

Section B

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Measure for Measure*

- 2 Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the presentation of Angelo here and elsewhere in the play.

	<i>[Enter ANGELO.]</i>	
<i>Angelo:</i>	When I would pray and think, I think and pray To several subjects. Heaven hath my empty words, Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue, Anchors on Isabel: Heaven in my mouth,	5
	As if I did but only chew his name, And in my heart the strong and swelling evil Of my conception. The state whereon I studied Is, like a good thing, being often read, Grown sere and tedious; yea, my gravity,	10
	Wherein – let no man hear me – I take pride, Could I with boot change for an idle plume Which the air beats for vain. O place, O form, How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit, Wrench awe from fools, and tie the wiser souls	15
	To thy false seeming! Blood, thou art blood. Let's write good angel on the devil's horn, 'Tis not the devil's crest.	
	<i>[Knock.]</i> How now, who's there?	
	<i>[Enter SERVANT.]</i>	20
<i>Servant:</i>	One Isabel, a sister, desires access to you.	
<i>Angelo:</i>	Teach her the way. <i>[Exit SERVANT.]</i>	
	O heavens, Why does my blood thus muster to my heart, Making both it unable for itself	25
	And dispossessing all the other parts Of necessary fitness? So play the foolish throngs with one that swounds, Come all to help him, and so stop the air By which he should revive; and even so	30
	The general subject to a well-wished king Quit their own part, and in obsequious fondness Crowd to his presence, where their untaught love Must needs appear offence.	
	<i>[Enter ISABELLA.]</i>	35
	How now, fair maid?	
<i>Isabella:</i>	I am come to know your pleasure.	
<i>Angelo:</i>	<i>[Aside]</i> That you might know it, would much better please me Than to demand what 'tis. – Your brother cannot live.	
<i>Isabella:</i>	Even so. Heaven keep your honour.	40
<i>Angelo:</i>	Yet may he live awhile; and, it may be, As long as you or I; yet he must die.	
<i>Isabella:</i>	Under your sentence?	
<i>Angelo:</i>	Yea.	
<i>Isabella:</i>	When? I beseech you? That in his reprieve, Longer or shorter, he may be so fitted That his soul sicken not.	45
<i>Angelo:</i>	Ha? Fie, these filthy vices! It were as good To pardon him that hath from nature stolen A man already made, as to remit	50

Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image
 In stamps that are forbid; 'Tis all as easy
 Falsely to take away a life true made,
 As to put mettle in restrained means
 To make a false one. 55

Isabella: 'Tis set down so in heaven, but not in earth.

Angelo: Say you so? Then I shall pose you quickly.
 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 60
 As she that he hath stain'd?

Isabella: Sir, believe this:

I had rather give my body than my soul.

Angelo: I talk not of your soul; our compelled sins
 Stand more for number than for accompt. 65

Isabella: How say you?

Angelo: Nay, I'll not warrant that; for I can speak
 Against the thing I say. Answer to this:
 I – now the voice of the recorded law –
 Pronounce a sentence on your brother's life: 70
 Might there not be a charity in sin,
 To save this brother's life?

Act 2, Scene 4