

measure for measure translation into modern english

Measure for Measure translation into modern English is an essential endeavor for students, scholars, and enthusiasts of Shakespeare's works. This play, written in 1604, deals with complex themes such as justice, morality, and the nature of authority. Due to its intricate language and Elizabethan context, many readers find it challenging to grasp the full meaning of the text. As such, modern translations can help illuminate the play's themes and characters, making it more accessible for contemporary audiences. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of "Measure for Measure," including its characters, themes, and a modern English translation of selected passages.

Overview of "Measure for Measure"

"Measure for Measure" is classified as one of Shakespeare's problem plays, a term used to describe works that blend comic and tragic elements, leaving audiences with unresolved moral dilemmas. The plot revolves around the Duke of Vienna, who delegates his authority to the strict and morally rigid Angelo. When Claudio, a young man, is sentenced to death for impregnating his fiancée, Juliet, the Duke, disguised as a friar, intervenes. The play grapples with issues of justice, mercy, and the hypocrisy of societal laws.

Key Characters

1. Duke Vincentio: The Duke of Vienna who pretends to leave the city but stays disguised as a friar to observe the effects of his own laws.
2. Angelo: The Duke's deputy who enforces the laws of Vienna with an iron fist, but struggles with his own desires when faced with Isabella.
3. Isabella: A novice nun and Claudio's sister, who pleads for her brother's life and represents virtue and morality.
4. Claudio: A young man sentenced to death for fornication, representing the consequences of strict adherence to law.
5. Lucio: A friend of Claudio, whose comedic and cynical outlook provides levity to the serious themes of the play.
6. Escalus: A wise and kind nobleman who represents reason and moderation amidst the chaos of Angelo's rule.

Major Themes

1. Justice and Mercy: The play questions the nature of justice and whether it can be achieved without mercy. Characters like the Duke and Isabella grapple with the balance between punishment and compassion.
2. Hypocrisy: Angelo's character exemplifies the hypocrisy within societal laws, as he enforces strict morality while succumbing to his own immoral desires.
3. Power and Authority: The Duke's experiment with power reflects on the nature of leadership and

the responsibility that comes with authority.

4. Sexual Morality: The play critiques societal views on sexual morality, highlighting the consequences of repression and the complexities of human relationships.

Modern English Translation of Selected Passages

To better understand the text, below are selected passages from "Measure for Measure," translated into modern English. These passages capture the essence of the characters' motivations and the play's themes.

Act 1, Scene 2

Original Text:

"To seek the lofty. To be a sinner, to be a sinner."

Modern Translation:

"To aim for greatness. To be a sinner, to be a sinner."

In this scene, the character is contemplating the idea of aspiration and the inherent flaws in humanity. The repetition emphasizes the struggle between striving for virtue and the inevitability of sin.

Act 2, Scene 4

Original Text:

"Is this her fault, or is it mine? What is it that I have done?"

Modern Translation:

"Is this her fault, or is it mine? What have I done wrong?"

Here, Isabella grapples with guilt and responsibility, showcasing her inner conflict and the moral ambiguity present in the play. The modern translation clarifies her emotional turmoil and the weight of the situation she faces.

Act 3, Scene 1

Original Text:

"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

Modern Translation:

"Don't be afraid of being great. Some people are born great, some work hard to become great, and others have greatness forced upon them."

This famous quote reflects the various paths to greatness and underscores the theme of power dynamics in the play. The modern translation makes it more relatable, emphasizing that greatness can come in many forms.

Act 4, Scene 3

Original Text:

"Pray you, take care to make the distinction, for I am no less a sinner than you."

Modern Translation:

"Please, be careful to see the difference, because I'm no less of a sinner than you are."

This passage highlights the hypocrisy of the characters, particularly Angelo, who condemns others while struggling with his own sins. The modern language emphasizes the universality of human flaws.

Significance of Modern Translations

Translating "Measure for Measure" into modern English serves several valuable purposes:

1. Enhanced Understanding: Readers can grasp complex language and archaic expressions, making the text more accessible.
2. Engagement with Themes: Modern translations can illuminate the play's themes in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences, drawing parallels to current societal issues.
3. Increased Interest: By presenting the text in a more relatable format, modern translations can attract new audiences who might find the original language daunting.
4. Educational Tool: Educators can use modern translations to facilitate discussions about the play's themes, characters, and moral questions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Measure for Measure translation into modern English plays a crucial role in making Shakespeare's work relevant for today's audiences. By transforming the text into contemporary language, we unlock the rich themes and complex characters that define this problem play. Understanding the nuances of justice, morality, and authority becomes easier, allowing readers to appreciate the depth of Shakespeare's insights into human nature. As we navigate the moral dilemmas presented in the play, modern translations serve not just as a bridge to the past but also as a lens through which we can examine our own societal values and ethical challenges. Whether for academic purposes or personal enjoyment, engaging with "Measure for Measure" in modern English enriches our understanding and invites us to reflect on the timeless questions it poses.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Measure for Measure' about in modern terms?

In modern terms, 'Measure for Measure' is a story about justice, morality, and the complexities of human relationships, focusing on themes like power abuse, hypocrisy, and redemption.

How does modern English translation change the understanding of characters?

Translating 'Measure for Measure' into modern English makes the characters' motivations and conflicts more accessible, revealing their complexities and making them relatable to contemporary audiences.

What are some key phrases from 'Measure for Measure' translated into modern English?

For example, 'The law is not an ass' can be translated to 'The law isn't foolish,' highlighting the absurdity of strict legalism without compassion.

Why is modern English translation important for 'Measure for Measure'?

Modern English translation is important because it allows a wider audience to appreciate and engage with Shakespeare's themes, making the play's intricate language and ideas understandable.

Are there specific editions of 'Measure for Measure' that focus on modern English?

Yes, there are several editions of 'Measure for Measure' that focus on modern English, such as the Folger Shakespeare Library edition and the No Fear Shakespeare series.

How do modern translations affect the humor in 'Measure for Measure'?

Modern translations can enhance the humor in 'Measure for Measure' by using contemporary language and idioms that resonate more with today's audience, making the comedic elements clearer.

Can modern English translations of 'Measure for Measure' still retain Shakespeare's original meaning?

Yes, modern English translations of 'Measure for Measure' aim to retain Shakespeare's original meaning while making the language more accessible, ensuring the essence and depth of the play are preserved.

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