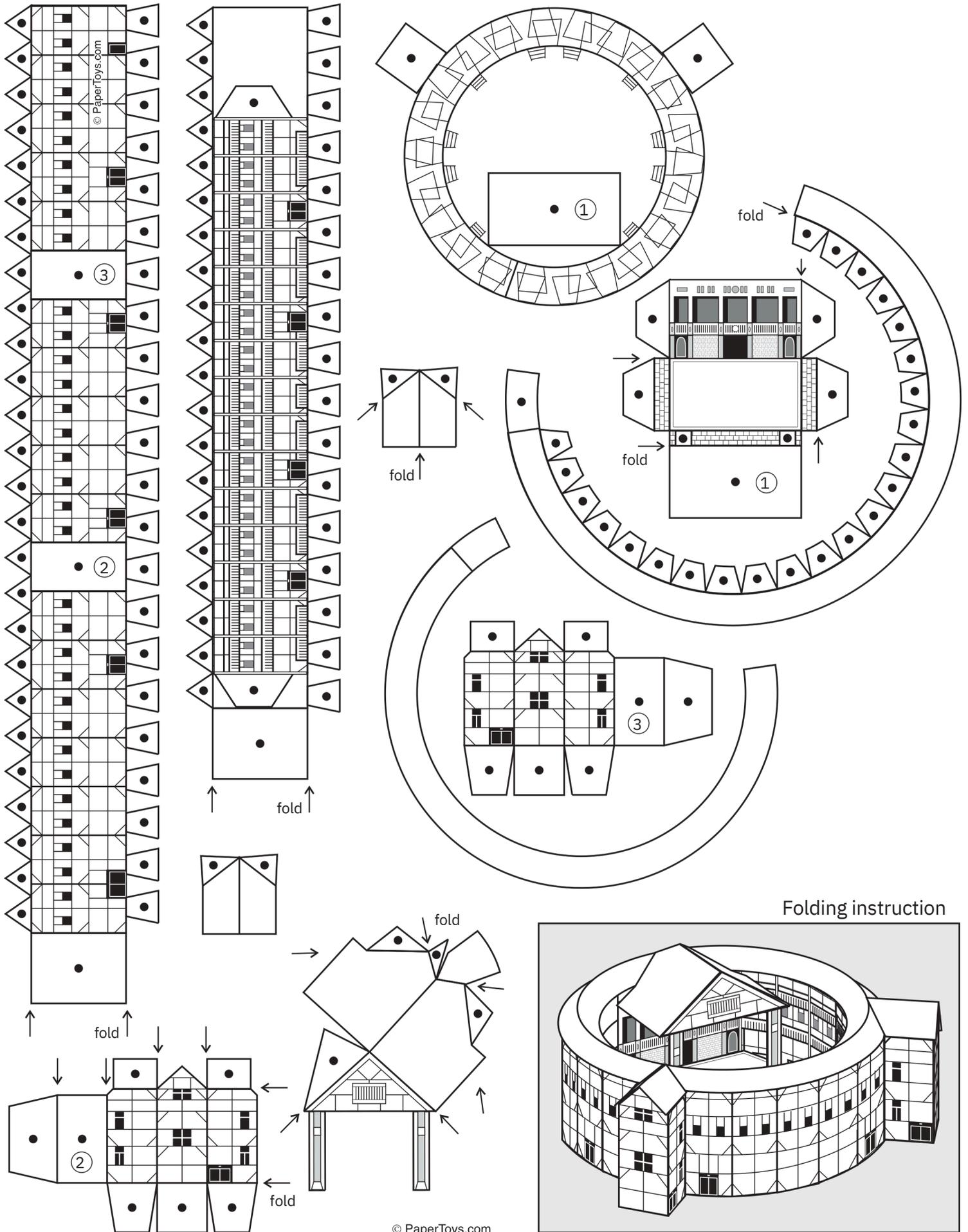
Down:

1. The Duke disguises himself as this member of the clergy
2. The city where Measure for Measure takes place
4. Angelo is appointed to this position by the Duke
7. She disguises herself to trick Angelo

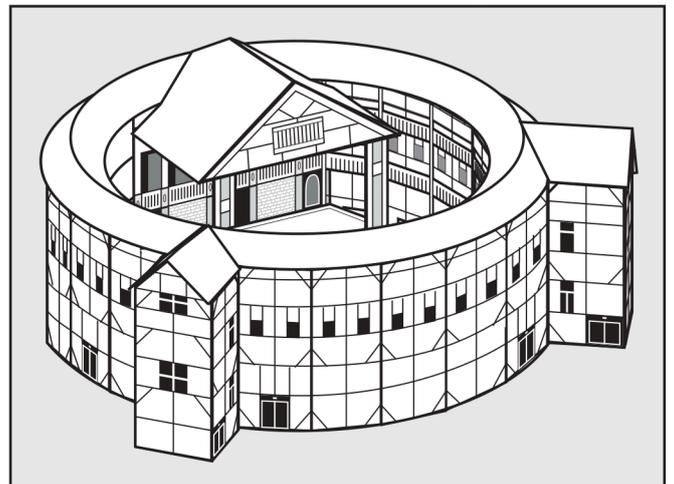
Across:

3. Measure for Measure is a play about mercy vs. _____ .
5. Someone who doesn't practice what they preach
6. Angelo believes Claudio died, but it was actually a _____ .
8. Claudio is _____ by Angelo.
9. Isabella is this kind of nun
10. Isabella's brother

Make your own Globe Theater!



Folding instruction





CONTACT US

Website:

<https://pcpa.org/youthandcommunityarts/>

Email:

jill.price@pcpa.org

Social Media:

[@pcpayouthandcommunityarts](#)

