

Measure for Measure

Act 1

1.1 Location: Vienna. The court of Duke Vincentio.

3-4 Of...discourse I would appear pompous if I were to attempt
to instruct you in the qualities of good government

5 put to know obliged to admit; **science** knowledge

6 lists limits

7 strength mental powers

8-9 But . . . work The meaning is uncertain; some words may
have been lost.

10 terms procedures

11 pregnant knowledgeable

12 art skill

13 we i.e. I (The Duke employs the royal plural through the
play.)

14 warp deviate

16 figure representation

17 soul deliberation

18 elected chosen; **supply** fill

19 dressed . . . love 1) gave him my love; 2) transferred the
love given to me to him

20 deputation appointment to act on behalf of another; **organs**
instruments

Act 1



1.1

Enter Duke, Escalus, Lords [and Attendants].

DUKE Escalus.

ESCALUS My lord.

DUKE Of government the properties to unfold	3
Would seem in me t' affect speech and discourse,	4
Since I am put to know that your own science	5
Exceeds, in that, the lists of all advice	6
My strength can give you. Then no more remains	7
But that to your sufficiency, as your worth is able,	8
And let them work. The nature of our people,	9
Our city's institutions, and the terms	10
For common justice, you're as pregnant in	11
As art and practice hath enrichèd any	12
That we remember. There is our commission,	13
From which we would not have you warp.	

[He hands Escalus a paper.]

—Call hither, 14

I say, bid come before us Angelo. *[Exit Attendant.]*

What figure of us think you he will bear? 16

For you must know, we have with special soul 17

Elected him our absence to supply, 18

Lent him our terror, dressed him with our love, 19

And given his deputation all the organs 20

Of our own power. What think you of it?

ESCALUS If any in Vienna be of worth

To undergo such ample grace and honor,

It is Lord Angelo.

- 27 character** appearance betokening moral qualities
- 29 belongings** endowments
- 30 proper** exclusively
- 30-1 waste . . . thee** expend your energies only on your own development
- 32-3 Heaven . . . themselves** Compare Matt. 5: 14-16: “Ye are the light of the world . . . Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men.”
- 35 finely touched** well-endowed
- 36 issues** ends
- 37 scruple** bit
- 38 determines** demands for
- 40 use** interest; **bend** direct
- 41 part in him** role as duke; **advertise** 1) display; 2) instruct. Angelo could himself model good governance.
- 42 Hold** stay, continue. Some interpret the word to mean, “Here, take the commission,” with accompanying stage action.
- 43 remove** absence
- 44 Mortality** the ability to pass a sentence of death. Alexander Pope (1723) emended to “morality,” with significant implications for Angelo (cf. 1.2.126n).
- 46 question** consideration; **secondary** second in command
- 48 mettle** spirit, strength of character. He continues with a pun on the “metal” of coins that should be sufficiently tested before the symbol of the Duke is stamped upon them. Angelo’s name echoes “angel,” an English coin imprinted with the Archangel Michael piercing Satan.
- 51 leavened** carefully considered
- 53 of . . . condition** so pressing
- 54 prefers itself** takes priority; **unquestioned** unexamined
- 56 importune** urge

- 59 **th'hopeful execution** the successful carrying out
 61 **bring you something** accompany you some distance
 64 **scruple** doubt
 67 **privily** secretly
 67-72 **I . . . it** James I's dislike of crowds is a known fact and the
 play was staged at his court in 1604.
 68 **stage me** exhibit myself as a show
 69 **do well** is politically useful
 70 **aves vehement** enthusiastic shouts of welcome
 72 **affect** desire
 74 **Lead forth** may God lead
 78 **bottom . . . place** limits of my authority
 83 **wait upon** accompany

1.2 Location: A public place.

- 1 **composition** agreement
 2 **fall upon** attack
 5 **Hungary's** A possible pun on "Hungary/hungry" and "peace/
 piece" may suggest that if peace is achieved, the soldiers will
 go hungry. Some think this a reference to James I's political
 concerns in 1604; Jowett and Taylor argue that this section
 was revised after 1617 to allude to the war in central Europe
 (*Shakespeare Reshaped 1606-1623*, Oxford, 1993).

