Story Grammar
Measure for Measure by William Shakespeare

Story

Plot: A deputy tries to blackmail a virgin into sleeping with him.
Themes: Priorities, Authority, Justice, Mercy

Episode

Setting: Vienna. A time period is not specified, but is traditionally set around the time the play was written – early 17th century.
Major Characters: Vincentio (the Duke), Angelo (the deputy), Isabella (the virgin), Claudio (Isabella's brother), Juliet (Claudio's beloved), Mariana (betrothed to Angelo), Escalus (an ancient lord), Lucio (a fantastic), Mistress Overdone (a whore), Barnardine (a condemned prisoner)

Chain of Events

Initiating Event: Angelo imprisons Claudio and sentences him to death for fornication. After meeting Isabella, Angelo tells her that if she will sleep with him, her brother will live, but if she will not, then her brother will die.
Internal Response: Isabella cannot consent to surrender her chastity, and tells Claudio what happened. When he begs her to reconsider, she is hurt and angered and feels betrayed. The Duke overhears this conversation between brother and sister.
Attempt/Outcome: The Duke, disguised as a friar, arranges with Isabella and Mariana to trick Angelo. Isabella tells Angelo she will come, but Mariana goes in her place.
An Outcome: Angelo orders Claudio’s death, in spite of his deal with Isabella. The Duke has Claudio and Barnardine, a condemned prisoner, switched. Barnardine is executed, and Claudio lives. But everyone, including Isabella and Angelo, believes that Claudio is dead.
A Resolution: The Duke sheds his disguise and takes control. He reprieves Angelo on the condition that he marries Mariana, reprieves Claudio and tells him to marry Juliet, and proposes to Isabella himself.
A Reaction: The play brings up questions about justice and mercy as the audience watches how different characters are repaid for their actions. Good for high school students, the play invites readers to question their priorities. Shakespeare brings his audience along an emotional rollercoaster as he includes a generous portion of deception and misunderstanding between the characters.