

QUESTIONS FOR SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMAS AND SONNETS

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This document contains questions on the following works, in alphabetical order (titles / pages / editions are included along with the questions):

Edition Used: Greenblatt, Stephen et al., eds. *The Norton Shakespeare*. 2nd ed. Four-Volume Genre Paperback Set. Norton, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0-393-93152-5.

Shakespeare, William.

<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> .	Comedies 911-79.
<i>As You Like It</i> .	Comedies 621-87.
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> .	Tragedies 879-967.
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i> .	Comedies 245-93.
<i>Coriolanus</i> .	Tragedies 969-1056.
<i>Cymbeline</i> .	Romances 273-364.
<i>Hamlet</i> .	Tragedies 323-424.
<i>Julius Caesar</i> .	Tragedies 257-321.
<i>King Henry IV, Part 1</i> .	Histories 595-672.
<i>King Henry IV, Part 2</i> .	Histories 673-757.
<i>King Henry V</i> .	Histories 759-836.
<i>King Henry VIII, or, All Is True</i>	Histories 847-929.
<i>King John</i>	Histories 529-94.
<i>King Lear</i> .	Tragedies (conflated) 739-823; intro. 571-81.

<i>King Richard II.</i>	Histories 457-527.
<i>King Richard III.</i>	Histories 361-450.
<i>Macbeth.</i>	Tragedies 815-88.
<i>Measure for Measure.</i>	Comedies 841-910.
<i>The Merchant of Venice.</i>	Comedies 425-89.
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream.</i>	Comedies 367-424.
<i>Much Ado About Nothing.</i>	Comedies 557-620.
<i>Othello.</i>	Tragedies 425-507.
<i>Pericles, Prince of Tyre.</i>	Romances 121-89.
<i>Romeo and Juliet.</i>	Tragedies 181-256.
<i>The Taming of the Shrew.</i>	Comedies 175-244.
<i>The Tempest.</i>	Romances 365-425.
<i>Timon of Athens.</i>	Tragedies 509-69.
<i>Titus Andronicus.</i>	Tragedies 115-79.
<i>Troilus and Cressida.</i>	Comedies 751-839.
<i>Twelfth Night.</i>	Comedies 689-750.
<i>The Winter's Tale.</i>	Romances 191-271.
<i>Selected Sonnets.</i>	Romances 597-659.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE QUESTIONS

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *All's Well That Ends Well* (Norton Comedies 911-79).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, consider Helen's exchange with the phony *miles gloriosus* Paroles. ("Boastful soldier," a Roman New Comedy term for this kind of stock character, based on a play by Plautus.) Why does she bother talking to him at all, and how does the content of the exchange relate to Helen's feelings for Bertram?
2. In Act 1, Scene 1, how do Helen's reflections illustrate the power of romantic love? In what way has her affection for Bertram transformed her and taken her beyond her ordinary limitations, hopes, and reflections? What are her expectations of success in winning his attentions? What stands in her way?
3. In Act 1, Scene 2, the King says modestly, "I fill a place, I know't" (69). A number of characters seem rather world-weary, as if they were simply going through the motions, playing assigned roles in life without enthusiasm or hope. How does the King describe Bertram's departed father, and how does that aristocratic paragon's conduct and attitude stack up against the present French court, Bertram included?
4. In Act 1, Scene 3, the Countess and her clown Lavatch have a conversation about his reason for marrying. Why does Lavatch want to marry? Does he have a better understanding of his motivations than Helen did in the first scene? Why or why not?
5. In Act 1, Scene 3, what are the Countess's thoughts regarding Helen's interest in her son Bertram? Why does Helen have so much difficulty explaining her passion for Bertram to the Countess?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, why is the King so resistant to Lafeu and Helen's offers of a cure? What arguments does Helen advance to convince the King that he ought to give her remedies a try? Why does he eventually accept? What does Helen ask of the King in return?
7. In Act 2, Scene 2, what is the point of the exchange between the Countess and Lavatch, who seems to think that he has the perfect catchphrase, an "answer {that} will

serve all men." Does Shakespeare use this scene to make any point that might be relevant to the play's action or general atmosphere? Explain.

8. In Act 2, Scene 3, Helen chooses Bertram as her reward for saving the King, and the restored old man ratifies her choice, but why does Bertram at first refuse the match? How does the king explain the nature of "honor"?

9. In Act 2, Scene 3, Lafeu and Paroles converse. Shakespeare often highlights the lesson that artifice (as opposed to whatever we consider "simply natural") is part of human nature and not to be condemned, but in what sense does Paroles abuse that aspect of humanity? What distinguishes *his* artifice from that of, say, Helen, who is trying to engraft herself into the aristocratic stock of France by marrying Bertram?

10. In Act 2, Scene 3, what advice does Paroles offer Bertram regarding his current situation? Why is the young man at this point unable to see through Paroles? And why (here and elsewhere in the play) is war rather than love such an attractive enterprise to Bertram?

11. In Act 2, Scenes 4 and 5, Lavatch and Paroles exchange witticisms. Describe the difference between their two philosophies. How does Lafeu try (without much success) to wean Bertram from Paroles in the fifth scene?

ACT 3

12. In Act 3, Scene 2, we hear that Bertram has betaken himself to the wars. How do the Countess and Helen, respectively, take this news? What seems to be Bertram's plan, as it is reported to us? And then in the Scene 4, what do we find out about Helen's proposed course of action now that Bertram has departed?

13. In Act 3, Scene 5, we meet the Florentine Diana and her widowed mother. These two women interact with Helen, who has recently arrived in Florence. What purpose does this scene serve in the play's developing action? Consider also Scene 7: what plan of action does Helen devise together with Diana and her mother?

14. In Act 3, Scene 6, with Paroles as usual pretending to be the valiant soldier he is not, what scheme do Bertram's friends the two Lords Dumaine devise in order to reveal to him the true nature of Paroles? What's the basis of their own understanding of this rascal? How willing is Bertram at present to be un-deceived about Paroles?

15. In Act 3, Scene 7, Helen elaborates on her plan with Diana and her mother. Consider the various acts of deception going on by now: Helen is plotting to outsmart Bertram,

Paroles is deceiving just about everyone, and Bertram and his friends are playing a trick on Paroles. What makes some of these acts of deception more legitimate than others?

ACT 4

16. In Act 4, Scenes 1 and 3, how does the trick devised by the two Lords Dumaine play out against Paroles? Aside from shamefully promising treasonous information to his supposed captors, what "information" does Paroles offer, and why is this information sought by the captors? What does this character think of his own deceptions and humiliation once he has been exposed -- what is his "philosophy of life" as he now explicates it?

17. In Act 4, Scenes 1 and 3 and in general, we might ask a separate question about Paroles: namely, how does this character compare to other of Shakespeare's comic rascals and villains? If you are familiar with Sir John Falstaff in *I and II Henry IV* (or *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), for example, that character would make a good subject for comparison and contrast.

18. In Act 4, Scene 4 at line 35 and then in Act 5, Scene 1 at line 27, Helen utters the play's title phrase, "All's well that ends well." At one level the phrase's meaning is obvious -- we still use it today when we want to say that some situation was a mess but now everything's fine. But what does it mean in these scenes and with regard to the play as a whole, when you have finished reading it? Does it connote a happy ending with no disturbing loose ends, etc., or do we need to recontextualize it to suit the ambience and action of the present play? Explain.

ACT 5

19. In Act 5, Scene 2, how does first Lavatch and then Lafeu receive the disgraced Paroles at Roussillon? Does this reception confirm the philosophy that this character has already adopted regarding his disgrace (mainly in Act 4, Scene 3)? If so, in what way does it confirm that philosophy?

20. In Act 5, Scene 3, how is Bertram undone by a pair of rings and by Diana's explanations when she arrives on the scene? That is, explain the basic plot mechanics of this scene. How does the king react to the deceptive responses Bertram has given and then to the apparent defiance of Diana when she is challenged to explain herself more fully?

21. In Act 5, Scene 3, when Helen finally enters and proves that she has fulfilled Bertram's two supposedly impossible conditions for gaining his affection, Bertram relents. How do you assess his sincerity or lack thereof when he exclaims, "I'll love her dearly, ever ever dearly" (313)? Does the play leave you feeling that Bertram and Helen are finally a genuine love match of the sort you expect from romantic comedy, or does the play's emphasis lie elsewhere? Explain.

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*. (Norton Tragedies 879-967).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scenes 1-3, what view of Antony emerges, based on what others say about him and on his dialogue with Cleopatra? In particular, how do the first three scenes capture the duality of Antony as a Roman and a man imbued with "Eastern" sensibilities?
2. In Act 1, Scenes 1-3, and then in Scene 5, what complexities in Cleopatra's character emerge, based on her interaction with Antony and her confidantes? To what extent does she understand Roman honor and sensibilities? How does she describe her relationship with Antony, and what seems responsible for the deep bond between them?
3. In Act 1, Scene 4, how does Caesar (Octavius, subsequently called Augustus Caesar) interpret Antony's carryings-on in the East? What complaints does he have about his illustrious fellow triumvir, and why does he suppose Antony will return to his duties in that capacity? In addition, what does Caesar reveal about his understanding of power?

ACT 2

4. In Act 2, Scene 2, when Caesar and Antony confront each other, what grievances and assumptions do they bring to the table? How does Agrippa help resolve the tension between them, at least for the present?
5. In Act 2, Scene 2, how does Enobarbus image forth Cleopatra? What does this description add to the things we have heard and seen about Egypt's Queen so far? On the whole, how does Enobarbus view the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra?

What insights does he have about the reason for the great impact she makes on Antony?

6. In Act 2, Scene 3, Antony speaks to a soothsayer. What does the Soothsayer tell him, and what effect does the information have on him? How does this affect your understanding, if it does, with regard to Antony's character and his motives for dividing his time between the Roman theater of operations and Egypt?

7. In Act 2, Scene 5, how does Cleopatra further our understanding of her affinity with Antony and the Roman world of power and honor that he embodies? In what sense does Cleopatra chafe at the limitations imposed on her by her gender?

8. In Act 2, Scene 5, what political deal does Pompeius (the son of Pompey the Great) make with Caesar and Antony? What does Enobarbus suggest about Pompeius' "deal" and about Antony's reasons for agreeing to marry Caesar's sister Octavia?

9. In Act 2, Scene 7, on the basis of the Triumvirs' celebrations when they seem to have arrived at an understanding, what becomes apparent about the qualities required to hold power in Rome? For example, what character deficiencies does Lepidus reveal? Why does the supposedly honorable Pompeius lose Menas' respect and loyalty at this point? How does Caesar respond to demands that he imbibe as heavily as Antony and the others?

ACT 3

10. In Act 3, Scenes 4-5, with hostilities brewing between Caesar and Antony, how does Antony treat Octavia when she offers to help? Why is Caesar outraged over Antony's latest actions in Egypt? How does he respond to his sister's arrival on an embassy from Antony? Is his characterization of Antony's treatment of her accurate or inaccurate? Discuss.

11. In Act 3, Scene 7, why does Antony decide to fight Caesar by sea instead of by land, where he seems to have the best chance? What role does Cleopatra expect to play in the coming battle, and why? What inferences do Enobarbus and Canidius draw about their great commander at this point? How does Antony's decision affect your own view of his stature as a Roman? Discuss.

12. In Act 3, Scenes 8-10, Caesar and Antony refine their respective strategies. What concerns shape Caesar's decisions? What concerns inform Antony's? What happens in the course of the battle, and how do Antony's closest associates respond to this

disastrous outcome? What is Enobarbus' thinking at this point with respect to his loyalty for Antony?

13. In Act 3, Scene 11, how does Antony himself react to the fiasco that was Actium? How does his self-described role as a world-historical agent or actor make the situation especially intolerable to him? What are his feelings towards Cleopatra at this point? Why is he able to reconcile with her so quickly?

14. In Act 3, Scene 12, what intentions does Caesar manifest regarding how he will treat Antony and Cleopatra? Why does he think he will be successful in carrying out these intentions?

15. In Act 3, Scene 13, how does Antony try to recover his self-command and snatch victory from what seems to others his certain disaster? As Enobarbus watches this attempt at self-recovery unfold, what rapid evolution does his attitude towards Antony undergo? What impact do Antony's words and actions in this scene have on your understanding of him? Discuss.

ACT 4

16. In Act 4, Scenes 1-5, what is Antony's apparent frame of mind as the battle draws near? How does he react to the news that Enobarbus has deserted him?

17. In Act 4, Scene 6, Caesar declares that the "time of universal peace" is near, but in what sense do his speech and conduct in this scene reveal a less than savory side to this man who will usher in the new world order? What resolution does Enobarbus come to, and why?

18. In Act 4, Scenes 10-14, the Egyptian fleet again fails Antony, going over to the Romans. How does the Queen behave upon hearing of this final disaster? What goes wrong with Antony's attempt to die in the true Roman fashion?

19. In Act 4, Scene 15, what pattern again reasserts itself in Antony's reaction to a military failure that involves Cleopatra? Why does Antony believe his present wretchedness will not altogether eclipse his reputation as a great Roman? Does it seem to you that his assumptions are reasonable, or self-deluded? Discuss.

ACT 5

20. In Act 5, Scene 1, how does Caesar take the death of Antony? How does he deal with the fallen Cleopatra? While it's obvious that political expediency is never far from Caesar's mind, does this scene allow you to interpret his actions and words as due to

something more than cunning and hypocrisy? Is the future Augustus a model Roman in his own way? If so, how?

21. In Act 5, Scene 2, in what sense does Cleopatra set about refashioning herself rhetorically as a hero partly in the Roman style? How does she refashion Antony as the noblest Roman and, perhaps, as something grander even than that?

22. In Act 5, Scene 2, why is Cleopatra particularly upset about the prospect that she will be put on display in Rome and that actors, as she says, will "boast my greatness" on the stage? In addition, how does her declared intent to rejoin Antony in death affect the play's tragic dimension? Does it enhance the sense of tragedy, or diminish it? Explain your reasoning on this point.

23. In Act 5, Scene 2, consider the adaptation Shakespeare has made from Plutarch's life of Antony, in which a rustic fellow brings Cleopatra a basket within which are concealed poisonous asps. Why do you suppose Shakespeare introduces a note of comedy or of the bizarre in rendering this scene's dialogue? Does this enhance the scene's tragic overtones in some way, or introduce a note of appropriate complexity? If so, how?

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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Comedy of Errors*. Norton Comedies 245-93).

ACT 1

1. The Norton editors suggest that this farcical play deals with the serious theme of human identity -- on what constitutes it and keeps it constant or changes it, how others partly determine who we are, etc. How does Egeon's sad situation in Act 1, Scene 1 help introduce this theme? In replying, consider how he got into the predicament in which he now stands as well as the nature of that predicament itself.

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus start off the confusion for us (and themselves) at their first meeting. What's the source and type of confusion we come across here? And how does Antipholus of Syracuse react to this confusion? In responding, consider in part his musings about the quest he has been on, the one that has brought him to Ephesus.

ACT 2

3. In Act 2, Scene 1, we meet Adriana, wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, and her sister Luciana. What is Luciana's view of relations between men and women? And what seems to be the ground of Adriana's anxiety about the state of relations between herself and her husband?

4. In Act 2, Scene 2, Antipholus of Syracuse interacts with Dromio of Syracuse, who really is his servant. What confusion unfolds as they speak? Later in the scene, what thoughts cross Antipholus' mind about his strange situation? Consider how he muses about sleeping and waking, transformation, and madness. And how does your perspective as an onlooker compare to such states, if it does?

5. In Act 2, Scene 2, how does Adriana deal with the shock of her confrontation with Antipholus of Syracuse (rather than of Ephesus -- the man who's really her husband)? What surprisingly serious philosophy does she set forth regarding identity in marriage?

ACT 3

6. In Act 3, Scene 1, the featured characters are Antipholus of Ephesus, Dromio of Ephesus, Angelo the goldsmith and Balthasar the merchant. How do Antipholus of Ephesus and his rightful servant handle being refused entrance to their own house? What does Balthasar suggest while this ruckus is going on, and how does Antipholus of Ephesus justify accepting that advice?

7. In Act 3, Scene 2, what complication arises for Antipholus of Syracuse when he speaks with Luciana, the sister of Antipholus of Ephesus? What does Luciana suspect has been going on with him, and how does she take his current declarations to her? In replying, consider the philosophy about relations between men and women that she has set forth here and earlier.

8. In Act 3, Scene 2, in what difficulties does Dromio of Syracuse find himself not only with his master Antipholus of Syracuse but also with Nell (Adriana's cooking-maid)? How does his predicament compare to that of his master? And what seems to be the point of the silly references to geographical locations here -- with Nell's body referenced as a globe containing Ireland, Scotland America, the Indies, and so forth?

ACT 4

9. At the previous scene's end, Angelo the goldsmith gave Antipholus of Syracuse (whom he took to be Antipholus of Ephesus) an expensive piece of jewelry, a chain. This jewelry piece turns out to be an important plot device. What can you say about the way Shakespeare has introduced it and what complications arise here in Act 4, Scene 1,

as well as about the possible symbolic implications of a "chain," considering the play's emphasis on how identity is formed and maintained?

10. In Act 4, Scene 1, what problem is Antipholus of Ephesus having with Angelo the goldsmith? What happens to Antipholus of Ephesus as a result? Also, Dromio of Syracuse returns and infuriates Antipholus of Ephesus with talk about escaping by sea. How do these two developments, taken together, lend an air of consequentiality to the play's action at this point and sharply delineate the quandary in which this particular Antipholus now finds himself?

11. In Act 4, Scene 2, what more do we learn from Adriana's talk with Luciana about the former's true regard for her husband Antipholus of Ephesus? How does she articulate her feelings for him and her sense of the basis of their relationship? How does she respond to news of his arrest?

12. In Act 4, Scene 3, it isn't hard to see the basic problem between Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse -- the usual mix-up of identities -- but what linguistic development adds to the confusion now? In replying, consider Dromio of Syracuse's circumlocution about "Adam" -- why do you suppose Shakespeare makes Dromio speak this way, aside from basic tact about the arrest?

13. In Act 4, Scene 3, consider what Antipholus of Syracuse says to his servant Dromio of Syracuse while the two go about their confused wrangling -- how does Antipholus refine his expression of the predicament he's in? And what seems to be his present plan, such as it is, for getting out of it?

14. In Act 4, Scene 3, what is the Courtesan's analysis of the strange conversation she's just had with Antipholus of Syracuse about the chain that keeps turning up as a plot device? How is this comedy of errors affecting her -- what is she driven to do at present, and why?

15. In Act 4, Scene 4 describe the situation in which both pairs of Antipholuses and Dromios now find themselves. Why might this portion of the play be described as the point where the comic "knot" is about to be tied most tightly? In your response, consider in part Adriana's reasoning and the presence of Doctor Pinch.

ACT 5

16. In Act 5, Scene 1, we have arrived at the place where the comic knot is indeed tied as tightly as can be: describe this "knot" or welter of confusions. What's the situation

now? Explain the mix-ups and misunderstandings that beset the characters at this point.

17. In Act 5, Scene 1, what role do Egeon, the Abbess and the Duke now play in setting matters straight -- in cutting or untying the comic knot?

18. Act 5, Scene 1 ends with a brief conversation between the two Dromios. These servants are rather of the sort one finds in the ancient comedies of the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence, from whom Shakespeare seems to have borrowed some of his stock comic moves. What significance would you say the two Dromios have held for the play -- for its action and in relation to the predicament of the two masters, Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus?

19. General question. *The Comedy of Errors* is an early effort by Shakespeare. Do you read it as mainly a farce or do you (like our editors) see it as more complex and worth putting in conjunction with the later comedies? What principle, if any, is really asserted or explored here? In other words, does it compare favorably to any of the later comedies? If so, which one or ones, and why, or why not?

20. General question. Much has been made of the notion of probability in drama -- Aristotle, after all, wrote that a play's action ought to follow what we today would call the dictates of probability and necessity. We know that the Ephesian and Syracusan Antipholuses and Dromios look almost alike, but how probable is it -- how likely -- that anyone who really knew a pair of twins (or even one of them) well would mistake one for the other? Is that a realistic premise? Does it matter? Why or why not?

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CORIOLANUS, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Coriolanus* (Norton Tragedies 969-1056).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what perspectives are we offered by the ordinary citizens and by the patrician (nobleman) Menenius on social class and politics? How does Menenius' analogy of the "body politic" help him to advance his case?

2. In Act 1, Scene 1, what can we infer about Caius Martius (later called Coriolanus) from his comportment and words towards the plebeians (common citizens) of Rome? If his state of error or flawed quality is becoming apparent, what is it?

3. In Act 1, Scene 3, Caius Martius' mother Volumnia and his wife Virgilia discuss him and his young son. What insights do these two women provide us about Caius Martius and about the temperament and bearing of a Roman matron ?
4. In Act 1, Scenes 4-10, how does Caius Martius manage his battle duties, and how does he handle the praise that comes his way in the struggle's aftermath?
5. In Act 1, Scenes 2, 9, and 11, we catch glimpses of Caius Martius' Volscian opponent, Tullus Aufidius. How does he size up his Roman enemy Caius, and what does Aufidius tell us will be his strategy for defeating Caius? To what extent does Aufidius delineated an ethic or set of values to set against those of the Romans?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scenes 1-2, what reception does Caius Martius (from 1.10 onwards given the honorary name "Coriolanus") get when he returns to Rome along with his fellow Romans Cominius and Lartius? How does he at first react to the news that he is to be made consul?
7. In Act 2, Scenes 1-2, what role do Tribunes of the People Brutus and Sicinius play in setting up Caius Martius Coriolanus for failure? What is their plan to bring him down, and what principle or ethos seems to underlie their determination to do so?
8. In Act 2, Scenes 2-3, how does Caius Martius Coriolanus process and deal with his task of standing exposed before the people to seek the consulship? Why must he undergo this ordeal in the first place? What turns the people against him even after they seem to have accepted his suit?

ACT 3

9. In Act 3, Scene 1, what complaints does Caius Martius Coriolanus rehearse against the plebeians and their representatives, the tribunes? What principles of statecraft does he set forth in denouncing them? What is the result of this lashing out?
10. In Act 3, Scene 2, how do Volumnia and Menenius somewhat expand the narrow definition of "Romanness" that Caius Martius Coriolanus has apparently held all his life? In other words, what arguments do they use to fight his intransigence when it comes to the common people and his own honor?
11. In Act 3, Scene 3, how and why does Caius Martius Coriolanus fail in his attempt to temporize with the plebeians (common people) now that he has lost their favor? What do Brutus and Sicinius have to do with Caius' failure?

ACT 4

12. In Act 4, Scenes 4-5, describe Caius Martius Coriolanus' entry into the Volscian city Antium (4.4) and then his meeting with Aufidius (4.5). What does Caius expect will happen, and why? And in what regard does the Volscian Aufidius hold his old enemy Caius, now that the man has turned his back on Rome?

13. In Act 4, Scene 6, in what state of affairs do we find Rome and Roman public opinion once it becomes known that Caius Martius Coriolanus and Aufidius are marching there at the head of powerful armies? (If you are presenting in class on this question, tell us a bit about warfare in Roman times: what would have been the typical way of taking down an enemy army and city?)

14. In Act 4, Scene 7, What becomes still clearer about Aufidius' estimation of and plans for his former enemy Caius Martius Coriolanus? How does he analyze the career of Caius thus far, and what future does he project for him? Characterize Aufidius' motivation with regard to this way of perceiving and treating Caius.

ACT 5

15. In Act 5, Scenes 1-2, Cominius and Menenius get a chilly reception from Caius Martius Coriolanus, but in Act 5, Scene 3 the embittered warrior relents. By what process does this change come about: how do Volumnia and Virgilia succeed where the men failed?

16. In Act 5, Scenes 5-6, how does Aufidius work Caius Martius Coriolanus' personal destruction? What political principle does Aufidius embody as opposed to Caius himself? In what sense has the latter, while ostensibly the noblest of Romans, failed to show sufficient self-awareness of Roman values; to what error or flaw, that is, does Caius owe his status as the play's tragic figure?

17. General question: T.S. Eliot remarked in his essay collection *The Sacred Wood* that while *Coriolanus* is by no means among Shakespeare's most appreciated plays, it is nonetheless among the most properly "classical" dramas that the playwright composed, far more so than, say, *Hamlet*. What, then, constitutes the classical quality and design of this play? Consider the representation of the protagonist Caius Martius Coriolanus as well as the play's basic structure and action.

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AS YOU LIKE IT, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *As You Like It*. (Norton Comedies 621-87).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, how might we take Oliver's disposition and his treatment of his younger brother Orlando as a paradigm for the way this play represents "the bad guys," or, if you prefer the metaphysical term, *evil*? How much power does Oliver have? Why does he dislike his brother so much? How does he respond when Orlando challenges his authority?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, what contrast does the relationship between Rosalind and Celia present to that between Oliver and Orlando in the first scene? What is the basis of the two women's friendship? What does Touchstone's presence add to our introduction to Rosalind and Celia?

3. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does the text describe the beginning of Rosalind's and Orlando's love for each other? How does the "wrestling match" between Orlando and the Duke's man Charles figure in this process, and to what extent should we analogize this contest with love as a kind of struggle or contest?

4. In Act 1, Scene 3, Duke Frederick imperiously banishes Rosalind from his court. What is his reason for doing this -- what logic does he urge upon Celia to justify his decision? How credible a villain does the Duke seem at this point?

5. In Act 1, Scene 3, what plan do Rosalind and Celia devise to escape the wrath of Duke Frederick? Why does Rosalind decide that disguising herself as a young man would be best -- what does this decision suggest about the play's attitude towards traditional gender assumptions?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scenes 1 and 4, we are introduced to the banished Duke Senior and to the shepherds Corin and Silvius. What impression do these scenes give us of the Forest of Arden? How close does the Forest come to being an idyllic pastoral space? What concerns beset Duke Senior and the shepherds, respectively?

7. In Act 2, Scenes 3, 6, and 7, how does Adam both assist and burden Orlando? What is the significance of Adam's biblical name in the context of the old servant's relationship to Orlando?

8. In Act 2, Scenes 5 and 7, Jacques is at his finest. In Scene 7, why is he so impressed with the conversation he and Touchstone have just had? As for Jacques' description of the Seven Ages of Man from lines 139-66 of Scene 7, how much faith should we put in his characterizations -- is Jacques' perspective trustworthy? What is the value of his melancholy observations in such an otherwise sunny play?

ACT 3

9. In Act 3, Scene 2, Touchstone engages Corin the shepherd in a debate over the relative merits of court and country life. How does Touchstone assess the life shepherds lead and the "manners" they exhibit? How does Corin respond to Touchstone's arguments against his way of life and his outlook? Does Shakespeare seem to be taking sides, or is the debate presented neutrally? Discuss.

10. Act 3, Scene 2 is structured around a series of pairings between key characters: Touchstone and Corin, Touchstone and Rosalind, Celia and Rosalind, Orlando and Jacques, and -- most significantly -- Orlando and Rosalind. Examine this last pairing: what kind of dialog does Rosalind (as Ganymed) engage in with the "love-shak'd" Orlando? What does "Ganymed" offer to do in order to cure Orlando of his passion? Why doesn't she just reveal who she is at once -- what is the value of this sort of play-acting and dialog on the subject of courtship?

11. Act 3, Scene 2 is structured around a series of pairings as mentioned in the preceding question. Choose any pair of dialog partners except Orlando and Rosalind, and discuss the significance of their conversation in light of the play's main themes (country versus court; love versus melancholia and cynicism; etc.).

12. In Act 3, Scene 3, Touchstone determines to marry the shepherdess Audrey, and his conversation with her makes yet another "pairing" of diverse characters. What is the basis of Touchstone's match with Audrey? In what ways are they similar, and what are their differences? How might they be a good match, in spite of the gap in understanding that divides them?

13. In Act 3, Scenes 4-5, Rosalind and Celia hide, and overhear poor Silvius courting the shepherdess Phebe. What does Rosalind expect to be her reward for eavesdropping? What role does she play when she intervenes in the scene that Corin had called "a pageant truly play'd / Between the pale complexion of true love / And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain" (3.4.52-55)?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scene 1, Rosalind meets and spars with Jacques while she is waiting for Orlando to show up for his "lesson." How does Jacques describe the benefits of his outlook on life to Rosalind? How much value does she see in what he tells her? Do you take her words as definitive regarding Jacques' presence in the play? Why or why not?

15. In Act 4, Scene 1, Rosalind (as Ganymed playing Rosalind, that is) schools Orlando in female ways and wiles, and then, when he's gone, she confesses to Celia how deeply she is in love with him. Why is she keeping up this disguise -- what is to be gained from such make-believe sessions about courtship? How well is Orlando doing as a student in such matters so far?

16. In Act 4, Scene 3, Phebe's chiding letter arrives in the hand of Silvius, and Oliver makes his entrance. How does Oliver explain his sudden conversion from one of the play's two villains into Orlando's benign messenger? How does he describe Orlando's rescue of him in the forest? How does he know "Ganymed" is not male, and what seems to be his attitude towards Rosalind's acting the part of a young man?

ACT 5

17. In Act 5, Scene 2, Ganymed/Rosalind promises to sort out the play's love matches by a kind of "magic." But while Silvius & Phebe, and Rosalind and Orlando, are still bound up by resistance and disguise, respectively, what ideal of love does Silvius set forth? To what extent is this view privileged in *As You Like It*? What does Rosalind's refrain "And so am I for no woman" connote in this light -- how does he/she relate to the ideal Silvius has proclaimed?

18. In Act 5, Scene 3, two young boys ("Pages") sing a song that begins "It was a lover and his lass." To what extent does this song relate to the coming resolution of the play or comment on what has gone before? Time permitting, to what degree do other songs in this play (Amiens' "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Who doth ambition shun" along with Jacques comic overturning of it at 2.5; Amiens' "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" at 2.7; the 2nd Lord's "What shall he have?" at 4.2; or Hymen's "Wedding is great Juno's crown" at 5.4) relate to the main action?

19. In Act 5, Scene 4, Touchstone explains how a courtly quarrel should proceed, basing his account on his own experience. How does this famous account (usually referred to as "Touchstone's quarrel") function structurally and thematically at this point, as we await the resolution Rosalind has promised?

20. In Act 5, Scene 4, Hymen (the God of marriage) intervenes. What does Hymen decree for the four couples gathered? Why is it appropriate that he (and not Rosalind) should "bar confusion" and "make conclusion" (125-26) of the play's events?

21. In Act 5, Scene 4, after Hymen has pronounced his lines, Jacques de Boyes (brother of Orlando and Oliver) enters and informs everyone that Duke Frederick has (like Oliver earlier) been transformed from a villain into good man and has decided to hand over his usurped powers to the rightful ruler, Duke Senior. How did this change take place? Why does it make sense that villainy should be so easily dispensed with in this comic play -- what is the usual function of villains in a Shakespearean comedy?

22. In the Epilogue, Rosalind has a special request to make of the audience. What is her request -- how is she drawing them into the action?

23. General question: how would you compare this play's comic resolution (the nature of it and the means by which it is effected) to that of any one of Shakespeare's other comedies that you have studied?

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CYMBELINE, KING OF BRITAIN, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Cymbeline, King of Britain*. (Norton Romances 273-364)

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, we are introduced to Cymbeline and Imogen. How does their discord (its causes and the manner of their interaction) compare to that of Lear and Cordelia in *King Lear*? Moreover, what other similarities and/or differences can you find between the current play's opening scene and the beginning of *King Lear*?

2. In Act 1, Scenes 1-2, Cymbeline's Queen converses with Imogen, and we meet the Queen's son Cloten. In what regard are these two held, and why? What difference between the mother and the son begins to appear even at this early point? But in what sense do they resemble each other as well?

3. In Act 1, Scene 4, how does Posthumus' "ring wager" come about? What are the terms of the wager between Jachimo and Posthumus? While such a bet no doubt seems unfair and even absurd to modern sensibilities, on what grounds might a medieval or early modern man have defended it?

4. In Act 1, Scene 5, how does she try to advance her plot against Imogen's match with Posthumus? What does she ask of the doctor, Cornelius, and how does he respond in word and deed? What is the Queen's use for Pisanio at this point?

5. In Act 1, Scene 6, how does Jachimo attempt to traduce Imogen? What virtues does she demonstrate in responding as she does? Based on all you have seen of Imogen thus far in Act 1, what seems to be the guiding principle by which she speaks and acts?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scenes 1 and 3, what anxieties and ambitions does Cloten manifest in his conversations with the Lords, with Cymbeline and the Queen, and finally with Imogen? How does he understand his own situation at Court and with regard to Imogen, whose affections he covets?

7. In Act 2, Scene 2, what details does Jachimo gather in order to convince Posthumus that Imogen has been unfaithful? What significance do Jachimo's classical allusions (to Tarquin, Tereus and Philomela) add to this wicked scene?

8. In Act 2, Scene 4, Jachimo lays out his "evidence" against Imogen's chastity. What makes the pitch effective as a piece of rhetoric? What weakness in Posthumus does Jachimo shape his unveiling of the evidence to exploit? What general view of women does Posthumus proclaim by the fifth scene?

ACT 3

9. In Act 3, Scene 1, what different attitudes do Cymbeline, the Queen, and Cloten take up towards Augustus Caesar's demand that the Britons pay tribute? What relationship obtains between Cymbeline and the Roman ambassador Lucius, and what seems to be the underlying reason for this relationship? If you are presenting on this question, please add some very brief background on relations between the Romans and the Britons around the time frame Shakespeare references (one helpful page is Brittania.com's).

10. In Act 3, Scenes 2 and 4, how does Imogen react first to the news that Posthumus is in Wales (Cambria) at Milford-Haven and then to the knowledge that he believes she has been false to him? What is Pisanio's plan to redeem the situation, or at least to avoid the worst that might happen? How does the Imogen react to this plan?

11. In Act 3, Scene 3, we meet Belarius and the two young men he has raised, Guiderius and his younger brother Arviragus. What is Belarius' story -- why was he banished?

What sort of life do he and the two young men lead, and in what setting? In what ways do their perspectives on this situation differ? How does this new "Belarius subplot" relate to the main one?

12. In Act 3, Scene 5, how does Cymbeline react to the news that his daughter Imogen has fled the court? What more do we learn about the Queen and Cloten's respective plans in this scene? In particular, what is Cloten's rationale for the attempt he plans to make against Imogen?

13. In Act 3, Scene 6, how do Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus receive Imogen, disguised as "Fidele"? How does this reception deepen the contrast already established between the existence these three men lead and the life others lead at the court of Cymbeline?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scenes 2 and 4, how do Arviragus and Guiderius show their "quality" as young men of aristocratic birth? What does Belarius apparently think of this manifestation of nobility, and what concerns him about the bold deed of Guiderius? To what extent does the play as a whole (up to this section) validate the idea that noble birth should be taken as a promise of innate goodness?

15. In Act 4, Scene 2, what happens to Imogen as "Fidele" when she drinks the potion that Pisanio gave her some time ago? When she awakens to find a headless body next to her, what confusions set in that the rest of the play's unfolding will have to resolve?

ACT 5

16. In Act 5, Scenes 1-3, what role do Belarius, Arviragus and Guiderius play in saving Cymbeline and Britain from defeat by the Romans? What motivates Posthumus to join with these three against the Roman army?

17. In Act 5, Scene 5, Posthumus' departed parents and brothers appear to him in a dream. What is the substance and import of his dream? How do the shades who appear to Posthumus in his sleep address Jupiter, and how does the God respond to their address? What does Posthumus learn, if anything, from the dream?

18. In Act 5, Scene 6, by what means is the identity of Imogen and Posthumus finally revealed to Cymbeline and the others at court? What specific device does Shakespeare employ to accomplish this revelation?

19. In Act 5, Scene 6, what further difficulty does this discovery lead to with respect to Belarius and Guiderius, and how is the new problem resolved? What about the fate of Lucius the virtuous Roman, and the devious Jachimo -- what happens to them?

20. Act 5, Scene 6 concludes with Cymbeline's commands, "Laud we the gods, / And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils / From our blest altars / . . . Let / A Roman and a British ensign wave / Friendly together" (477-81). Contrast the ending of *King Lear* with the concluding scene of *Cymbeline*: what makes it possible for the latter play (a romance) to end with forgiveness, concord, and security while the tragedy *King Lear* ends in crushed hopes and death? What assumptions are operative in *Cymbeline* that are not viable in *King Lear*?

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HAMLET, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. (Norton Tragedies 323-424).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, Marcellus and Bernardo looked to Hamlet's friend Horatio to interpret the apparition they have seen. What assumptions does Horatio make, and what leads him to make such assumptions?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, Hamlet speaks with bitter irony to Gertrude and Claudius. So far, what is apparent about Claudius from his remarks? To what extent does the King "speak reason" to a grieving son, and to what extent does his speech reflect upon him in ways he may not recognize?

3. In Act 1, Scene 2, Hamlet offers a soliloquy (i.e. speaks to himself) after he talks with Claudius and Gertrude. What seems to be his state of mind -- what lies at the bottom of his depression? Does the famous "Oedipal interpretation" of the play begin to earn its stars at this point? If so, how?

4. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Hamlet receive the news of his father's appearance as a ghost to Horatio and the two watchmen?

5. In Act 1, Scene 3, Ophelia first listens to her brother's departing sermon about chastity and politics, and then faces her father Polonius. How does this counselor understand Hamlet's attentions to Ophelia? What advice does he give his daughter?

6. In Act 1, Scenes 4-5, the ghost beckons Hamlet to a private audience. On what grounds might the ghost's demands be considered reasonable? On what grounds might they be considered unreasonable? (Is it appropriate for a Christian to take revenge? Where does the revenge code come from?)

7. In Act 1, Scene 5, follow Hamlet's response to what he has just seen and heard. How much of this response do you consider appropriate in the circumstances and how much is jarring, contradictory, or unintentionally revealing? Explain your rationale.

ACT 2

8. In Act 2, Scene 1, Polonius keeps tabs on Laertes and is sure Hamlet has gone mad for love of Ophelia. Polonius is often portrayed to match Hamlet's estimation of him as a "foolish, prating knave." How would you stage this character, and why? (You might also consider Act 2, scene two, where Polonius lays out a plan for Claudius.)

9. In Act 2, Scene 2, evidently without prompting from Polonius, Claudius and Gertrude summon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to sound out the cause of Hamlet's disturbance. What does Claudius suspect -- why should he be so concerned about Hamlet's behavior?

10. In Act 2, Scene 2, Voltimand informs Claudius that the King of Norway has rebuked young Fortinbras for trying to get his hereditary lands back from Denmark. What is the rest of the news from Norway? What does Claudius' response to this news suggest about his powers of statecraft?

11. In Act 2, Scene 2, Hamlet enters reading, and Polonius questions him. Then Rosencrantz and Guildenstern try their luck at getting the Prince to talk. Hamlet obviously knows he's being spied upon, and so he manipulates his auditors. But to what extent, and where, does he perhaps reveal more about his mental state than he knows? Are there some unintended ironies and evidence of obsession here? Explain.

12. In Act 2, Scene 2, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Hamlet that his favorite acting troupe is on the way to Elsinore. What connections does the Prince begin to make between drama and the rest of life? And how does his taste for speeches about the Trojan War reflect on his own situation and underlying motives? (Consider "Pyrrhus" as a possible point of comparison.)

13. At the end of Act 2, Scene 2, Hamlet (alone) reproaches himself for his failure to act even though he (unlike an actor) has real-life motivation for taking revenge. But what

doubts about his course of action does Hamlet betray? Where do these doubts seem to have come from -- have the audience been adequately prepared to hear them? Explain.

ACT 3

14. In Act 3, Scene 1, Hamlet speaks his famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy. He has already rejected suicide as un-Christian, so what exactly is the point of this speech -- what does he admit? Does that admission entirely account for his failure to act so far? Explain.

15. In Act 3, Scene 1, Polonius and Claudius conceal themselves to hear Hamlet's conversation with Ophelia. The scene has been variously played, based on the director's surmises about what Hamlet knows and when. How would you suggest an actor play the scene -- to what extent does Hamlet's conversation with Ophelia seem sincere? When, if at all, does he become aware that he is being spied upon? Is he carried away, utterly sane, or somewhere in between? Explain with specific reference to the text.

16. In Act 3, Scene 2, why should there be a "dumb show" preceding the main play *The Murder of Gonzago* (or, in Hamlet's revision, *The Mouse Trap*)? Why would this representational doubling up be the most effective way to "catch the conscience of the king"? Why does Hamlet need this confirmation anyhow? (You may want to refer to the end of Act 2, scene 2 for Hamlet's explanation.)

17. In Act 3, Scene 3, Claudius (having decided to send Hamlet to England), privately assesses his spiritual state. Hamlet decides that killing the King just now would amount to "hire and salary, not revenge." Based on what the audience hears, is Hamlet correct -- what has Claudius come to understand about his spiritual condition? How does this scene also represent a clash between the play's revenge plot and its Christian overtones?

18. In Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet confronts Gertrude, mistakenly killing Polonius in the process. What accusations does Hamlet level against his mother? Are they accurate? How does Gertrude respond to them? Also, how much of this scene, as you would play it, has to do with Hamlet's private obsessions, and how much of it has to do with matters of marriage and state? (Consider the appearance of the Ghost in this regard.)

19. At the end of Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet at first demands that Gertrude avoid Claudius and not reveal to the King that her son is "but mad in craft" rather than actually insane, but then he changes his mind and advises her to go to the King. What seems to be Hamlet's strategy at this point -- how is he trying to outmaneuver Claudius?

ACT 4

20. In Act 4, Scenes 1-4, Claudius deals with the aftermath of Polonius' death, sending Hamlet off to England with a sealed death sentence. In scene 4, Hamlet catches sight of Fortinbras' troops on their way to war in Poland. What insight does Hamlet gather from this incident -- is the resolution he draws from it convincing, or unconvincing? Explain.

21. In Act 4, Scenes 5-7, Ophelia's madness is on display and then she drowns in a brook. What has caused Ophelia's insanity, and why do you suppose it takes the particular form it does -- bawdy songs and obsession with the symbolism of flowers? Also, why is it appropriate that Gertrude should offer such a beautiful, elaborate description of Ophelia's death? (Act 4.7.166-83 is one of Shakespeare's finest flights of verse, aptly memorialized in Millais' Pre-Raphaelite painting "Ophelia.")

22. In Act 4, Scenes 5-7, Laertes bursts into Elsinore Castle demanding revenge for his father's death, and Claudius steers him towards what appears to be a foolproof plot against Hamlet's life. How has Laertes (here and elsewhere) served as a foil for Hamlet's character and his relationship to the heroic revenge code?

ACT 5

23. In Act 5, Scene 1, Hamlet, having made his escape at sea and been set ashore by pirates, now joins Horatio in an extended and partly comic confrontation with a punctilious gravedigger ("First Clown") and several visual reminders of death (*memento mori*). In what sense does this scene advance the play's action -- at least indirectly -- rather than just amounting to comic relief? What insight does Hamlet draw from talking to the gravedigger, meditating upon the skull of "poor Yorick," etc.?

24. In Act 5, Scene 1, Ophelia's funeral party arrives at the cemetery, and Hamlet competes with Laertes for the title of "Denmark's most ridiculous grieving person." Aside from bringing the major characters together, what does this scene accomplish structurally and thematically?

25. In Act 5, Scene 2, Hamlet explains to Horatio how he has managed to return to Denmark. If the beginning of this scene marks Hamlet's recognition (in Aristotelian terms, his *anagnorisis*), what is that recognition and where does it seem to have come from? How do Hamlet's utterances about "divinity" (providence) reflect on his adherence to an ancient revenge code that demands blood for blood?

26. In Act 5, Scene 2, the foppish courtier Osric makes the necessary sporting challenge, and Hamlet accepts. To what extent does the succession of events leading to four

deaths (Gertrude, Laertes, Claudius, and Hamlet) reconcile the revenge plot to Christian misgivings about revenge and Christian insistence on providence as the ruling order?

27. In Act 5, Scene 2, Fortinbras (having finished his bloody task in Poland), marches into Elsinore takes command of the situation -- what does he make of the carnage that greets him? Why is it appropriate that Horatio should insist on a public display of the corpses to accompany his explanation of the tragic events?

28. In Act 5, Scene 2, theater-goers and critics have long noted the bizarre quality of *Hamlet's* final scene -- aptly embodied in the line "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead" (Tom Stoppard has written a play by that title, starring none other than "R and G.") How do you account for such a comic line at the culmination of a tragedy?

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JULIUS CAESAR, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Julius Caesar* (Norton Tragedies 257-321).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, a cobbler parries wits with the tribunes Murellus and Flavius. What is the subject of their conversation? What atmosphere surrounds them as they talk in the streets of Rome -- what is the occasion for the large gathering of common people (i.e. plebeians) like the cobbler? What accusations does Murellus make against these commoners, and what is his own attitude towards Julius Caesar?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, we are introduced to Caesar at a few points. What is the "great man" like -- what attributes does Shakespeare apparently mean to foreground? For example, what do you infer from the way Caesar handles the soothsayer's urgent cry about "the Ides of March," and what impression does Caesar's concern about Cassius make?

3. In Act 1, Scene 2, Cassius sounds out Brutus on the issue of Caesar's increasing power. Consider his statements as persuasive acts, as "rhetoric": what specific images, insinuations, and arguments does he set before Brutus to win him over? What seems to motivate Cassius to oppose Caesar? What assumptions does he make about his friend Brutus?

4. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Brutus receive and respond to Cassius' attempt to enlist him in a conspiracy against Caesar? What qualities does he show that set him apart

from Cassius? Is there anything disturbing or incongruous or revealing about his responses to Cassius? If so, what?

5. In Act 1, Scene 3, Cassius goes to work on Casca (with whom he had spoken earlier as well, in Scene 2). Taking into account Casca's words in Scenes 2 and 3, characterize this conspirator: what seems to his particular attitude about current conditions in Rome, about the point of conspiring against Caesar, and drawing Brutus into the plan?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, what feelings and thoughts occur to the solitary Brutus as he considers what to do? What reasoning process does he employ to convince himself that Caesar, his friend and benefactor, must die? What reflections does he make regarding the more general subject of "conspiracy" -- what seems to be his attitude towards conspiracy in general?

7. In Act 2, Scene 1, Brutus is introduced by Cassius to the other conspirators: Casca, Decius, Cinna, Metellus Cimber, and Trebonius (Caius Ligarius enters later). What problem does Brutus identify with the oath they want to swear? How does he handle the call to do away with Mark Antony, and how does he describe the actual violence that must be done to Caesar? Is his description realistic, or naive? Explain.

8. In Act 2, Scene 1, after speaking with the conspirators and before convincing Caius Ligarius to join the cause, Brutus returns home and faces his wife Portia's concern. What has she been observing of late about her husband? What appeal does she make to get him to confide in her? What image or impression of this famous Roman couple does this brief scene provide?

9. In Act 2, Scene 1, Brutus speaks briefly to Caius Ligarius and has no trouble convincing him to participate in the conspiracy. The language they employ is drawn from medicine: they speak of sickness and health. At what other points do those terms appear in the play? What is their thematic significance?

10. In Act 2, Scene 2, what seems to be Caesar's frame of mind when he hears of Calphurnia's nightmare and gets bad news from his augurers? How genuine do you find his bravery in the face of these tidings? How does Decius change his mind and convince him to go to the Capitol? On the whole, what image of Caesar prevails in these brief moments before he goes to his death?

11. In Act 2, Scenes 3-4, Artemidorus (a rhetorician), alone, reads a letter of warning he intends to hand Caesar, and Portia briefly meets the Soothsayer Caesar had earlier

called "a dreamer." How does the dialog heighten the suspense in advance of the next scene? How do Portia's words, in particular, affect your perspective on the murder to come?

ACT 3

12. In Act 3, Scene 1, Caesar is cut down by the daggers of Brutus and his fellow conspirators. What device do the killers employ to isolate and transfix their target? How well does Caesar live up to his star billing in this world-historical event -- how well, that is, does he die? What do Brutus and Cassius respectively say and do right after the murder and before Antony's servant enters at line 122?

13. In Act 3, Scene 1, Antony sends word by a servant that he wants to talk with Brutus and understand why he has killed their mutual friend, Caesar. What more does Antony ask of Brutus, and how does he take advantage of Brutus' honorable character in the conversation that follows through line 253?

14. In Act 3, Scene 1, what does Antony reveal to be his true motive in the soliloquy (lines 254-75) that follows his conversation with the conspirators? Does this soliloquy make you think the worse of Antony, or does he have some measure of right on his side? When you hear the word "Roman," what qualities come to mind first? What kind of "Roman" is this complex, cunning Antony?

15. In Act 3, Scene 2, what defense does Brutus make of what he and the other conspirators have done? Upon what principles does he say they have acted? How well does his rhetoric succeed with his audience of commoners or plebeians -- what do they appear to want by the time he finishes speaking?

16. In Act 3, Scene 2, how does Antony, speaking in the wake of Brutus, persuade the commoners in favor of Caesar and against the conspirators? What specific appeals does he make to the people? What devices or tricks of rhetoric does he employ to hold their attention and win their hearts? By the end of his speech, what has he accomplished -- what is the situation now?

ACT 4

17. In Act 4, Scene 1, Antony confers with Octavius (the future Emperor Augustus) and the third member of the Second Triumvirate (43-33 BCE), Lepidus. What new facet of himself does Antony reveal in the course of his discussion with Octavius? How does the latter react to Antony's characterization of Lepidus, and how does Antony respond? Finally, what is the plan against the conspirators at this point?

18. In Act 4, Scenes 2-3, what is the cause of the argument between Cassius and Brutus? What injustice has Cassius committed? How does Cassius manage to heal the rift between them -- on what grounds does he appeal to Brutus, and why is his attempt so successful?

19. In Act 4, Scene 3, how does Brutus take the news of his wife Portia's suicide? What reasons does he give for his decision to reject Cassius' battle tactics and instead to meet the enemy forthrightly at Philippi? Why does Caesar's ghost appear to Brutus towards the end of the scene -- what, if anything, may we infer from this unearthly visit about the rightness of Brutus' cause so far and about the value of his plans for the future?

ACT 5

20. In Act 5, Scene 1, describe the brief parley or meeting between the forces of Antony and Octavius and Brutus and Cassius: what charges and counter-charges do they level against one another? What philosophical meditation does Brutus share afterwards when he is alone with Cassius? How do you interpret what Brutus says at this point -- what does he plan to do if he is threatened with capture?

21. In Act 5, Scene 3, what military error has Brutus committed, according to Titinius? How is that error symptomatic of Brutus' mistaken assumptions throughout the play? Cassius orders his slave Pindarus to run him through with the sword he used to kill Caesar. What are Brutus' reflections when he learns that his friend is dead?

22. In Act 5, Scene 5, what parting thoughts does Brutus offer about his course of action as he prepares to run upon his sword? Why does he think that he, and not Antony and Octavius, will be best remembered? A short while later, how does Antony memorialize his now-departed enemy?

23. In Act 5, Scene 5 and in general, since it is really Brutus and not Caesar who is the play's protagonist, how would you characterize Brutus' tragedy? What accounts for his failure as a political actor? To what extent do his Roman virtues redeem him? To what extent does he attain to tragic insight into the causes of his failure to defeat "Caesarism" and re-establish Republican virtues?

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THE FIRST PART OF HENRY IV, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* (Norton Histories 595-672).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what problems does Henry IV (Bullingbrook from *Richard II*) enunciate at the play's beginning? How does he mean to resolve them, and what is keeping him from carrying out his resolutions? How would you describe the pattern of his reign so far?
2. In Act 1, Scene 2, what concerns seem most proper to Sir John Falstaff, the play's resident Lord of Misrule? What is he complaining about? What plot do Falstaff's friends set in motion against him, and why?
3. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Prince Harry regard Falstaff and his other low-ranking friends at the Boar's Head Tavern? How does the Prince respond to Falstaff's jests? Why is he hanging around with such rascals in the first place, and what plan does he apparently have in mind for the future, now that his father is king and great events are in the offing?
4. In Act 1, Scene 3, we are introduced to Harry Hotspur, Henry Percy's (Northumberland's) son. What seem to be Hotspur's characteristics? In what sense is Hotspur admirable, and in what sense flawed? What attitude does he take up towards the King and towards his familial elders Worcester and Northumberland?

ACT 2

5. In Act 2, Scenes 1-2, how do the robbery and mock robbery play out? How does Falstaff treat the people he robs -- what does he say to them, and what do you draw from such comments regarding Falstaff's self-image? How does he behave at the moment when he, in turn, is robbed of his spoils?
6. In Act 2, Scene 4, what additional things become apparent about Hotspur? What attributes does Hotspur's wife, Kate (Lady Percy), possess? How well does Hotspur relate to her? Why, for example, does he choose to hold back information from her about his key role in the rebellion against King Henry IV?
7. In Act 2, Scene 5, what is Prince Harry up to at the beginning of the scene? Why does he associate with the Tavern's "drawers" -- what does he learn from them? Why does he make fun of the drawer Francis -- how does Prince Harry's remark at lines 5.2.86-88

("I am now of all humours ...") perhaps explain the motivation for his jests regarding that common laborer?

8. In Act 2, Scene 5, what accusations does Falstaff level at Prince Harry and others upon re-entering the Boar's Head Tavern after the robbery? How does Falstaff describe what happened during the robbery at Gadshill? How does Prince Harry undercut Falstaff's lies, and what do Falstaff's attempts to vindicate himself reveal about his outlook on life?

9. In Act 2, Scene 5, what is the serious point underlying Prince Harry's comic play-acting the roles of King and Crown Prince (which latter, of course, he actually is) with Falstaff? Moreover, how does the play-acting carry darker undertones respecting Falstaff's tenure as "Lord of Misrule" in Prince Harry's life?

10. In Act 2, Scene 5, towards the end of the scene, how does Prince Harry deal with the lawmen who come looking for Falstaff because of his thievery at Gadshill? What promise does he subsequently make Falstaff about his place in the war against the rebels besetting Henry IV, and how does Falstaff react to that promise?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, what do the rebels discuss? Why don't Hotspur and Owen Glyndwr get along -- what differences in outlook and personal expression keep them apart? What attributes does Glyndwr possess that differ markedly from Hotspur's?

12. In Act 3, Scene 2, what reproaches does Henry IV make against his son Prince Harry, heir to the throne? What wisdom does he try to impart to the young man, and what unsavory comparison does he make between Prince Harry and King Richard II, whom Henry deposed back when he was still called "Bullingbrook"? How does Harry console and re-inspirit his father: how does he cast his imperfect past and what promises does he make for the present and future?

13. In Act 3, Scene 3, what is the nature of Falstaff's quarrel with the Hostess and with Prince Harry at the Boar's Head Tavern? What is Falstaff's mood on the eve of the fight against the rebels Glyndwr, Hotspur, and others?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scene 1, what is happening on the rebel side? How does Hotspur take the bad news he receives? How does he deal with the praise that Richard Vernon heaps

upon Prince Harry, and what does Hotspur's attitude towards his rival reveal about him?

15. In Act 4, Scene 2, what has Falstaff done in the wake of the Prince's procuring for him "a charge of foot" back at 3.3.171? How does Falstaff apparently construe the significance of war? In what sense does his standing in the play begin to decline at this point?

16. In Act 4, Scene 3, how does Hotspur describe his kinsmen's role in helping Henry Bullingbrook depose Richard II and become King Henry IV? How does Hotspur characterize King Henry's reign up to the present time? How do the rebels' prospects look at this point, just before their direct meeting with the King in the next Act?

ACT 5

17. In Act 5, Scene 1, how does King Henry IV counter the rebels' interpretation of the events leading to the present's imminent hostilities? What offer does the King extend to those massed to fight against him? Does it seem realistic? Why or why not? How does Prince Harry treat the reputation of Hotspur (here called Henry Percy)?

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, what "catechism" (see 5.1.127-39, "'Tis not due yet ...") does Falstaff offer regarding the concept of chivalric honor? Why does he call it a catechism? How does his speech reflect upon or connect to the chivalric meeting we have just seen between the King, Prince Harry, and the enemies against whom they are about to do battle?

19. In Act 5, Scene 2, why does Worcester keep the knowledge of the King's offer from Hotspur? What is Hotspur's present attitude towards his rival, Prince Harry? How good a rhetorician or public speaker is Hotspur on the eve of battle? How do his skills compare with those of others in this play?

20. In Act 5, Scenes 3-4, what two "redemptive" acts does Prince Harry perform, in light of his previous promises to his father? Describe the Prince's actions and what he says about them to others. Consider as well his brief meeting with Falstaff during this heroic scene: how does he react to his old friend's behavior now?

21. In Act 5, Scenes 3-4, how does Falstaff conduct himself during the battle? Why does Prince Harry go along with Falstaff's deceptive claim to have killed Hotspur? Doesn't doing so undercut the redemptive storyline Prince Harry has been working up to since the end of *Richard II* and all through *I Henry IV*? Or is there a different way to understand Harry's genial treatment of Falstaff at this point? Explain.

22. In Act 5, Scene 5, what is the kingdom's status at the end of the play? How secure is Henry IV's throne, and overall, what is your impression of him at this point? How do the victors deal with those they have captured, and what still remains to be done?

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THE SECOND PART OF HENRY THE FOURTH, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*. (Norton Histories 673-757).

ACT 1

1. In the "Induction" and then in Act 1, Scene 1, what is the present state of the rebellion against King Henry IV? What source or sources do the conspirators, chief among them Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland (father of Hotspur, whom Prince Harry killed in Act 5 of *I Henry IV*), use to gather their sense of where they stand? What is the cause of Northumberland's rage from 1.1.136-60, and what do his angry words suggest to us about the nature and effects of rebellion?

2. Act 1, Scene 2, what is the argument between the Chief Justice and Sir John Falstaff? What is Falstaff trying to accomplish or gain at this point? How does this scene reflect on the ones preceding and following it, in which we hear the rebels assessing and debating their own prospects?

ACT 2

3. In Act 2, Scene 1, in what difficulty is Sir John embroiled with Hostess Quickly of the Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap? How does he resolve it, if indeed what happens amounts to a resolution at all? What is the Hostess' own perspective on the quarrel?

4. In Act 2, Scene 2, what is Prince Harry's plan to expose Falstaff's "true colors"? Reflect back to Prince Harry's practical joke and raillery at Falstaff's expense in Act 2 of *I Henry IV*: in consideration of Harry's present reflections and devices throughout the scene, what change might we find in his way of evaluating Sir John's shortcomings?

5. In Act 2, Scene 3, Lady Percy (the slain Hotspur's wife) and Lady Northumberland (the Earl's wife) try to talk Northumberland out of taking part in the imminent battles against the King. What arguments do they use, and in the process what contrast between Hotspur and his father the Earl emerges to the latter's disadvantage?

6. In Act 2, Scene 4, Falstaff's abuse of Prince Harry's reputation and friendship is made plain. Consider the sweep of this scene in its entirety -- the women's exchanges with Falstaff, his driving out of fiery Pistol, and then Prince Harry's exposure and mockery of his ungenerous and overly familiar prating. What basic error does such prating betray in Falstaff's way of thinking about Harry? And more generally, what figure does old Sir John cut as a man in this scene, with regard both to his sentimental appeal for us and his stark limitations?

ACT 3

7. In Act 3, Scene 1, the King (Henry IV), steeped now in experience, meditates on the burdens of his exalted status. Aside from the famous remark, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (3.1.31), what can we learn from his thoughts on the subject of royal power and pomp, both when he is alone and when he speaks with Warwick?

8. In Act 3, Scene 2, we are introduced to Justice Robert Shallow. What is this character's personal mythology; i.e., what view of his past has he built up for himself and for retail to others? What habits of speech reinforce his self-representation, and what motive/s might we suppose have led to the construction of such a narrative on his part? How does Falstaff assess this old acquaintance, and what advantage does he expect to gain from his brief reunion with Shallow?

9. In Act 3, Scene 2, while conversing with Justice Shallow, Falstaff sets about choosing some soldiers to serve under his charge in the fight against the rebels. Who are these prospective soldiers? What attitudes do they manifest about the wars, and as in *I Henry IV* (and/or *Henry V* if you are familiar with that play), what resemblances and contrasts are thereby underscored between the common person's view of military violence and the views of their aristocratic "betters"?

ACT 4

10. In Act 4, Scene 1, King Henry IV's supporter the Earl of Westmorland argues the rebellion with the rebels Archbishop of York (Richard Scroop) and Lord Mowbray. What points do they advance in favor of their struggle against the king, and how does Westmorland answer those points? Moreover, what error in military judgment does it soon become clear that the rebels have allowed themselves to commit?

11. In Act 4, Scene 2, Falstaff takes the rebel Sir John Coleville prisoner. We have heard Falstaff talk about military honor before, in 5.1 and 5.3 of *I Henry IV*. How does the rascal address this issue in the present scene? In addition, how do he and the king's brother, Prince John, seem to regard each other?

12. In Act 4, Scene 3, what advice does Henry IV give the Duke of Clarence (i.e. his son Thomas) about Prince Harry? How does Warwick assure the king that all will be well with the heir apparent? In responding, consider the relation between Warwick's response and what Prince Harry himself has said about his conduct thus far, for example in 2.2 and 2.4 of the present play, or 1.2 of *I Henry IV*? What continuity do you find?

13. In Act 4, Scene 3, Prince Harry reflects on the crown from lines 151-73, somewhat as the king himself had done in 3.1. How does Prince Harry's emphasis differ from that of the king? Moreover, as the scene progresses with the awakening of the king to find his crown missing, what anxieties beset him about the reign to be expected of his seemingly reckless heir? How does the Prince convince him that his fears are groundless?

14. In Act 4, Scene 3, a reassured King Henry IV offers his heir Prince Harry a striking piece of advice about how a ruler may avoid the worst kind of trouble. What is that advice? What does it suggest about the king's understanding of his subjects, and, more broadly, about human nature? (See 4.3.305-47; "O my son ...") Consider also what the king does immediately after giving this advice -- how does it reflect on or alter your perception of the political counsel he has just given?

ACT 5

15. In Act 5, Scenes 1-2, what theory about "wise bearing or ignorant carriage" (5.1.64) does Falstaff set forth? What happens subsequently (in the second scene) between the Chief Justice and Prince Harry to call this theory into question? In the course of this interaction, what does Prince Harry say to demonstrate his grasp of the legal and formal or ceremonial aspects of his now supreme position?

16. In Act 5, Scenes 3 and 5, what are Falstaff's expectations now that his old friend Prince Harry is king? What happens to those expectations when the king's procession passes him by? Consider the manner in which the meeting between these two unfolds in the fifth scene: to what extent does "Harry" recognize his former companion, and what can we learn from the exact manner in which he does so?

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KING HENRY V, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *King Henry V*. (Norton Histories 759-836).

ACT 1

1. In the Prologue, what does the Chorus ask theater-goers to do? In what sense might the Chorus be said to give the spoken words of Shakespeare's play the place of honor in their experience?
2. In Act 1, Scenes 1-2, the Bishops of Ely and Canterbury have their reasons (money, for the most part) for sending the young Henry off to France. But what specific arguments do they employ to convince him -- what is Salic Law, and what do the Bishops say about Henry's predecessor kings?
3. In Act 1, Scene 2, what qualities in Henry are brought to the fore by the Dauphin's wicked present of "tennis balls" in place of a serious answer to his claims upon the French throne?

ACT 2

4. In Act 2, Scene 1, what seems to be Shakespeare's principle in going back and forth between serious and silly, noble and low, as he begins to do here with the comic scene between Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym (Henry's friends from *Henry IV*, Parts 1-2)? How does their quarreling compare to that of their betters?
5. In Act 2, Scene 2, how does King Henry set forth the moral of the treason and fall of Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey? Pay particular attention to his comments about Scroop.
6. In Act 2, Scene 3, how do Henry's former friends Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym see the impending war with France? When they learn that old Jack Falstaff has finally died, what effect does his passing have upon them? What do they think is the cause of his death?
7. In Act 2, Scene 4, what contrast between the French outlook on war and the English one appears? How does Exeter, in his message to the King of France, undercut the expectations and rhetoric of Shakespeare's French?

ACT 3

8. What perspectives on war do Act 3, Scenes 1-3, taken together, advance? Consider the remarks of Henry, Pistol/Bardolph/Nym, and the Welshman Fluellen.

9. In Act 3, Scene 4, the French Princess Katherine explores the presence of the English from her own perspective. What does she add to our understanding of the war and the French?

10. In Act 3, Scenes 5-7, how does King Henry's insistence on hanging Bardolph for theft show about his grasp of proper kingship? How can we connect this part of the play with Fluellen's failure to discern (at least initially) Pistol's nature? Consider this question in light of Shakespeare's perpetual interest in sorting out "seeming" from "being."

11. In Act 3, Scene 7, what flaw in the Dauphin's character reaffirms itself? How does the Constable undercut the Dauphin's claims?

ACT 4

12. In Act 4, Scene 1, why does Henry wander about the camp on the eve of battle? What does he find out about the way some of his subjects (Williams and Bates) think of their part in the campaign? What argument does Henry use to bring Williams around, and what quarrel nonetheless remains between them?

13. In Act 4, Scene 1, when Henry is at last alone, how does he sum up his thoughts on the nature and responsibilities of kingship? What spiritual burden will he bring with him into battle, aside from anything to do with current events?

14. In Act 4, Scenes 2-3, contrast the Frenchmen's high words before battle with what Henry and his English followers say. What assumptions do the French make about the English, and what proves effective for Henry in lifting the spirits of his men?

15. How do Act 4, Scenes 4-5 work together to show the French side's shameful conduct?

16. In Act 4, Scenes 6-8, how much realism do you find in Shakespeare's representation of the battle and the views characters take concerning war? And how does King Henry explain his unlikely triumph over the French?

17. In Act 4, Scenes 7-8, how does the quarrel between King Henry and Williams get settled? What moral principle does this settlement reaffirm?

ACT 5

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, what lesson about symbolism does Fluellen teach Pistol when the two meet? And what does Pistol plan to do now that the war is over?

19. Act 5, Scene 2, what strategy does King Henry employ to win Katherine's heart and her assent to the marriage that will make him heir to the French throne? What objections does she make, and how does he deal with them?

20. Critics have long argued both sides of an obvious issue in *Henry V*: is the play pro-English and pro-war to the point of jingoism (a "jingo" is someone who is too quick to call for war, usually to promote national prestige), or should we say that Shakespeare is criticizing others for such attitudes? Or do you find that "either/or" argument simplistic? Explain.

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HENRY VIII, OR, ALL IS TRUE, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Henry VIII*. (Norton Histories 847-929).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what is the main conflict between Cardinal Wolsey and Buckingham? With what faults does Buckingham reproach the cardinal? What errors does he charge him with, especially with regard to foreign policy? What is Buckingham's response to his arrest at the end of this scene?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, characterize the relationship between King Henry and Cardinal Wolsey. What is Henry's difficulty with the Cardinal, and how does Wolsey try to bring him around? What is Henry's final judgment regarding the matter of the heavy taxation that Wolsey has laid upon the people?

3. In Act 1, Scene 2, what is queen Katherine's function and relative strength? How does her influence with King Henry compare to the influence Cardinal Wolsey enjoys? What assessment can we offer of King Henry's decision-making process and judgment in this scene?

4. In Act 1, Scene 3, what perspective do the Lord Chamberlain and Lovell and Sands offer on the cardinal's recent conduct? What criticisms do they make of the way the English regard the French and their fashions?

5. In Scene 4, the setting is at the Cardinal's quarters, York Place. What is going on? Describe the courtly masque that takes place and explain what its unfolding may reveal about the relationship between King Henry and Cardinal Wolsey. In addition, what momentous meeting also takes place towards the end of this courtly ceremony?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, how do the first and second gentleman characterize current opinion about Buckingham? How does Buckingham bear up and meet his fate: what account does he give of himself, his past and his thoughts? In addition, how do the first and second gentlemen explain the matter between Queen Katherine and King Henry: what's the source of their marital problems?

7. In Act 2, Scene 2, the Lord Chamberlain, Norfolk and Suffolk have much to criticize about Cardinal Wolsey. What complaints do they make? How much do they seem to understand of what is going on in Henry's court at this point? What indeed are King Henry and Cardinal Wolsey up to regarding Katherine?

8. In Act 2, Scene 3, what is the subject of Anne Boleyn's conversation with the old lady, her companion? What picture of Anne's character emerges during this scene? Is she virtuous, ambitious, both? Explain your rationale based on textual cues.

9. In Act 2, Scene 4, Queen Katherine defends herself against Henry's divorce proceedings. What is her main argument against this husband of many years who is intent upon abandoning her? How skillful a rhetorician is she, in her own right and in comparison with Cardinal Wolsey? What role does King Henry play during these proceedings? What does he really seem to think of his wife, and how does he explain his rationale for divorcing her?

10. In Act 2, Scene 4, what role does King Henry play during the divorce proceedings in which the queen and Cardinal Wolsey have so much to say? What does Henry apparently think of his wife, and how does he explain his rationale for divorcing her?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, Griffith and Cardinal Wolsey come to confer with Queen Katherine. What is their aim, and how does she receive them? What counter-arguments do they make against her protests? Why do you think she more or less gives in to them towards the end of the scene?

12. In Act 3, Scene 2, what is the immediate cause of Cardinal Wolsey's downfall? Describe his attitude just before he begins to get bad news, and then the evolution of his attitude towards the rapidly developing personal catastrophe that overtakes him: where does he start, so to speak, and where does he end in terms of his power position and spiritual state?

13. In Act 3, Scene 2, describe King Henry's rhetorical method of interrogating and exposing Cardinal Wolsey: how does the king approach this conversation, and why does he draw things out in this manner? Why doesn't he just accuse the cardinal directly and at the outset?

14. In Act 3, Scene 2, does the way Cardinal Wolsey is treated by Lords Surrey, Suffolk and Norfolk generate any sympathy for him? Why or why not?

15. In Act 3, Scene 2, once Cardinal Wolsey is certain of his downfall, how does he describe what it means for him? How does he explain its significance to Cromwell and what advice does he give that man? What moral lesson does Shakespeare apparently want us to take from the fall of a great man in a play that has borne witness already to the falls of Buckingham and Queen Katherine?

ACT 4

16. In Act 4, Scene 1, how does Shakespeare represent Anne Boleyn's coronation as Queen of England? Does the investiture go well? Try to find out something online about her coronation -- does what you find match the Shakespearean account, or does it differ substantially? Explain.

17. In Act 4, Scene 2, we find that Queen Katherine is on her deathbed. In what spirit does she receive the news of the former Cardinal Wolsey's passing? How does she face her own death: what last requests does she make of Henry and others? What are her final thoughts about the husband who left her behind for Anne Boleyn?

ACT 5

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, the discussion revolves around Archbishop Cranmer, who assumed that title in 1533, with the support of Queen Anne Boleyn's faction. Where do Gardiner and Lovell stand with regard to the queen and the archbishop? What is King Henry's plan to see Archbishop Cranmer through his time of difficulties?

19. In Act 5, Scene 2, Archbishop Cranmer finds himself waiting like a common man just to be let in to the gathering where he will be accused by a council of great lords . Explore the importance of decorum and ceremony, of "staging" events in this scene: how does it illustrate King Henry's skill as an actor in what we might call "the theater of power"? Finally, what is the outcome of this meeting?

20. In Act 5, Scene 3, the future Queen Elizabeth I is about to be christened. How do the porter and the lord chamberlain describe the commonfolk who are jostling for position

in the palace yard to see the great event? What is the dramatic function of this representation of events just before the christening?

21. In Act 5, Scene 4, what are the essentials of Archbishop Cranmer's prophecy concerning the royal infant Elizabeth, daughter of Queen Anne Boleyn and King Henry VIII? In your response, consider what Cranmer implies about Elizabeth's significance both for England's theological welfare and its political disposition.

22. General question, but especially relevant to Act 5, Scene 4. It has sometimes been said by critics that the history play *Henry VIII, or, All Is True* follows the pattern of Shakespeare's late romance plays such as *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. What evidence supports that claim, especially with regard to the final act's way of rounding off events?

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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF KING JOHN, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Life and Death of King John* (1594-96; Norton Histories 529-94).

ACT 1

1. General question for the play as a whole: what kind of king is John -- what traits and qualities emerge as Shakespeare develops his portrayal of this medieval ruler? Historians have never been as kind to John (called "Lackland") as they've been to his elder brother the Christian Crusader King Richard I (Coeur de lion, "the lion-hearted," ruled 1189-99); both were among the five sons of the Plantagenet/Angevin King Henry II of England (ruled 1154-89). But is Shakespeare's John entirely bad, or is the portrait more mixed than that? Explain.

2. General question for the play as a whole: Henry II's Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine ("Queen Eleanor") is one of English royalty's most famous members. What figure does the great lady cut in Shakespeare's play? How does she drive the action at certain points? Is she in some sense more powerful and stronger than King John himself? Does that power hold up? Explain.

3. In Act 1, Scene 1, what is King John's situation at the beginning of the play? With what personal quarrel is he immediately presented, and how does he deal with it? More importantly, how does Queen Eleanor overrule her son John and resolve this situation?

4. In Act 1, Scene 1, Philip the Bastard makes his first appearance at Court and we witness his treatment of his legitimate brother. Legitimacy is a common theme in Shakespeare, most notably debated in the wicked person of Edmund in *King Lear* ("Thou, nature, art my goddess," etc.). What set of values animates Philip at the outset and what are his thoughts once he has been dubbed Sir Richard Plantagenet, the acknowledged (if illegitimate) son of the late King Richard I?

5. In Act 1, Scene 1, how does Philip handle his mother's feelings when he forces her (Lady Falconbridge) to admit that Richard I was in fact his father rather than Sir Robert Falconbridge? How much difference does "legitimacy" really make? What is its value here and in the play generally?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, what is the subject of the argument between the arriving King John and the French King Philip? What principles of succession does each man support, and how do Constance and Queen Eleanor explain their own position regarding young Arthur, Duke of Brittany?

7. In Act 2, Scene 1, how does Shakespeare portray young Arthur? Do a little research and find out what you can regarding what actually happened to this young son of Geoffrey, Duke of Brittany and Constance. How does Shakespeare's representation of this young man tend to work in favor of King John's hold on power, at least for a time?

8. In Act 2, Scene 1, the people of Angers seems steadfast in their resistance to the forces of both King Philip and King John. What position does the town's spokesman adopt towards both sovereigns? How does he propose to resolve the strife between these two kings who threaten the town's safety? How do the kings receive this proposal at first?

9. In Act 2, Scene 1, what has been Philip the Bastard's role throughout this negotiation? What has he advocated and what is his reaction when it seems that Blanche and Louis the Dauphin seem about to be united in marriage?

10. In Act 2, Scene 2, and at the beginning of Act 3, Scene 1, the proposed solution to the problems of Kings Philip and John understandably don't please Arthur's mother Constance. Consider the course of her lamentation in this scene. How does she process what is happening? Does she seem like a strong figure at this point? What resources, if any, are available to her?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, the papal legate Pandolf appears. What demand does he make of King John, and in what spirit does the King answer him? Why might this attitude have appealed to Shakespeare's Protestant audience, even though England's split from Roman Catholicism did not occur until 1534, with Henry VIII's Acts of Supremacy?
12. Explain how Act 3, Scene 1 illustrates the Norton editors' remarks about Shakespeare's treatment of historical process in this play as more or less devoid of fulfilled patterns and, therefore, of meaning. How does the present action's playing out undermine what the Kings have already done? Have we already seen this kind of undermining at work in the play? If so, where?
13. In Act 3, Scenes 2 and 3, how does the military situation stand at present, and what plan does King John make going forward to secure himself upon the throne of England? Characterize John's rhetoric in assailing the conscience of his loyal assistant Hubert: how does he proceed in this initially delicate but ultimately brutal task?
14. In Act 3, Scene 4, we may be reminded of the Norton editors' suggestion that Queen Eleanor and Constance at least appear to be strong figures in this play, drivers of the action. But consider Shakespeare's representation of Constance at this point: how does she illustrate the figure of the woman as a victim of war, something we often find in Shakespeare?
15. In Act 3, Scene 4, what Machiavellian counsel does the papal legate Pandolf offer Louis the Dauphin? How might the young heir to the French throne profit from Arthur's misfortune? What's in it for Pandolf and the Pope if he does so?

ACT 4

16. In Act 4, Scene 1, why is Hubert unable to carry out his dreadful task against Arthur? How does Shakespeare represent the unfolding operation of conscience in Hubert?
17. In Act 4, Scene 2, King John is confronted with the hostility of great noblemen such as Salisbury and Pembroke, the strange and agitated state of the people as personified by a prophetic commoner, and the death of his mother Queen Eleanor. How does he react to all of this? What, if anything, does he learn? Does he seem to be a changed man, and if so, how?

18. In Act 4, Scene 3, Arthur attempts to escape from his prison but dies in the attempt, breaking his body upon the stones below. Much of the scene centers on the subsequent exchange between Hubert and Philip the Bastard. The Norton editors suggest that the latter character is not really a consistent one but rather that he changes as the play progresses. How does his reaction to the of Arthur illustrate that point? You might also want to consider his reaction in the first scene of Act 5 to the news that King John has made peace with Pandolf.

ACT 5

19. In Act 5, Scene 1, King John hears that Arthur is in fact dead and prepares to fight the French invaders in England. In Act 5, Scene 2, how does Louis the Dauphin respond to Pandolf's demand that he desist in his preparations for war against England? Furthermore, what is Philip the Bastard's posture at this point: what role is he playing for the King?

20. In Act 5, Scene 3, King John is by now desperately ill with a fever even as the battle rages, and with the death of the powerful French Count Melun, the English noblemen who had recently opposed King John now return to the English monarch's side. By Scene 6, King John has apparently been poisoned by a monk who was no doubt resentful of the taxes levied against the clergy earlier in the play. How does King John characterize his own illness and bodily sensations upon being poisoned? Why are they strangely appropriate as harbingers of the end of his reign?

21. In Act 5, Scene 7, what seems to be England's situation upon the death of King John? What role does Philip the Bastard play at this point, and how does he sum up the sense of nationalism we might expect in a Shakespeare history play? But further, to what extent is this play nationalistic at all: has a meaningful sense of English history at this period emerged from the dialog and action, or do you agree with the Norton editors that it really hasn't?

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KING LEAR, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *King Lear*. (Norton Tragedies 739-823).

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How many different meanings for the term "nature" are developed in this play? Who articulates the various meanings? Are these significations kept distinct? Do they remain stable throughout, or are certain characters disabused of what they had formerly thought? Discuss your findings.
2. The various characters try to assert control over the play's events by using a number of different linguistic strategies: rash invective, Machiavellian analysis, extreme bluntness, flowery evasion (Oswald), the language and song of madness and foolery, and visionary or prophetic poetry. Discuss a few of them by way of response.

ACT 1

3. In Act 1, Scene 1, does Lear's division of his kingdom in 1.1 remind you of a fairy tale? If so, in what way, and of what specific fairy tale does it remind you? Describe your expectations about how the story might end based on Lear's opening division of the kingdom in the particular manner Shakespeare has contrived.
4. In Act 1, Scene 1, what, if anything, is the problem with Lear's decision to step aside (if not quite abdicate) and to divide his kingdom into thirds? Moreover, is there a problem with his demand for a public display of affection from his three daughters? Why does he appear to need such a display?
5. In Act 1, Scene 1, what reasons does Cordelia offer herself and the King for not going along with his request for a public display of affection? Are her speech and bearing appropriate, or inappropriate? Explain your reasoning.
6. In Act 1, Scene 1, Kent speaks truth to Lear's raging power, and gets himself banished. How good is his attempt as a piece of rhetorical persuasion? If you find it flawed, do you think any other strategy might have worked where his failed? Why or why not?
7. In Act 1, Scene 1, what comments do Regan and Goneril offer at 1.1.286-307 regarding their father's past character and his present conduct? In what sense might their views be considered reasonable? Nonetheless, what do they reveal about themselves in this conversation, especially in their upbraiding of Cordelia right before this conversation?

8. In Act 1, Scenes 1-2, the Edmund/Gloucester sub-plot (or co-plot) also gets under way. At this early stage, what relation subsists between it and the main Lear/Daughters plot? What common theme or themes do you see in them both? (The same question might be asked subsequently, as the two plots unfold, and would make a good paper topic at this more detailed level.)

9. In Act 1, Scene 2, Edmund and Gloucester give us their respective understandings of "nature." How does each talk about this concept? What advantage does Edmund have over Gloucester partly because of their differences regarding this matter, and why?

10. In Act 1, Scene 4, consider the Fool's interaction with the King. What does the Fool do for Lear -- how helpful are his insights to Lear (and to us as viewers)? Discuss also the manner (songs, riddles, etc.) he employs to convey his meaning. Which do you find most effective, and why? (This question might be asked of any segments in which the Fool appears, and could be developed into a good paper topic.)

11. In Act 1, Scene 4, observe how the servant Oswald behaves towards Lear after the latter has given away his kingdom. What manner does he use towards Lear from lines 44-85, and why? (Refer to Scene 3 for the latter issue.) What opportunity does Oswald's behavior provide the newly disguised Kent?

12. In Act 1, Scene 4, Goneril enters around line 190 and makes herself odious to Lear. What in particular does he find so offensive in Goneril's manner and in the things she says to him? By Scene 5, what insight does he begin to gain about his treatment of Cordelia? How would you characterize his state of mind by the end of Scene 5?

ACT 2

13. In Act 2, Scene 1, by what specific means (words and actions) does Edmund not only manage to drive Edgar out of doors but also to win himself still more credit with his father Gloucester and ingratiate himself with Cornwall?

14. In Act 2, Scene 2, Kent comes across Oswald and insults this servant in a very precise manner. Observe Kent's tortured attempt afterwards to explain to Regan and Cornwall why he has been thrashing their sister's messenger. What limitations does Kent show as a speaker in this episode?

15. In Act 2, Scene 3, Edgar takes on the identity of a mad beggar, calling himself "poor Tom." Why might this be an appropriate identity for him now, aside from the obvious motive of avoiding detection? How do Edgar's words in adopting this identity connect with the play's central themes so far? (Possible paper topic: trace this question

forwards: how does Edgar's sojourn as "Poor Tom" through Act 4, and then his reassumption of his proper self in Act 5, help us understand the errors, sufferings, and human potential of other characters in the play?)

16. In Act 2, Scene 4, Lear is furious when he learns of Kent's punishment. He blames Goneril but quickly learns that Regan, too, is against him. Explore what leads up to Lear's frustrated exclamation, "O, reason not the need!" and his subsequent tirade (2.4.264-86). Why is it so important to Lear that he retain his hundred knights? What seems to be his state of mind towards the end of this scene?

ACT 3

17. Act 3, Scenes 2, 4, and 6 are concerned with the actions of King Lear and others during a raging storm. In what sense is the storm metaphoric of Lear's inner disturbance? In what sense is it significant as a natural phenomenon *not* reducible to Lear's inner state and, therefore, perhaps relevant to broader issues of heavenly or natural justice in the play?

18. In Act 3, Scene 2, what does the storm apparently mean to Lear himself? How does he address the storm -- to what extent does he connect its operation with what Regan and Goneril have done to him?

19. In Act 3, Scene 2, what service do the Fool's songs and other utterances provide the King as both men suffer in the storm? How do you understand the Fool's "prophecy" from lines 80-96? What is he suggesting?

20. In Act 3, Scene 4, what significance does King Lear find in "Poor Tom's" sufferings and in his crazed utterances? What connections does he make between himself and this supposed beggar? What does he learn from him?

21. In Act 3, Scene 5, King Lear stages a mock trial for Regan and Goneril, with Poor Tom (soon to cast off his disguise) and the Fool (who exits the play at the end of this scene) as judges. What accusations does Lear level against Regan and Goneril? What might he be trying to accomplish by putting them on trial -- what kind of "justice" is he looking for, and how does he assess the quality of the *ad hoc* court he has established?

22. In Act 3, Scene 7 (one of the most distressing scenes in any play I can recall), Gloucester, having been taken prisoner in his own home, is blinded. Why is it appropriate to Goneril's nature (and to that of her sister as well) that she should choose this specific punishment for Gloucester, and how do the prisoner's words only reinforce the desire of Regan and Cornwall to inflict that very punishment on him?

ACT 4

23. In Act 4, Scenes 1 and 6, the wretched Gloucester conceives of and then tries to make his final exit, but as it turns out, he is -- or rather isn't -- in for a real letdown. What is Edgar trying to accomplish with his artistic, but misleading, treatment of Gloucester? Also, to what extent does Edgar's interaction with his father Gloucester parallel or differ from his interaction (as Poor Tom) with the mad King Lear in Act 3, Scene 4?

24. In Act 4, Scenes 2 and then 5, Goneril first plots with Edmund to have him replace her husband Albany, and then Regan attempts to gain Oswald's help as a courier in winning Edmund's affections. How does this sexual competition symbolize the new dispensation to which Lear's mistakes have led his kingdom? How does Albany's assessment of Goneril (and Regan) in Act 4, Scene 2 help characterize this kingdom-wide degeneration?

25. In Act 4, Scene 6 (line 80ff) Lear engages in mad a ramble about the nature of kingship and authority, womankind, and the institution of justice. What obsessions grip him, and what insights does he offer regarding some of these subjects?

26. In Act 4, Scene 6 (lines 227-70), Edgar catches Oswald in the act of attempting to kill old Gloucester and dispatches him, reading afterwards Goneril's treasonous letter to Edmund. Why does Edgar confront Oswald in rustic dialect? What role in the unfolding tragedy has Oswald played up to his ignominious end?

ACT 5

27. In Act 5, Scene 3, Lear, on his way to an army-camp holding cell with Cordelia, lays out his vision of the future the two will share. How does he assess the pair's present circumstances, and what predictions does he make for their future? To what extent do the King's lyrical words at this point, and in the aftermath when he confronts Cordelia's lifeless body, amount to tragic insight? What has he learned from the terrible events that he has partly set in motion?

28. In Act 5, Scene 3, Regan and Goneril argue over Edmund. Where do they do so? Is this setting important? As asked in a previous question, how does this sexual competition symbolize the new dispensation to which Lear's mistakes have led his kingdom? If you already deal with that question, consider Goneril's answer to Albany when he confronts her with the letter she wrote to Edmund: how does she construe the nature of the political power she has been given?

29. In Act 5, Scene 1, Edgar (as an anonymous knight) gives Albany the letter he had found on Oswald's body, and issues a challenge against Edmund as a traitor to his brother, father, and Albany. In Scene 3, Edmund must defend himself against the accusation of treason that Albany has seconded against him. In what sense is it poetic justice that the fight with Edgar should prove to be Edmund's undoing? (Edmund had earlier declared "nature" his ruling spirit or concept; in the name and service of what outlook does he in fact die?)

30. In Act 5, Scene 3, by the play's end, everyone who had stood to inherit the kingdom has died or been slain. Someone has to accept the responsibility of governing. What attitudes do Albany, Kent, and Edgar adopt towards this responsibility? Do Edgar's last four lines (5.3.324-27) adequately sum up the play? Why or why not?

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THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD II, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Tragedy of King Richard II*. (Norton Histories 457-527).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what is the substance of the quarrel between Thomas Mowbray (Duke of Norfolk) and Harry Bolingbroke (Duke of Hereford and later King Henry IV)? In what role does this quarrel cast King Richard II in the play's first few scenes? What seems to be Richard's attitude towards this affair?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, why is it difficult for John of Gaunt to take sides unambiguously in the quarrel that Richard is adjudicating between Mowbray and Bolingbroke? With what failings does the widowed Duchess of Gloucester reproach him, and what effect does Gaunt's reply have upon her?

3. In Act 1, Scene 3, how does Richard decide the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke? What rationale seems to underlie his decision? How does he treat John of Gaunt in this scene, and how, in Act 1, Scene 4, does he react to Gaunt's terminal sickness?

4. In Act 1, Scene 3, what advice does John of Gaunt offer Harry Bolingbroke as the latter enters several years of exile from England? How does Harry see the matter?

ACT 2

5. In Act 2, Scene 1, what accusations does the dying John of Gaunt level against Richard -- what failings as a feudal ruler does Gaunt find in Richard? How does Richard respond to these charges, and what becomes manifest about the King's character during and immediately after this conversation?

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, how does the Duke of York reinforce the charges Gaunt has already made against Richard? How successful is the Duke in explaining Richard's faults to him? What does Northumberland afterwards add to this litany of flaws and mistakes on Richard's part?

7. In Act 2, Scenes 2-3, what is the Duke of York's quandary now that Richard has left him in charge of the kingdom for a time? How does he respond to the entreaties of Harry Bolingbroke, who has returned from exile without Richard's permission? What is Harry claiming he has returned to do?

ACT 3

8. In Act 3, Scene 1, what accusation does Bolingbroke level against Bushy and Green? How does this accusation also function as self-justification for his current course of action?

9. In Act 3, Scene 2, how does Richard respond to and characterize his circumstances as a king facing a serious (and, as becomes increasingly evident, successful) rebellion? What seems to be his state of mind? How do those around him (Carlisle, Aumerle, and Scrope, mainly) receive his gestures and speeches?

10. In Act 3, Scene 3, Bolingbroke and King Richard meet first through intermediaries and then face to face -- as the scene progresses, how is Bolingbroke forced to "show his hand," so to speak, and lay bare his real intentions with respect to Richard and the Crown? What role does Richard play in this revelation?

11. In Act 3, Scene 4, what lesson does the Gardener impart to us about human nature and governance by means of his understanding of natural process and horticulture? The play has been filled with human failings and misfortunes -- is this rather philosophical scene reassuring or disturbing, in your view? What is the rationale for your response?

ACT 4

12. In Act 4, Scene 1, Bolingbroke has already begun to take on the duties of kingship, though as yet he is not king. How does he handle the quarrel between Fitzwalter and

Aumerle? What is his reaction to the news that his old enemy Norfolk (Thomas Mowbray) has died in Venice? How is he trying to distinguish himself from Richard by such conduct?

13. In Act 4, Scene 1, Bolingbroke requires that Richard abdicate the throne. What are his apparent expectations regarding Richard's performance in such a spectacle, and how does Richard at least partly frustrate those expectations? Consider especially Richard's meditation on kingship and on his identity as a mortal human being. (See 4.1.263-99; "They shall be satisfied....")

ACT 5

14. In Act 5, Scene 1, how does Richard's Queen interpret what he has just done? How does Richard respond to her anguished reproach -- what narrative does he urge her to tell about him when he is gone? What warning does Richard offer Northumberland about the soon-to-be King Henry IV?

15. In Act 5, Scenes 2-3, the Duke of York's son Aumerle has pledged himself to a conspiracy against Harry Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV. How does this scene play out? How does it amount to a reflection on the relationship between the personal or familial sphere and the realm of politics?

16. In Act 5, Scene 3, what are King Henry IV's scene-opening concerns about his son Harry, the Crown Prince? What has the Prince been doing while his father was hard at work winning a kingdom? How (according to Percy's report) did the Prince react to news of his father's coronation?

17. In Act 5, Scene 5, what is the substance of the deposed Richard's reflections on his reign and fall? What, if anything, has he learned from the disaster he has suffered -- do his reflections constitute something like "tragic insight"? Why or why not? (See 5.5.1-65.) Also, in what manner does Richard meet his death -- do his actions restore some dignity to him? Explain with reference to 5.5.99-118.

18. By the end of Act 5, Scene 6, King Henry IV is filled with remorse for the way he has come by the throne. How, specifically (see Scene 4), did the new King's wishes lead to Richard's death? How does the news of the murder frustrate Henry's attempt to inaugurate a juster and more stable period of English governance? What pattern does Henry's reaction to Richard's death suggest for the rest of his reign?

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KING RICHARD III, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *King Richard III*. (Norton Histories 361-450).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, Richard starts the play off with his remarkable "Now is the winter of our discontent" soliloquy (speech delivered alone, not to other characters). How does he represent himself in this passage, and indeed throughout the first scene? How does he characterize his own nature and ambitions, the times in which he lives, and his powerful relatives?
2. In Act 1, Scene 2, Richard woos, and apparently wins, the unfortunate Anne Neville, who mourns Henry VI and her betrothed, his son Edward Prince of Wales. Richard is complicit in their deaths. How does he go about this delicate task? What accounts for his success?
3. In Act 1, Scene 3, The royal dysfunctional family gather over a meal to bicker. What are some of their complaints? In particular, how does Queen Margaret (Henry VI's widow) reproach Queen Elizabeth and Richard, and what warning does she make to Buckingham about Richard? How does Richard represent himself to others in this scene?
4. In Act 1, Scene 4, Clarence, about to be murdered by a pair of thugs on the order of Richard, offers a starkly beautiful rendition of his uneasy dream -- what happens in that dream? What does it reveal to him? To us? To what extent does this scene generate real sympathy for Clarence, and to what degree do his remarks more generally suggest his complicity in the less savory side of power politics?

ACT 2

5. In Act 2, Scene 1, what figure does the soon-to-be-departed Edward IV, Richard's Yorkist elder brother, cut in this scene: namely, what hopes does he express for the future of his dynasty? What does he expect of his family? And to what self-analysis is he driven when Richard deftly undercuts him with the news that Clarence is dead?
6. In Act 2, Scene 2, what quality breaks the unitary effect of Elizabeth, Clarence's children, and the Duchess of York's lamentation over Clarence and Edward IV? Still, to what extent is the grief expressed in this scene genuine, and the scene effective as an expression of sorrow?

7. In Act 2, Scene 3, three citizens air their thoughts and anxieties about Edward's death and what is to come. What does this chorus of citizens apparently think of the great events and noble "actors" to which they are partly witness? What are their fears and expectations?

8. In Act 2, Scene 4, this scene in which Queen Elizabeth foresees the destruction of her family (the Woodvilles) rehearses Tudor propaganda about Richard's ill-favored appearance and wicked ways from childhood onwards. Do some brief research on the Internet and set down what you can find about Richard's character as modern historians represent it, or as it appears on websites devoted to Richard III. What opinion seems to prevail today?

ACT 3

9. In Act 3, Scene 1, describe the exchange between the young Prince Edward (Edward IV's heir), his little brother York, and Richard: how does Edward size up his current situation? Why do Edward's observations in particular disturb Richard, as we may discern after the boys have been sent to the Tower?

10. In Act 3, Scenes 2-3, how does this scene set Hastings up for what is to come in scene 4 (his execution) -- what does he think of his prospects at this point? How does he react to the undoing of his own enemies? What does he say in response to the Messenger who tells him about Stanley's ominous dream?

11. In Act 3, Scene 4, in a meeting to discuss matters pertaining to the coronation, what piece of stagecraft does Richard contrive to get rid of the troublesome Hastings? What is the further point of this brief drama -- what does Richard accomplish thereby?

12. In Act 3, Scene 5, how do Richard and Buckingham dupe the Mayor of London into accepting their version of events surrounding Hastings and his sudden execution? Shakespeare makes it clear that the Mayor accepts their claims -- why, in your view, might such a public figure accept what seems to us such a spectacle and justification for judicial murder?

13. In Act 3, Scene 6, the Scrivener enters with an indictment of the condemned Hastings. How does this ordinary fellow sum analyze the nature of the great events taking place in his midst? What lies at the root of the problem, as far as he is concerned?

14. In Act 3, Scene 7, analyze the "theatrics" of the episode in which Buckingham and Richard make a show of the latter's alleged reluctance to accept the crown. What

reasons does Buckingham employ to advance the cause of Richard's acceptance, and what reasons does Richard give in feigning to decline it? What logic or assumptions about power and about the audience underlie this piece of political theater?

ACT 4

15. In Act 4, Scene 1, three of the play's women (Elizabeth, Anne, and the Duchess of York) gather to consider their plight. How does Anne, once betrothed to Edward IV's heir, explain her acceptance of Richard's offer of marriage? Does her explanation seem credible? Explain.

16. Act 4, Scenes 2-3, in these scenes, Richard moves with great speed to consolidate his power, commanding the murder of the young princes in the Tower of London and taking other vital actions. How do Buckingham and Tyrrel, respectively, react to Richard's demands to do away with the princes? What accounts for the difference in their reactions? How does Richard take Buckingham's response?

17. Act 4, Scenes 4-5, what role does Queen Margaret play in her exchange with Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess (Richard's mother)? What accusations do these three level at one another, and to what extent is there any understanding between them about their sufferings or their position as women in a world of dynastic intrigue?

18. Act 4, Scene 4, what logic and rhetorical emphasis does Richard employ to try to win over Queen Elizabeth to his desire for the hand of her daughter (also named Elizabeth) in marriage? How does she respond to him?

ACT 5

19. Throughout Act 5, contrast the language and actions of Richard and Richmond: what state of mind does each appear to be in on the eve of their fateful meeting? How do they justify the upcoming battle to their followers?

20. Act 5, Scenes 3-5, how does Richard conduct himself during the Battle of Bosworth, up to and including his death? In what sense is his comportment at the end characteristic of his life? What future does Richmond (soon to become Henry VII) lay out as the play concludes?

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MACBETH, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. (Norton Tragedies 815-88).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scenes 1 and 3, how is the truth status and significance of the supernatural element in this play established by the three witches or Weird Sisters? What do the Sisters look like to Macbeth and Banquo? What can we gather from their spells in these scenes? What information do they present to Macbeth and Banquo, and how do they present it?
2. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does the Sergeant describe and evaluate for King Duncan and others the performance of Macbeth during the battles against Norway, Macdonwald, and the now-disgraced Thane of Cawdor? How might the information we hear in this scene affect our understanding of the following scene, in which the Sisters reveal the future to Macbeth and Banquo?
3. In Act 1, Scene 3, how do Macbeth and Banquo, respectively, respond to the prophecies made to them? With regard to Macbeth, first, what emotional effect has the Sisters' news and prophecy stirred up in him, and what are his reflections on his current state of mind? With regard to Banquo, how does his reaction differ from that of Macbeth?
4. In Act 1, Scenes 4 and 6, what assessment can we make of Duncan's perceptions and his hold upon power as Scotland's king? What are his reflections on the disloyal former Thane of Cawdor? How does Duncan comport himself towards his powerful subjects first at his own palace in Forres and then when he arrives at Macbeth's castle home? What plan does he announce to Macbeth regarding titles and the succession?
5. In Act 1, Scene 5, how does Lady Macbeth compare to her husband in the reception of the supernatural knowledge he brings her? What anxiety does she show regarding Macbeth's ability to succeed in the enterprise that looms before them both? What does she reveal about her position and sensibilities as a woman confronted with what would traditionally be considered a man's violent work?
6. In Act 1, Scene 7, what is Macbeth's self-assessment on the eve of the murder? Consider as well the conversation between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth? What rhetorical means does she use to drive him towards the execution of the plot that owes so much to her ingenuity as a co-conspirator?

ACT 2

7. In Act 2, Scene 1, what are Macbeth's thoughts and actions immediately prior to the dreadful act he is soon to commit against Duncan? What insight does the "Dagger" part of this scene afford Macbeth and us? What, that is, can we gather about Macbeth's attitude towards the self-transformative deed he is about to carry out, and what, if anything, can we infer from it about his conduct in subsequent actions?

8. In Act 2, Scene 2, in the immediate aftermath of Duncan's murder, what happens to Macbeth's sensibilities? Choose a few examples that allow you to compare and contrast Macbeth before and after his violent crime. In particular, how do the effects of conscience manifest themselves, and what unforeseen consequences of his deed do they signal?

9. In Act 2, Scene 3, the Drunken Porter scene is one of the most admired instances of comic relief in tragedy (along with the Gravedigger scene in *Hamlet*). What makes the scene funny? (Consider the difference between the Porter's outlook on things and the perspective of more important characters.) Moreover, what does the Porter explain that could be applied to Macbeth and his situation after killing Duncan?

10. In Act 2, Scene 3, what image of themselves do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth project towards others in the killing's aftermath? Also in this scene, the princes Malcolm and Donalbain decide to flee the scene of their father's assassination. What reasons do they give? What conception of politics do such reasons imply?

11. In Act 2, Scenes 3-4, how much do Banquo, Macduff, and Rosse appear to understand about what has just happened -- do they suspect that Macbeth has killed his royal guest? What decision do they make towards the end of Scene 4?

ACT 3

12. In Act 3, Scene 1, once Macbeth has attained the throne, what problem begins to preoccupy him? What rhetorical strategy does he use to spur the agents of his plot against Macduff? How does that rhetoric stem from Macbeth's own situation, self-image, and anxieties?

13. In Act 3, Scenes 2 and 4, how does Macbeth explain to himself and us the logic of the predicament into which his own ambition has driven him? How has the balance of his relationship with Lady Macbeth changed by this point in the play?

14. In Act 3, Scene 4, what effect does the appearance of the ghost of his onetime friend Banquo (murdered at his instance in Act 3, Scene 3) have upon Macbeth? How does this intrusion of the supernatural differ, if it does, from Macbeth's earlier encounters with that realm in the person of the witches, for example, or when he confronted the "dagger of the mind"?

15. In Act 3, Scene 5 (probably not genuine), what is Hecat's understanding of the Witches' conduct from the play's outset, and how does she clarify Macbeth's chief human flaw or weak point?

16. In Act 3, Scene 6, how do Lennox and his fellow lord describe the current state of affairs in Scotland? What actions are under way beyond the kingdom, and why?

ACT 4

17. In Act 4, Scene 1, when Macbeth goes for his second visit to the Weird Sisters and Hecate, what successive visions do they unfold before him? How does Macbeth respond to each, and what plan of action does he make on the basis of what he has learned from these visions?

18. In Act 4, Scene 2, Lady Macduff and her young son are murdered. What perspective do these two characters provide that has not as yet found its way into this play about political intrigue and vaulting ambition? How might we characterize the structural principle in accordance with which this painful scene appears where it does?

19. In Act 4, Scene 3, as Malcolm and Macduff consider the way forward against Macbeth, what accusations does Malcolm level against himself? Why does he subject Macduff to this disturbing self-deprecation? Moreover, what does the scene suggest about the play's delimitation of the boundaries of royal power?

20. In Act 4, Scene 3, Macduff is informed of the murder of his own family, and Malcolm immediately tries to shape the stricken man's response. Describe the rhetoric he employs to do so. How might this portion of the scene (Macduff's response and Malcolm's rhetoric) be taken as metacommentary on the ethos and language of war and manhood that runs all through this play?

ACT 5

21. In Act 5, Scene 1, what symptoms of insanity does Lady Macbeth display? (In responding, look up "obsessive-compulsive disorder" (OCD), which is today's term for this character's affliction.) What's the point of dwelling on the Queen's psychological

symptoms in a play filled with supernatural events? Why is it Lady Macbeth and not Macbeth who suffers this fate, even though the man had himself shown some of the same guilty obsession right after the murder of Duncan?

22. In Act 5, Scene 2, Menteth, Cathness, and Angus describe Macbeth's plight. In Scene 3, how does Macbeth bear out this description in his actions and words? How does his conversation with the doctor attending Lady Macbeth deepen our insight into his current state of mind as the forces arrayed against him begin to close in, and disaster looms?

23. In Act 5, Scene 5, Macbeth faces the death of his distracted wife and the eerie news that Birnan Wood is moving towards him, making a cruel mockery of what had seemed a solid prophecy of his continued hold on power. With what quality of speech, what attitude, does he greet these events? How do his reflections mark a change from what we have become accustomed to in the king since the murder of Duncan? Do we have here a traditional recognition scene where the protagonist acknowledges the nature of his mistake and accepts the consequences, or would you describe what happens some other way? Explain.

24. In Act 5, Scenes 7-8, in what manner does Macbeth face the destruction that he now understands to be imminent? As he moves from the philosophical reflection of Scene 5 to the attitude he displays in the present scenes, what pattern has reasserted itself in Macbeth's attitudes and actions from the play's beginning?

25. In Act 5, Scenes 8-9, Macbeth is killed and Malcolm is proclaimed king. Several of Shakespeare's tragedies, among them *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, end with a political restoration. Discuss the quality of that restoration in the current play; to what extent has the damage done by Macbeth been repaired? Does the principle of order seem secure at the play's end? Explain the rationale for your response.

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Measure for Measure* (Norton Comedies 841-910).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, the Duke hands power to Angelo and Escalus. What advice does he offer Angelo, and how does he describe the power that has been temporarily given to him? Also, why does the Duke prefer to leave Vienna without fanfare?
2. In Act 1, Scene 2, Shakespeare introduces us to Lucio as well as to Mistress Overdone (a prostitute) and her servant Pompey. What problems does their presence (their outlook, their practices, etc.) pose for the war on vice that is to be carried out by the Duke's lieutenants Angelo and Escalus?
3. In Act 1, Scene 2, Claudio enters on his way to prison. How does he describe his predicament to Lucio? What hopes does he invest in his sister, Isabella -- why, that is, does he suppose she might be able to get him out of his troubles?
4. In Act 1, Scene 3, what underlying logic does the Duke reveal to Friar Thomas concerning his decision to entrust his power to subordinates -- what main reason, and what subsidiary reason, does he advance? Do his reasons seem just to you -- should a ruler do such a thing for the reasons stated? Why or why not?
5. In Act 1, Scene 4, we get our first look at Isabella in the nunnery where she plans to take her vows. Lucio, informing her of her brother's plight, relays Claudio's call for help. How does Isabella construe her task at this point?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, what makes it so difficult for Escalus to judge the case between Master Froth, Pompey, and Elbow's wife? How does he handle the situation, and in what sense does he thereby distinguish himself from Angelo?
7. In Act 2, Scene 2, what concept of justice does Isabella set forth to counter Angelo's sternness? What is so attractive to Angelo about Isabella, and what irony does he find in the fact that it is she who "tempts" him?
8. In Act 2, Scene 4, Angelo makes his brazen demand of Isabella, who seems only with difficulty able to comprehend it. What possible contradiction does Angelo bring to light about Isabella's stern refusal, given what she has already said about her brother's offense? Explain.

ACT 3

9. In Act 3, Scene 1, the Duke (disguised as a friar) reconciles Claudio to death, and just as quickly Isabella's information unreconciles him. The disguised Duke then offers Isabella a way to save her brother without yielding her body to Angelo. What exactly does he propose? Does it seem like an appropriate solution? Why or why not?

10. In Act 3, Scene 1, what is Lucio's apparent motivation for slandering the Duke (to his face, as it turns out)? What does the Duke imply in his rhymed couplets towards the end of this act about the proper way to deal with vice? Why is this an important admission with regard to the administration of human justice?

ACT 4

11. The Duke (still disguised) is busy throughout this act arranging affairs to suit the desired outcome -- justice done in front of all. What are the most important steps he takes in Act 4? To what extent must others be kept in the dark about the unfolding plan, and why?

12. Follow the experiences and dialog of Pompey, Abhorson, Barnardine and Lucio throughout this act. How do their words and acts advance the play's action or add something to our understanding of the main threat, which is the impending execution of Claudio?

ACT 5

13. In Act 5, Scene 1, the play's resolution turns on the Duke's ability to arrange affairs so that rather than enforcing strict justice -- "measure for measure" -- he and Isabella can charitably return good for evil and, thereby, make evil characters serve the good. Do you find the play's moral resolution satisfactory? Why or why not?

14. Shakespeare's comedies (as Northrop Frye says) generally involve an exodus from corrupt urban life to a magical place where characters explore their problems and are transformed. Then there is a return to urban life, with appropriate marriages making social renewal possible, and honest leadership lending political continuity. *Measure for Measure* ends with marriages and the Duke's return, but what accounts for so many critics finding it a "dark comedy" rather than an optimistic statement about the chances for individual happiness and social harmony?

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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Merchant of Venice*. (Norton Comedies 425-89).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what sense of community is affirmed between the Venetian merchant Antonio and his several gentile (non-Jewish) friends? Antonio is sad without knowing why -- what kind of atmosphere does that fact set up for this comic play?
2. In Act 1, Scene 1, what seems to be the relationship between Antonio and Bassanio -- what has led to the latter man's need for Antonio's help?
3. In Act 1, Scene 2, what constraint lies upon Portia's future, thanks to her father's will? What complaints does she have about her suitors?
4. In Act 1, Scene 3, Antonio and Shylock discuss the former's need for a loan. Why doesn't Antonio take Shylock's terms seriously? What grievances does Shylock set forth against Antonio and other Christians whom he has come upon in the Rialto (the financial district of Venice)?

ACT 2

5. In Act 2, Scenes 1 and 7, and 9, respectively, the Princes of Morocco and Arragon choose amongst the gold, silver, and leaden caskets for Portia's hand in marriage. Why do they make the choices they make, and what explanation of their error is provided in the enclosed scrolls?
6. In Act 2, Scenes 2-3, Lancelet (Shylock's servant) and Jessica (Shylock's daughter) decide to abandon him. Why is Lancelet disaffected from his master, and why is Jessica determined to run away? Does she do so with a clear conscience? Explain.
7. In Act 2, Scenes 4-6, Jessica, Lorenzo, and his companions Gratiano and Salarino plot Jessica's escape, and then make good on it. What important concern arises from the fact that the Venetian custom of donning masques figures in their plans? Moreover, what can we make of Jessica's disguising herself as a boy?
8. In Act 2, Scene 5, what forebodings does Shylock reveal as he prepares to dine with his gentile debtors? What are his concerns about his daughter Jessica and the possibility that she might come into contact with Christians?

9. In Act 2, Scene 8, how does Shylock react to the awful news that Jessica has run away and, to make matters worse, stolen his golden ducats and jewels? Would it be fair to say (see also 3.1) that he confuses the two losses, as the Christians suggest by their mockery -- or is something else going on here?

ACT 3

10. In Act 3, Scenes 1 and 3, what good does Shylock say insisting on his bond will do -- how does he justify what Christians in the play would call "Jewish" hard-heartedness?

11. In Act 3, Scene 2, what accounts for Bassanio's success in choosing the leaden chest rather than the golden and silver ones? How might the song "Tell me where is fancy bred?" be a way of describing Bassanio's choice?

12. In Act 3, Scene 3, how does Antonio, who stands within Shylock's power, understand his predicament -- why can't the Duke help him, and what irony resides in that fact?

13. In Act 3, Scene 5, is there any significance in Lancelet's theological quibbling with Jessica over her religion? How might we connect this comic scene with the play's more serious events?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scene 1, what lesson about mercy underlies the disguised Portia's defense of Antonio? How does Saint Paul's injunction that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" apply to Portia's final destruction of Shylock's demand for a pound of flesh? (2 *Corinthians* 3:6)

15. In spite of Portia's Christian lesson in Act 4, scene 1, do the Christians engage in some conduct that is less than charitable towards Shylock? Explain.

16. At the end of Act 4, Scene 1 and then in Scene 2, why does Bassanio (although grudgingly) set aside his oath regarding the ring Portia has given him and award it to the supposed Doctor? What does this act suggest about his understanding of the relative value of relationships between men and relationships between men and women?

ACT 5

17. In Act 5, Scene 1, what is the thematic significance of Lorenzo's remarks about the heavenly music we can't hear because of our fallen nature -- i.e. because of "the muddy vesture of our decay"?

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, what allows for resolution of the controversy over the loss of Bassanio and Gratiano's rings, given them by Portia and Nerissa, respectively? How do the two women assert a kind of power that the men didn't know they possessed?

19. General question: this dark comedy about Christians and Jews has troubled many Shakespeare scholars and theater-goers. Shakespeare's plot favors the Christian theological framework, not Shylock's Judaism. But in what sense might we be doing Shakespeare an injustice if we take Shylock for a one-dimensional, stock ethnic character? In what ways is he more complex than that?

20. General question: similarly, in what sense does Shakespeare's representation of Christian characters such as Antonio, Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano complicate what might otherwise be a straightforward victory for Christianity over Shylock's principles?

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (Norton Comedies 367-424). Of interest: [1623 First Folio Facsimile](#)

ACT 1

1. Act 1, Scene 1 begins with a conversation between Theseus, Duke of Athens and Hippolyta the Amazon Queen, a famous couple from Greek mythology. What is the story about them and their eventful coming-together? What model of gender relations does their presiding presence in the play suggest, and to what extent is that model borne out in this scene (and elsewhere in the play, especially if you are presenting on this question)?

2. In Act 1, Scene 1, Hermia's father Egeus enters as a typical New Comedy-style *senex iratus* (angry old man). What specific demands does he make when he bursts onto the scene? What penalties does he threaten? How seriously are we to take his threats and, more generally, how should we understand the symbolic authority he represents?

3. In Act 1, Scene 1, what dilemma does Helena (Hermia's childhood friend) confront in this first scene? What does she decide to do about it? How does she theorize the nature and power of love, and how does her theorizing relate to her own situation?

4. In Act 1, Scene 2, Peter Quince and his actors (workingmen all) make plans to rehearse their play. What is the occasion for this play: who is calling for it, and why? What sort of play will it be, in terms of its plot and major theme or themes?

5. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Bottom the Weaver distinguish himself (for better or worse) from the other actors who are to take roles in *Pyramus and Thisby*? What is to be his role, and why, in your view, does he want to play several other roles as well? How does Peter Quince handle this troublesome fellow?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, Oberon and Titania first appear. What kind of place is their fairy realm? What special powers do this couple have? To what extent are they like, and to what extent unlike, a human couple? What is the subject of their current discord, and what apparently motivates them to take the respective positions they do regarding this subject?

7. In Act 2, Scene 1, we meet Puck or Robin Goodfellow. Who is he, and what powers does he possess? What task is he charged to perform in this scene, and why?

8. In Act 2, Scene 2, what error does Puck make in discharging his responsibility as set forth by Oberon in the previous scene? Why does he make this mistake, and what are its effects?

9. In Act 2, Scene 2, what might account for Hermia responding as she does to Lysander's advances? What assumptions do Hermia and Lysander seem to make in this scene regarding erotic attraction or love?

10. In Act 2, Scene 2, how, specifically, does Oberon bewitch his Queen Titania? Do some internet searching on the lore of the flower he uses to cast a spell over her -- why is that flower particularly appropriate to the task, and how might its symbolism be connected to the play's broader thematic concerns?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, what representational and audience-related concerns does Bottom raise with Peter Quince and his fellow actors concerning the action of *Pyramus and Thisby*? What is the basis of those concerns -- why does Bottom worry about the

things he specifies, and what plans do he and the others come up with to deal with them?

12. In Act 3, Scene 1, as mentioned above, Bottom manifests some anxiety about how certain things will be represented in *Pyramus and Thisby* and how the audience will take such representations. Theatrical realism is an issue that Shakespeare himself raises in his plays by means of prologue-speakers and main characters. Choose one such instance and discuss briefly how the issue is dealt with. (The prologue of *Henry V* is one possibility; so is Hamlet's advice to the actors in the troupe that comes to Elsinore Castle to entertain him, or Feste the Clown's song concluding *Twelfth Night*. But there are others.)

13. In Act 3, Scene 1, what magic does Puck work upon Bottom the Weaver? Why might Bottom be the most appropriate target of such magic? How does Bottom react to what one of his fellow actors calls his "translation" (i.e. his transformation)? How does Titania show her fondness for Bottom, and how does he react to her attentions?

14. In Act 3, Scene 2, what jealousies and hostilities beset Hermia and Helena as well as Demetrius and Lysander? How do Oberon and Puck manage the squabbling humans who have entered their territory? What does Oberon declare to be his chief desire, and how does he plan to achieve it?

ACT 4

15. In Act 4, Scene 1, Oberon says that his human visitors will take away nothing more from their strange experiences in the forest than "the fierce vexation of a dream" (69). The title of the play contains that word "dream." What significance do you impute to the word -- how is the play's action similar in its movement and significance to a dream? In responding, you may also want to consider Act 5, Scene 1's conclusion, in which Oberon's fairy helpers bless the palace of Theseus and Hippolyta while they and the guests sleep.

16. In Act 4, Scene 1, Theseus and Hippolyta converse and await their wedding ceremony. During the conversation, how does Hippolyta strive to maintain her autonomy as they move towards this "institutional moment"? How does Theseus respond to this attempt?

17. In Act 4, Scene 1, how does Theseus handle Egeus' newly repeated invocation of the law against Hermia -- what new information frustrates Egeus' angry demands, and what further declarations does Theseus make to complete the happiness of all except the angry old man?

18. In Act 4, Scenes 1-2, Bottom the Weaver muses on his wondrous transformation and then returns to his fellow actors. How does he construe what has happened to him? What use does he plan to make of the experience? Why do you suppose that he, alone of all the play's human characters, has actually seen the fairies?

ACT 5

19. In Act 5, Scene 1, what does Theseus apparently think of the forest adventure he has heard recounted by Hermia, Lysander, Helena, and Demetrius? In speaking to Hippolyta before the performance of *Pyramus and Thisby*, what principles of literary appreciation does Theseus set forth? In what sense do his comments extend beyond the realm of art and into other areas of life?

20. In Act 5, Scene 1, how do Theseus and the other noble characters respond to the performance of *Pyramus and Thisby* put on by Peter Quince and his crew of artisans? Why does Theseus take so much pleasure in the performance in spite of its defects?

21. In Act 5, Scene 1, how does Puck's epilogue connect the performance of *Pyramus and Thisby* and the noble audience's reaction to it with the larger performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? What privilege and responsibility does he grant Shakespeare's actual audience? What seem to be the implications of this epilogue for the status of a play in relation to the world beyond art?

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Much Ado About Nothing*. (Norton Comedies 557-620).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, Leonato says, "There is a kind / of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and {Beatrice}" (1.1.49-50). How do they conduct this war? That is, what do they say to and about each other, in what settings, and in whose presence? To what extent do others believe their insults and quips to be sincere indicators of dislike and constancy in opposition to romance?

2. In Act 1, Scene 1, why, in your view, do Beatrice and Benedick carry on as they do? What expectations about the opposite sex and about love do they appear to have? What makes them unable just to act like so many other perfectly happy individuals who do *not* avoid romance?

3. In Act 1, Scene 1, how does Claudio describe the manner in which he has fallen in love with Hero? Why does Don Pedro offer to woo Hero for Claudio -- why doesn't he do his own wooing? In general, how well does Claudio seem to know Hero, and how can you tell?

4. In Act 1, Scene 3, what seems to be the reason for Don John's sadness? What grievance, for example, does he have against Don Pedro? How does he react when he hears that the Prince is going to help out Claudio in his suit with Hero? What else besides any objective grievances might be at the root of Don John's misery?

ACT 2

5. In Act 2, Scene 1, how does Beatrice explain her general objection to pairing off with a man? When she meets Benedick in his carnival disguise, what does she say to him, and what effect do her comments have? Why, in your view, do they have such a strong effect, and why is the fact that he was disguised significant?

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, what is Don John's opening move in his bid to bring sorrow to Claudio? What does he say to Claudio, and why exactly does Claudio believe him? How is this initial problem resolved?

7. In Act 2, Scene 1, what plan does Don Pedro conceive to bring Beatrice and Benedick together? Why does he want to do so -- what principle seems to animate Don Pedro's actions in this regard? And why does he come up with this particular scheme -- what makes it so appropriate with regard to the two characters to be tricked?

8. In Act 2, Scene 2, what further scheme do Borachio and Don John devise to ruin things for Hero and Claudio? What is the underlying rationale for this scheme -- why would such a plan be likely to succeed, based on what you already have inferred about those who are to be duped?

9. In Act 2, Scene 3, what more do we hear from Benedick about his reason for being so standoffish about women? But how, after he is duly tricked to perfection by Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato, does Benedick's attitude change when he "learns" that Beatrice is in love with him? What insight about the nature of romantic desire and ritual might we infer from his transformed attitude and his words at the end of Scene 3?

10. In Act 2, Scene 3, what might be inferred from Balthazar's song beginning "Sigh no more" (2.3.56ff) about the real cause that might be attributed for the contrariness of both Benedick and Beatrice regarding love relations? And what counsel does the song give women who pine over men -- how are they to cure themselves of such

unhappiness? How, that is, do you interpret the advice, "be you blithe and bonny, / Converting all your sounds of woe / Into hey nonny, nonny" (2.3.69-70)?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, how does Beatrice react to the trick that Hero and her assistants play on her to convince her that Benedick is in love with her? Is her reaction surprising in any way? If so, why? If not, why not?

12. In Act 3, Scene 2, when Don John makes his scandalous claim about Hero's disloyalty, why does Claudio find it plausible? What does he insist he will do if the claim turns out to be true, and what does that insistence say about him?

13. In Act 3, Scene 3, Constable Dogberry enters with Verges and we find him again in Act 3, Scene 5. Part of Dogberry's role in the play is, of course, just to make us laugh. What exactly is funny about him? In addition, what might be said about his further significance, both in terms of the plot and any major themes to which you can connect his views and actions?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scene 1, Claudio cruelly shames Hero in front of the entire wedding party, and Leonato nearly goes mad when he finds that what should have been a happy occasion has brought only dishonor. But what do Beatrice and Benedick say that shows they have better judgment -- how do they interpret the charges brought against Hero and the way Claudio has behaved?

15. In Act 4, Scene 1, how does Friar Francis understand what has happened? What is his plan to make things right, and what reasoning underlies that plan?

16. In Act 4, Scene 1, Beatrice and Benedick at last admit their love for each other face-to-face. By what emotional and verbal process do they each work up to their own separate admission, and how exactly do they state the fact itself? What "extra mile" must Benedick go to convince Beatrice that he really is in love with her? How does he react to this new demand, and why so?

17. In Act 4, Scene 2, Dogberry is determined to make known the villainy his watchmen have found out about when they arrested Borachio and Conrad. What most upsets Dogberry about the whole affair, and why? What self-appraisal does he offer us in this scene? Again, how might we connect Dogberry's views here with the broader thematic interests of the play?

ACT 5

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, how does Leonato at first claim he will deal with the humiliation of his daughter at the hands of Claudio? What resolution does he then propose? How is it received, most particularly by Claudio?

19. In Act 5, Scene 2, Benedick, after briefly conversing with Margaret and admitting that he "cannot woo in festival terms" at (5.2.35), is back to his battle of wits with Beatrice. But how has their manner of addressing and dealing with each other changed, now that they have confessed their affection for each other? What remains the same, and what is different?

20. In Act 5, Scenes 3-4, what penance must Claudio still do for his treatment of Hero? What must he say and do to redeem himself, both at the supposed tomb of Hero and then during the wedding scene? How does Hero herself assist in imparting the lesson Claudio must learn? What is that lesson, as you understand it?

21. In Act 5, Scene 4, how do Benedick and Beatrice respond to the news that they have both been fooled into their present amorous state? How do they justify to each other their reason for giving in, and how do they affirm that they are still committed to a permanent relationship in spite of the trickery practiced on them?

22. In Act 5, Scene 4, Benedick now insists he cares nothing "for / a satire or an epigram" (5.4.99-100). He is determined to be married. How does he sum up what he has learned about himself and, to put it generally, the human condition, especially with regard to romance? What advice does he have for Don Pedro, and why?

23. General Question: what is the "nothing" about which there has been so "much ado" in this play? What have the characters -- and presumably the audience -- learned about the concerns referenced by the term "nothing" in this comedy of manners?

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OTHELLO, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Othello*. (Norton Tragedies 425-507).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what reasons does Iago give to justify his hatred of Othello? Do they seem sufficient grounds for such animosity? Also, to what extent (in this scene and in 1.3), does Iago seem like more than a one-dimensional stage villain?
2. In Act 1, Scenes 1-2, how is Othello's elopement with Desdemona described to her father Brabantio? That is, what specific racial or cultural terms do Iago and Roderigo use to urge Brabantio to act against Othello? How does Brabantio himself take the news?
3. In Act 1, Scene 3, how does Othello confront the charge leveled against him? What wins over the Duke of Venice (if not Brabantio)? Consider mainly Othello's performance as a speaker -- what is it about his bearing and his language that makes him attractive in this regard?
4. In Act 1, Scene 3, Othello stakes his life on Desdemona's faithful recounting of their love's development. How does Desdemona explain and defend her love for this stranger to Venetian ways? What strengths does she show at this early point in the play, when we get our first look at her?
5. In Act 1, Scene 3, Iago counsels Desdemona's admirer, Roderigo. What grounds for hope does Iago give Roderigo: how, that is, does he explain the nature of Desdemona's affection for Othello and why does he claim that their love can't last? To what vision of love does Roderigo himself subscribe? (2.1.213-85 is also relevant to this question if you are presenting on it or developing a paper topic.)

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, Desdemona banter with both Michael Cassio and Iago. What topics do they discuss, and in what manner do they talk about them? What in these innocent conversations might be said to signal trouble for Desdemona and Cassio, and opportunity for Iago? Why so?
7. In Act 2, Scene 3, how does Iago contrive Cassio's ruin? What role does Roderigo play in the plot, and what weaknesses does Cassio show in this scene?

8. In Act 2, Scene 3, Othello dismisses Cassio from his service. What is the basis for his judgment? Characterize the process whereby he arrives at and then conveys this judgment. To what extent does Othello's treatment of Cassio seem justified? Explain the rationale for your response to this last question.

ACT 3

9. In Act 3, Scene 3, discuss Iago's rhetorical strategy in bringing Othello round to condemning his wife for adultery. What images and ideas does Iago plant in Othello's head, and in what order? How does he keep his own base, self-interested motives from becoming plain to Othello?

10. In Act 3, Scene 3, what weakness or incapacity of judgment does Othello betray? By the end of 3.3, what deterioration or contraction has taken place in Othello's outlook on his career and his marriage?

11. In Act 3, Scene 4, Othello manifests his famous obsession with the handkerchief he gave Desdemona. What underlies the power of this token -- what history and qualities does Othello attribute to it, and why does its loss drive him nearly mad?

12. In Act 3, Scene 4, Emilia and Desdemona discuss men's treatment of women and, in particular, men's jealousy. In what sense is Emilia a foil to Desdemona's sensibility here and elsewhere in the play? Also, when Desdemona says, "I never gave him {Othello} cause," is her statement entirely accurate? Why or why not?

ACT 4

13. In Act 4, Scenes 1-2, consider how Othello's dialogue with Iago affects his argument with Desdemona in 4.2. How does Iago's cunning help make Othello deaf to Desdemona's self-defense?

14. In Act 4, Scene 2, discuss Desdemona's self-defense both in speaking with Othello and then with Emilia and Iago. What does she rely on to protect her reputation? And in 4.3, how does Desdemona respond to Emilia's spirited assault on men's deceptive ways?

ACT 5

15. In Act 5, Scenes 1-2, how does Iago try to secure the final success of his wicked plan? What circumstances prove to be his undoing, and how does his fall help to cap off the play's tragic ending in relation to Othello?

16. In Aristotelian tragedy, the protagonist must recognize his or her error and reassert some measure of personal dignity in the face of ruin. In Act 5, Scene 2, by what means does Othello come to understand his error? How does he reassert his dignity? To what extent do others recognize any such accomplishment? Do you find it sufficient? Why or why not?

17. General question: if you have seen Oliver Parker's film of *Othello* (starring Laurence Fishburne), how well do you think it captures the movement and thematic significance of Shakespeare's text? What did you like about the film? What, if anything, didn't you like about it, and why?

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PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND GEORGE WILKINS

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. (Norton Romances 121-89).

ACT ONE (SCENES 1 TO 4)

1. In Scene 1, John Gower sets the stage for us in his prologue: King Antiochus of Antioch lost his wife and is now in an incestuous relationship with his daughter; young Prince Pericles has come to Antioch to take his chances with the riddle in which the king has wrapped up his wicked relations with his daughter, with her hand in marriage as the prize. Explain what you can about Pericles's approach to life – that is, to fortune, wealth, love and the gods. In what sense might we say that he is at this point the perfect comic protagonist?

2. In Scene 1, what is the wording of the riddle? Is it difficult or easy to solve? Why is the manner of this riddle appropriate to the taboo nature of its content? Why have so many men apparently failed to solve it and lost their lives as a result? Why is Pericles able to solve it, unlike his predecessors in this quest?

3. In Scenes 1-2, and particularly in the latter, how does Pericles respond to the threat presented to him by his solving the riddle? What qualities as a man and as a potential leader does he show? How do his responses cut against any notion that he is merely a naïve young man -- what does he understand that shows his potential and even maturity?

4. In Scene 2, Pericles makes his way back to Tyre and informs Helicanus about what has happened. What counsel does Helicanus give the Prince, and what qualities does this subject show in giving it?

5. In Scene 3, we again meet Thaliart, the commoner Antiochus had ordered to kill Pericles. How does Thaliart understand his situation? What principle does he enunciate regarding the relationship between kings and subjects? How does he react to the news from Helicanus that Pericles has gone traveling and is no longer in the kingdom?

6. In Scene 4, we meet Governor Cleon and his wife Dionyza of the great biblical city Tarsus. What is their situation? How does Cleon describe it in detail, and what attitude do both he and his wife manifest towards their plight? In what spirit does Cleon greet the coming of Pericles's well-provisioned fleet of ships and the prince's generous offer of assistance?

ACT 2 (SCENES 5-9)

7. In Scene 5, John Gower again acts as chorus for the coming action, and as usual his narration is accompanied by a "Dumb show." In this or in any of the scenes in which Gower functions as a chorus, in what way does his manner of imparting information impact your understanding of the play?

8. In Scene 5, Pericles, having been shipwrecked, washes up on the coast of Pentapolis and encounters some fishermen there. How does he set forth his predicament and make his claim upon their assistance? How do they respond to what Pericles requests? Furthermore, what symbolic significance might we attach to the fishermen's discovery of a rusty suit of armor that washes up along the same stretch of the coast? Why is it so important to Pericles?

9. In Scenes 6-7, Pericles makes his way to the court of King Simonides and his daughter Thaisa. How do this King's conduct and speech, along with that of his daughter, contrast with the manner of reception given Pericles by Antiochus and his daughter back in the first scene? In other words, what pronounced difference is there in the guest-host relations Pericles encounters in these two different kingdoms?

10. In Scene 8, Helicanus reports that Antiochus and his daughter were struck by lightning while riding in their chariot, but the subjects of the absent Pericles's realm have more pressing matters on their minds. With what concerns do they come to Helicanus, and how does Helicanus deal with these concerns -- what is his plan going forwards?

11. In Scene 9, King Simonides of Pentapolis shows tact and charm in dissembling his strong approval of the brewing match between Pericles, who has by now won the jousting tournament he entered along with several other knights, and the king's daughter Thaisa. Why does the king so strongly approve? Moreover, why does he at first hide his delight in the match and treat Pericles rather harshly?

ACT 3 (SCENES 10-14)

12. In Scene 10, John Gower fills us in on the latest developments: Pericles's bride has had a child, the wicked King Antiochus and his daughter are reported dead, and back in Tyre, Helicanus is under pressure to accept the crown. The Prince sets sail for home, but runs into a powerful storm. In Scene 11, how does Pericles handle the awful loss of Thaisa? How does he shape our future understanding of his newborn daughter: what does he say about her and what is his plan to keep her safe?

13. In Scene 12, we learn that Pericles has made his way through the storm to Tarsus, while Thaisa's carefully sealed coffin, tossed overboard by suspicious sailors, has washed ashore in Ephesus, where it comes to the attention of the physician Cerimon. What virtues does Cerimon show that link him to the hero Pericles? How does Cerimon achieve the almost miraculous revival of Thaisa: what means does he employ to this end, and what advice does he give Thaisa later in Scene 14?

14. By Scene 13, Pericles has reached Tarsus and he now entrusts Cleon and his wife with the care of his infant daughter Marina. What are Pericles's requests to Cleon, and what vow does Pericles himself make to the goddess Diana regarding Marina? What attitude does Pericles manifest towards the realm of the gods in this scene?

ACT 4 (SCENES 15-19)

15. In Scene 15, we find out that Pericles has by now made it back to Tyre, and in Ephesus Thaisa has become a votary of the chaste goddess Diana. The young daughter Pericles named Marina and then left with Cleon at Tarsus is now a young woman, thanks to our passage through time with John Gower. How does Marina understand her current situation, and with what difficulty is she now presented: what's the cause of Dionyza's attempt upon her life?

16. In Scene 16, as a result of the failed attempt on Marina's life, the young woman ends up at the mercy of brothel-keepers in Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. In Scene 19, we are let in on the efforts of the Pander, his wife the Bawd and their man Boul't's efforts to acclimate Marina to the role of a prostitute. By what means does Marina get the upper hand not only on them but also on her would-be first customer, the Governor of

Mytilene? How does the cumulative effect of these two scenes create a parallel between Pericles' heroic qualities and Marina's virtue?

17. In Scene 17, Governor Cleon of Tarsus wrestles with the unwelcome knowledge of what his wife Dionyza has done to Marina -- they both believe Marina is dead. How does Dionyza defend her wicked deed -- what principles does she assert that we can take as the opposite of the romance quality of good characters such as Pericles, Thaisa, Helicanus, Cerimon and Marina? Why does Cleon go along with Dionyza's cover-up?

18. In Scene 18, we hear from John Gower that Pericles has made his way by sea to Tarsus to see what has become of his daughter Marina, whom he hasn't seen since he left her as an infant in the care of Governor Cleon and his wife Dionyza. How does Pericles take the news that Marina has supposedly died -- at what resolution does he arrive, and how might we relate or contrast that resolution to his earlier displays of good character and firm faith in the gods?

ACT 5 (SCENES 20-22)

19. In Scene 20, John Gower tells us that Pericles' ship has ended up at Mytilene's harbor during a holiday dedicated to Neptune, god of the sea. Scene 21 is taken up with the near miraculous recovery by Pericles of his supposedly dead child, Marina, who guides him towards recognition of the truth and herself completes the realization of her own identity. How does Marina accomplish this impressive recovery or redemption?

20. In Scene 22, Pericles obeys the dream vision of Diana he had towards the end of the previous scene, and makes his way to the goddess' temple at Ephesus. How does Pericles and Marina's wondrous recovery of Thaisa (and hers of them) unfold -- what makes the necessary mutual recognitions possible? Why is Diana the appropriate goddess to guide the characters towards and preside over the happy romance ending: Pericles, Thaisa and Marina together again, with the addition of Lysimachus of Mytilene as Marina's new husband?

21. General question: Shakespeare's romance plays end happily and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is no exception, but such dramas wouldn't be "romances" if they didn't involve considerable grief and loss, which is the stuff of tragedy. What, then, hasn't been entirely recovered or redeemed, made "all better" in the generally comic temporal sweep and favorable disposition of fortune and the gods? Or to ask the question in another way, how have Pericles and the other key characters been transformed by what has happened to them, making it perhaps inappropriate to suggest that they've

simply returned to the spiritual and intellectual state in which they seem to have been at the play's outset?

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ROMEO AND JULIET, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*. (Norton Tragedies 181-256).

ACT 1

1. What does the Prologue announce as the subject of this tragedy? What moral lesson does the Prologue promise the play will deliver?
2. In Act 1, Scene 1, in what light does the bantering and quarreling amongst the servants and higher-status characters from the two houses cast the "civil strife" that has been going on in Verona? What seems to underlie their dissension?
3. In Act 1, Scene 1, what has the Prince apparently been doing about the problem between the Montagues and Capulets? What does he do about it now -- what sentence does he pronounce, and how effective does it seem?
4. In Act 1, Scene 1, we first hear about and then meet Romeo when he talks with Benvolio. What state of mind does Romeo seem to be in, and why? What is characteristic of his speech? What advice does Benvolio offer Romeo, and how does the latter respond?
5. In Act 1, Scene 2, what is father Capulet's plan for Juliet? What opportunity does this plan create for Romeo, who at this point has never seen Juliet?
6. In Act 1, Scene 3, Juliet's nurse (Angelica) is included in the family discussion -- what has been the nurse's relationship with Juliet? What is her perspective on the current plan to marry her to Paris, the Prince's worthy kinsman? To what extent does the nurse seem wise or authoritative in her pronouncements?
7. In Act 1, Scene 4, Mercutio recounts the legend of Queen Mab. What is this legend, and what seems to be the point of Mercutio's mentioning it at this point? How does Romeo react to Mercutio's speech about Mab?
8. In Act 1, Scene 5, the Capulet festivities are the scene of Romeo's first meeting with Juliet. What happens during this encounter -- how does Shakespeare represent the

process of "falling in love" as we discover it in the looks, actions, and words of Romeo and Juliet? On the negative side, how does Tybalt remind us of the obstacles the two new lovers will face?

ACT 2

9. In Act 2, Scene 1, what view of romantic love does Mercutio offer by way of deflating Romeo's naive, wholehearted outlook? What are Mercutio's strengths and limitations as a source of perspective in this play?

10. In Act 2, Scene 2, Romeo and Juliet meet again. Both are idealistic in their way, but what differences may be found between them in the degree and quality of their idealism regarding love and courtship? What concerns does Juliet show heightened awareness of that do not seem of immediate concern to Romeo?

11. In Act 2, Scene 3, Friar Lawrence goes along with Romeo's plan to wed Juliet secretly. What assumptions does the Friar make about the situation? Lawrence is surely a sympathetic figure, but why is his conduct in this scene a portent of misfortunes to come?

12. In Act 2, Scene 4, Mercutio indirectly mocks Tybalt, the young man who will soon kill him in a fight. In what way is Mercutio both a participant in the hostilities between the Capulets and Montagues and yet capable of seeing beyond them? How does he treat Juliet's nurse when she comes calling? How does he match wits with Romeo, and regarding what subject?

13. In Act 2, Scene 5, Nurse Angelica again offers advice and support to Juliet. In his lecture on *Romeo and Juliet*, Coleridge implies that while the Nurse is eccentric, she is also a universal type of the caring, elderly nurse. How is that apparent in this scene?

ACT 3

14. In Act 3, Scene 1, Tybalt mortally wounds Mercutio. How does this deed unfold -- what part does Romeo play in Mercutio's death? What parting wisdom does Mercutio offer as he dies? Also, how does the Prince deal with this latest outbreak of factional violence in Verona? Does his sentence seem wise, or unwise? Explain your rationale.

15. In Act 3, Scene 2, what is Juliet doing when she gets the bad news about the death of Tybalt (her kinsman) and Romeo's part in the fighting as well as his banishment from Verona. How does she react to this news? What dilemma does she face, and how does she bear up in light of it?

16. In Act 3, Scene 3, what advice does Friar Lawrence give Romeo to overcome his difficulties as a banished member of a warring house? What limitations does the Friar betray in this scene -- how does Romeo himself characterize the Friar's understanding of romantic love?

17. In Act 3, Scenes 4-5, Romeo and Juliet spend their first night together in dangerous circumstances. What traditional poetic genre do they invoke at first light? How do they view their situation and their prospects at this point?

18. In Act 3, Scenes 4-5, what expectations do Juliet's parents (her father in particular) have for her? What might account for her father's harsh words and threats, both in the most obvious sense and at a deeper psychological level?

ACT 4

19. In Act 4, Scenes 1-4, what is Friar Lawrence's scheme to bring Juliet through her difficulties? How does Juliet receive this plan? What are her fears and resolutions as she puts it into action? Does she seem to have matured by this point in the play? Explain your rationale for responding as you do.

20. In Act 4, Scene 5, the Capulet parents believe they have suffered an irretrievable loss of the sort all parents fear: the loss of a beloved only child. Describe this scene as a whole in terms of its mixture of lamentation, grotesque description, and comedy.

ACT 5

21. In Act 5, Scenes 1-2, what course of action does Romeo determine now that (so far as he knows) Juliet is dead? What discomfiting news does Friar Lawrence receive about the progress of his plan for Romeo and Juliet?

22. In Act 5, Scene 3, Romeo makes his way to the Capulets' tomb. What is his intention, and what actually happens in the tomb? What mistaken assumptions and accidents help make this scene as tragic as it is?

23. At the play's end, Friar Lawrence (along with Balthasar) is called to give an account of what has happened, and is forgiven for his role in the sad events. It has been said that *Romeo and Juliet* is not tragic because accidents are mostly responsible for the disastrous outcome. Do you agree with that assessment? Why or why not? If you see *Romeo and Juliet* as genuinely tragic, what is the tragic quality or dimension in the play?

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THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Taming of the Shrew*. (Norton Comedies 175-244).

ACT 1

1. In the Induction Scenes 1-2, how is Christopher Sly's metadramatic presence connected to one or more themes relevant to the main story of the play (i.e. the men's pursuit of Katherine and Bianca)?
2. In Act 1, Scene 1, why has Lucentio come to Padua -- what does he hope to gain by traveling to this Italian city? Where is he from and what are his circumstances? How does the text describe the young man's first sight of Bianca -- what effect does she have on him and his plans? What new scheme do he and his servant Tranio cook up to win her?
3. In Act 1, Scene 1, what is life like for Katherine and Bianca at the play's beginning? Why isn't their father, Baptista, willing to allow his youngest daughter Bianca to marry at this point? What seems to be the quality of his relationship with his daughters, and how can you tell?
4. In Act 1, Scene 2, why has Petruccio made his way to Padua? What are his circumstances, and what is his attitude towards romantic love and the institution of marriage? How does he differ from Lucentio in circumstances and attitude?
5. In Act 1, Scene 2, what is Hortensio's angle in his dealings with his old friend Petruccio? How honest is he with the man, and what plan do the two of them come up with to advance their respective agendas?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, what is Petruccio's first move in his quest to make Katherine as his bride? How does he introduce himself to her, and how does he manage their first conversation? In what sense do the two of them already seem appropriate for each other?
7. In Act 2, Scene 1, what do Gremio and Tranio offer by way of a dowry for Bianca? How does Baptista handle this competition? To what extent, up to this point in the play, has anything like "true love" or genuine erotic passion come into view?

ACT 3

8. Act 3, Scene 1, how does Lucentio woo Bianca in the guise of a schoolmaster -- what creative "device" does he employ to make his wishes known to her, and how effective is it, based upon her response?

9. Act 3, Scene 1, why does Hortensio forswear any further interest in Bianca at the scene's end -- what has she supposedly done to lose his interest? What fear or anxiety does this response on Hortensio's part betray?

10. In Act 3, Scene 2, Petruccio makes quite a fool of himself as the wedding ceremony is about to take place, and then during it (Gremio reports what happened during the actual ceremony). What exactly does he do, and why does he do it, as you infer from his own words and actions?

11. In Act 3, Scene 2, why does Kate react as strongly to his stratagem as she does -- what was she evidently expecting the ceremony to be like, and what, by implication, might she be expecting from marriage itself, both in the personal sense of relations with Petruccio and in the broader, institutional sense that marks a person's status in the community?

ACT 4

12. In Act 4, Scene 1, what happens on the trip home to Petruccio's estate after the wedding? How does Petruccio, in soliloquy, further explain to us his methodology in dealing with Kate thus far? On what principles about male-female relations and about human nature has he been operating? Petruccio is hardly a feminist, but to what extent might his strategy and actions show a certain respect for Kate?

13. Act 4, Scene 3, how much of Petruccio's behavior does Kate seem to understand -- to what extent, that is, does she comprehend the principles underlying his madcap behavior towards her? How well would you say she has held up under this onslaught so far, and what evidence can you find for your response?

14. In Act 4, Scene 6, how does Petruccio continue his plan to conquer his new bride Kate -- what further outrageous demands does he make of her, and how much of a fight does she put up? How much progress, to judge from this scene and the third scene, has Petruccio made towards his goal of a truly "conformable Kate"?

ACT 5

15. In Act 5, Scene 1, Lucentio's father Vincentio has been impersonated by a gullible "Pedant" (at the instigation of Tranio) and now finds himself nearly hauled off to prison as an imposter when he arrives in Padua. Parental authority is often a major consideration in comic plays; how has Shakespeare dealt with that authority in the present play? Consider the present scene, but also briefly reflect on Baptista's role as father to Kate and Bianca.

16. In Act 5, Scene 2, when the three couples at last get together for a feast at Lucentio's, how do the wives of Lucentio and Hortensio show themselves to be "froward"? What does Hortensio's wife apparently mean by the quip, "He that is giddy thinks the world turns round"? (5.2.20)

17. In Act 5, Scene 2, Petruccio wins his bet with the other men when Kate speaks with ringing clarity about the supposed nature of women and about relations between the sexes. What views does she set forth regarding these issues? Does the play as a whole merely perpetuate the conventional view of marriage, or does the courtship battle between Petruccio and Katherine redeem that view and make it seem worthwhile?

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THE TEMPEST, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Tempest*. (Norton Romances 365-425).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what kind of "tempest" does Prospero stir up? Explain the resonance of the storm metaphor for this play. For example, what does the storm at the outset of the play do to notions about rank, worth, and so forth, as the characters on board the sinking ship argue with one another?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, how is Miranda positioned as a central character in the play, and what virtues does she appear to possess? How much does she know about her past, and what does she learn about her origins and status in this scene?

3. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Prospero explain his loss of power and exile to Miranda? To what extent does he admit partial responsibility for his own downfall, and to what degree does he find others (his brother Antonio and the King of Naples) culpable?

4. In Act 1, Scene 2, what kind of magic does Prospero wield? What seems to be the source of that magic, and to what ends is he presently employing it? Aside from Prospero's magic, what role does Fortune or Providence (God's plan) play in the first two scenes?

5. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Prospero treat Ariel and Caliban? What does his treatment of them suggest about his understanding of power and its proper uses? In what sense might it be said that Prospero's potential for tyranny is on display in this scene?

6. In Act 1, Scene 2, Caliban has sometimes been allegorized by modern critics as an island native facing the onslaught of European colonizers. How do you interpret his situation? What are Caliban's virtues and vices, and how does he describe himself -- his nature, his origins, his rights, his limitations?

7. In Act 1, Scene 2, How does Ferdinand understand his situation after the shipwreck? How does Ariel's song reinforce Ferdinand's perceptions? Why does Prospero treat Ferdinand as he does, in spite of his inward delight at Miranda's admiration for the young man?

ACT 2

8. Act 2, Scene 1, what utopian vision of governance and society does Gonzalo set forth? How do Sebastian and Antonio respond to this vision? Does Gonzalo seem wise? What are his strengths and limitations?

9. Act 2, Scene 1, what course of action does Antonio urge upon Sebastian, brother of Alonso, King of Naples? According to Antonio, what opportunity has the tempest presented to Sebastian, and how should he respond? How does Ariel thwart this evil exhortation?

10. Act 2, Scene 2, how does the comic scene with Trinculo and Stephano complement the previous one with Antonio and Sebastian? Why do Trinculo and Stephano form a natural unit with Caliban?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, what task has Prospero given Ferdinand? What sort of interaction between Ferdinand and Miranda takes place -- upon what is their affection based, and in what manner do they declare that affection? How does Prospero react to their conversation, which he overhears without their knowledge?

12. In Act 3, Scene 2, what action does Caliban urge upon Stephano? What appears to be Caliban's view of "politics"? In other words, how should power be won, who deserves to win it, and how should it be maintained? What weakness in understanding does Caliban show in this scene?

13. In Act 3, Scene 3, what is the significance of Prospero's magical stagecraft as he prepares to pronounce sentence against the shipwrecked men who have wronged him - why does Ariel offer up a banquet and then, appearing as a harpy, make the banquet disappear?

14. In Act 3, Scene 3, how does Prospero describe the sin of King Alonso of Naples? How does he punish Alonso for his role in banishing him? What effect does this punishment have upon the King?

ACT 4

15. In Act 4, Scene 1, what demonstration of his power does Prospero give Ferdinand and Miranda, and why does he offer them this demonstration? Who are Ceres and Iris, and what is the subject of their exchange?

16. In Act 4, Scene 1, Prospero utters his famous remark, "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep" (156-58)? What is the immediate context of this remark in the scene, and how, more generally, does it apply to Prospero's own magical powers?

ACT 5

17. In Act 5, Scene 1, Prospero seems quite willing to part with his magic at long last. Why so? What has it helped him to accomplish that is perhaps even more important than exposing the faults of his enemies and getting them to promise to restore him to his dukedom?

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, when Prospero reveals Ferdinand and Miranda to the assembled company, they are playing chess. What is the significance of that choice on Shakespeare's part, with respect to the couple's island courtship and their prospects for a happy future?

19. In Act 5, Scene 1, what has Alonso learned from his ordeal as a temporarily bereaved father? How does he participate in the play's successful resolution and setting-to-rights in this final scene?

20. In Act 5, Scene 1, what future lies in store for Prospero's onetime minions Caliban and Ariel? What power or realm has Ariel symbolized throughout the play, and what life will he enjoy now that Prospero will soon have no further need of him?

21. In the epilogue, what prerogative does Prospero acknowledge as belonging to the audience? In what sense does Prospero here put himself in the situation of his own servant Ariel with respect to playgoers? How does the epilogue reflect on the relationship between art and life beyond art, between the representations of a creator and the imagination and attention of a viewer?

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TIMON OF ATHENS, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Timon of Athens*. (Norton Tragedies 509-69).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, what kind of picture of the protagonist is provided by the dialogue between the poet and painter? What is the significance of the poet's imagined scene in which the protagonist is favored by Lady Fortune?

2. In Act 1, Scene 1, what's our first glimpse of Timon himself? How does he respond to the Old Athenian's suit? What seems to motivate him at this early point in the play?

3. In Act 1, Scene 1, the Cynic philosopher Apemantus makes his first appearance. Do a bit of research online and, in your own words, set down the main tenets of the Cynics. Furthermore, how does Apemantus treat Timon -- what seems to be the relationship between them?

4. In Act 1, Scene 2, both Apemantus the Cynic and Timon give us much more information about their respective outlooks on life. What more do we learn from Apemantus in that regard? What intentions does he manifest towards Timon -- why does he even pay attention to this wealthy nobleman whom he evidently holds in contempt? What's in it for Apemantus?

5. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does Timon see his own acts of extreme generosity towards others as well as their shows of generosity towards him -- i.e. all the gift-giving, feasting and fine words he and his compatriots engage in? What does he apparently believe he's accomplishing by distributing such largesse? What would the perfect society look like if Timon had his way?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scene 1, why is the Athenian Senator calling in his debts (demanding that Timon pay back the money he has borrowed from the Senator)? What realities about borrowing and extending credit -- economic realities, in other words -- is the Senator pointing out?

7. In Act 2, Scene 2, Timon's worthy servant Flavius tries to get him to understand the gravity of his financial situation. What is that situation? What is Flavius' perspective on it and on what needs to be done now? How does Timon himself process his awful predicament, and where does he think help may be found? How would you assess Timon's understanding, his state of mind, at present?

ACT 3

8. In Act 3, Scene 1, in hopes of securing loans to get him through his difficulties, Timon has authorized his servant Flaminius to start making the rounds amongst those who have enjoyed his largesse. How does the conversation go between Flaminius and Timon's supposed friend Lucullus? On what principle and in what spirit does Lucullus refuse to help Timon at such a critical time?

9. In Act 3, Scene 2, it's time for another of Timon's servants, Servilius, to ask another friend of Timon, Lucius, for a loan. What's Lucius' reason for failing to deliver? Aristotle, who wrote perceptively about qualities such as beneficence, munificence, and magnanimity in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, offered the insight that those who give assistance nobly find this activity more pleasant than do those who are on the receiving end. Lucius claims to approve thoroughly of Timon's past generosity, but how does his present attitude bring home a stark truth about the psychology of borrowing and lending?

10. In Act 3, Scene 3, Sempronius takes his turn at disappointing Timon by refusing him assistance in spite of the man's past generosity towards him. What rationale does Sempronius provide, and what inferences about human nature does Timon's servant draw from them?

11. In Act 3, Scene 4, servants gather at Timon's estate to promote their masters' suits against him, confronting Timon's Flavius and Flaminius with an ugly scene. What perspective do these disgruntled servants offer us on the unfolding financial tragedy of Timon's house? In your response, consider the following: echoing Apemantus' earlier quip, "Men set their doors against a setting sun" (1.2.137), Lucius' servant says, "a prodigal course / Is like the sun's, but not, like his, recoverable. I fear / 'Tis deepest

winter in Lord Timon's purse" (3.4.14-17). What insight do you find in these seasonal-cycle metaphors with regard to human nature and the significance of human economic arrangements and behavior?

12. In Act 3, Scenes 4-5, and then in Scene 7, Timon himself has clearly begun to register the depth of the delusion and betrayal involved in his ruin. How does he respond to his creditors' servants, and then in Scene 7, how does he try to bring home to his assembled creditors the true nature of their betrayal? At that scene's end, at what new principle has Timon arrived with regard to his fellow human beings? Does it seem justified, or too broad? Explain.

13. In Act 3, Scene 6, the military captain Alcibiades brings a matter to the Athenian Senate and finds himself not only disappointed in his hopes of obtaining mercy for a soldier who has killed another man, but banished into the bargain for his bluntness in defending his request. What motivates the senators to refuse Alcibiades' request, and to what resolution does their intransigence drive him?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scene 1, Timon, determined to quit Athens, rages and embraces the coming-on of "confusion" in all human affairs. In Act 4, Scene 2, how do the language and conduct of Timon's former servant Flavius undercut any tendency an audience might have to be carried along with Timon in his misanthropy? What does Flavius announce as his plan going forward with respect to Timon's predicament?

15. In Act 4, Scene 3, which consists of a long series of strange confrontations between self-exiled Timon and those who come to visit him outside Athens, Timon first digs for roots to eat and instead discovers -- gold! How does he use this gold during his first meeting with Alcibiades and the prostitutes accompanying that banished soldier? How does this false bounty from "mother earth" help Timon advance his misanthropic intentions towards his first visitors?

16. In Act 4, Scene 3, Apemantus visits Timon. What does this Cynic philosopher think of the ruined man's current living arrangements and conduct? Why doesn't he accept the notion that what Timon is doing might be a way of curing himself of his despair? How does Timon respond to Apemantus' taunting criticisms -- how does he defend the path of exile and hermit-status that he has chosen to take, and to what extreme apostrophe to "gold" and against all humanity does his angry conversation with Apemantus lead him around lines 374-84?

17. In Act 4, Scene 3, after Apemantus leaves, Timon gives gold to some thieves who visit him, and even offers them examples supposedly proving that even the sun, moon, and earth are thieves. But then his onetime servant Flavius show up. What does Flavius do to try to bring Timon to patience? What effect do Flavius' efforts have on Timon -- how does the latter respond, and how do his remarks at the end of this long scene sum up the resolution at which he has arrived about his fellow human beings?

ACT 5

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, Timon's old flatterers put in an appearance in front of Timon's cave. How do they understand his downfall and current condition? What does Timon do when he's faced with such visitors, and how does this scene help to set up the one that follows, in which the Athenian senators visit Timon to make a pitch for his help against Alcibiades?

19. In Act 5, Scene 2, the Athenian senators visit Timon in hopes of gaining his assistance against Alcibiades, who is set upon attacking Athens for its mistreatment of him when he sought mercy for one of his soldiers. This is the last we are going to hear from Timon alive: what is his parting shot against the senators and indeed all humankind? Why do you suppose Timon not only makes this declaration but cruelly leads the senators on before making it -- how does that amount to something like revenge for the pattern of injustice he surely feels has brought him to his ruin?

20. In Act 5, Scene 4, a soldier sent by Alcibiades discovers Timon's grave, which bears an inscription the soldier can't read, so he determines to bring a wax copy of it back to his captain. In Scene 5, the Athenian senators try to convince Alcibiades to limit the scope of his wrath. What rationale do they offer for such restraint on their enemy's part? How does Alcibiades respond, and why does he respond as he does?

21. General question: perhaps the bitter conclusion of *Timon of Athens* seems less than fully "tragic" when we compare it to Greek tragic endings or to Shakespeare's other tragedies -- *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, etc. Timon's final insight, that is, may well seem to many readers and viewers more like a sustained misanthropic rant than deep insight into the human condition. What do you think -- do you find the play compelling as tragedy or compelling on some other grounds, or not very compelling at all? Explain your reasons for responding as you do.

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TITUS ANDRONICUS, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Titus Andronicus*. (Norton Tragedies 115-79).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 1, discuss the play's presentation of Roman religious ritual: why does Titus believe that his sacrifice of Tamora's eldest son Alarbus is honorable and necessary? In what does the sacrifice consist, and how does Shakespeare represent it onstage?
2. In Act 1, Scene 1, how does the captured Tamora, Queen of Goths, react to the prospect -- and then the fact -- of her eldest son's slaughter? How does her response affect the way an audience might perceive the conduct and attitude of Titus with regard to the sacrifice?
3. In Act 1, Scene 1, how does Titus present to the Roman public his view of the death of several sons in his latest military campaign? How does he appear to feel about it privately, to himself, and how much scope do his private sentiments have with him?
4. In Act 1, Scene 1, what is the political situation in Rome? What claims do Saturninus and Bassianus respectively make to succeed their departed father the emperor? What clues does the text offer about the character of these two young men?
5. In Act 1, Scene 1, how does Titus handle the authority given to him by the people and leading politicians, including his brother, the Tribune Marcus Andronicus? In particular, what is Titus' rationale for lending his voice to Saturninus and ignoring Bassianus?
6. In Act 1, Scene 1, the newly elevated Saturninus chooses Titus' daughter Lavinia as empress, but is promptly love-struck by the alluring Tamora. How does Titus take the offer of his daughter being raised to empress, and how does he handle the rebellion this prospect sparks on the part of Bassianus, Lavinia, and his own sons? Who is in the right here, and why?
7. In Act 1, Scene 1, what does Tamora (newly made empress) understand about Roman ethics and politics that Titus doesn't (at least until later)? Explain how she asserts her authority over Saturninus and begins to take control of the situation in Rome by manipulating that nation's codes of language and conduct.

ACT 2

8. In Act 2, Scene 1, how does Tamora's long-time lover, Aaron the Moor, see his situation now that Tamora has become Empress of Rome? How does he deal with the argument between her sons Chiron and Demetrius over their desire for Lavinia -- what advice does he offer them, and what is his purpose in advising them as he does?

9. In Act 2, Scene 3, how does Aaron's stratagem play out? In what ways do Chiron, Demetrius, Tamora and Aaron heap injury upon injury on the Andronici in this scene? In particular, how does Tamora respond to Lavinia's pleas to kill her instead of ravishing her?

10. In Act 2, Scene 4, characterize Marcus Andronicus' response when he lights upon the ravished and mutilated Lavinia: what classical allusions come to him when he sees her in distress, and what use does he make of them? How does he connect the dreadful scene in front of him with what has so far occurred in the play, and what does he think it necessary to do?

ACT 3

11. In Act 3, Scene 1, Titus is confronted with two shocks: the impending execution of two sons, and the sight of his mutilated daughter Lavinia, brought to her by his brother Marcus. How does he understand Rome now? To what extent is the representation of Titus' suffering at this point designed to elicit pity? What in the representation might be said to work against pity?

12. In Act 3, Scene 1, what deception does Aaron practice against Titus, and on what basis is he able to get away with it -- that is, why, with respect to Titus' outlook and sensibilities, is Aaron's stratagem so successful? In addition, what does Aaron reveal about his motivation for behaving as he has so far in the play -- what are his allegiances and desires?

13. In Act 3, Scene 2, the remaining Andronici in Rome gather for a banquet. What do Titus' reactions and words reveal about his mindset at this point? Is he distracted, as Marcus thinks, or would his mental state be best described otherwise? What is discussed at the banquet, and what elements of the scene inject comedy into an unbearable situation?

ACT 4

14. In Act 4, Scene 1, by what means does Lavinia reveal what has been done to her? How does Ovid's book *The Metamorphoses* figure in her successful implication of Chiron and Demetrius? What lesson does Titus himself derive from Lavinia's tale, beyond the obvious one that Tamora's sons are the guilty parties?

15. In Act 4, Scene 2, Titus has his message delivered to Chiron and Demetrius, and news arrives that Tamora has given birth to a child by Aaron. How does Aaron handle this dangerous situation? What new dimension of himself do his words and actions regarding this event and its significance reveal?

16. In Act 4, Scene 3, how does Titus advance his designs on the Emperor? To what extent, if at all (as asked in a previous question), does he appear to be unbalanced? What is the point of having his supporters shoot "messed" arrows in the direction of Saturninus?

17. In Act 4, Scene 4, how do Saturninus and Tamora, respectively, react to Titus' threatening gesture against them from the previous scene, in which he ordered message-laded arrows shot in the Emperor's direction? What errors beset their thinking with regard to Titus' mental state and motives?

ACT 5

18. In Act 5, Scene 1, Aaron is captured by Lucius' army while trying to escape from Roman territory with his child. From lines 124-44, Aaron utters one of the purest declarations of villainy in English drama: what opposition do his words constitute against Roman ethics, or indeed any kind of morality at all?

19. In Act 5, Scene 2, Tamora and sons show up at Titus' place dressed as Revenge, Murder, and Rapine. What does Tamora apparently think she is accomplishing by this performance? How does Titus fool them all, and what does he do to Chiron and Demetrius? How does he explain his course of action to them as he kills them?

20. In Act 5, Scene 3, Titus ends Lavinia's suffering and feeds Tamora and Saturninus "Chiron and Demetrius pie." First, how does Titus justify his killing of Lavinia? And with regard to the dinner scene, why, after all that has happened thus far and based on the Ovidian source from which Shakespeare has drawn, is this cannibalistic catastrophe the most appropriate one?

21. In Act 5, Scene 3, what punishment does Lucius (newly proclaimed emperor) decree for Aaron? Why is that punishment a suitable revenge for what Aaron has done? Also, to what extent does Lucius' heaping of blame on Aaron for what has happened seem adequate as an explanation for the tragic events that have occurred? Explain.

22. General question: why are there so many references to body parts in this play that they begin calling attention to themselves as such? What theme is Shakespeare exploring -- or what goal is he achieving -- when he makes his characters refer so clumsily, and so frequently, to the body parts they or others have lost: tongues, hands, heads, etc.?

23. General question: is *Titus Andronicus* a straightforward revenge tragedy, a parody or send-up of revenge tragedy, or something in between? In other words, do you think the play is meant to be taken seriously as tragedy? Or do you find its chief value in the realm of jest, spectacle, and mockery? Explain.

24. General question: if you have seen Julie Taymor's film *Titus* (2000), how does it explore the play's conflicts between Romans, Goths, and Aaron the Moor? How might the film be said to enhance our understanding of the play? What does the "neo-fascist" setting (and perhaps other decisions Taymor makes) add to the text?

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THE HISTORY OF TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The History of Troilus and Cressida*. (Norton Comedies 751-839).

ACT 1

1. How does the Prologue address the Homeric context of the play's action? What attitude towards that context begins to become apparent?

2. In Act 1, Scene 1, what sets Troilus apart from the play's heroic, martial context? How does he describe his state of mind at this early stage? What seems to be Troilus' opinion of Pandarus and his motives for trying to make him a match with Cressida?

3. In Act 1, Scene 2, what difference becomes apparent between the way Cressida speaks to Pandarus about Troilus and the way she thinks of him privately? How does she explain her reluctance to enter a love match with Troilus? On the whole, how would

you characterize Cressida at this point -- is it feasible to make any assumptions about her at this early stage? If so, what assumptions?

4. In Act 1, Scene 3, what role does Ulysses (his name in Homer is Odysseus) play in explaining the current state of affairs and in devising a scheme to improve the situation? Why, according to him, is Achilles' conduct in this seventh year of the war such a disaster for the Greek army? What does Ulysses plan to do about it?

5. In Act 1, Scene 3, Aeneas meets Agamemnon to deliver Hector's challenge to any Greek warrior who dares meet him in single combat. What are the terms of this challenge? Refer back to Scene 2 for its source, and attend also to Agamemnon's reply to Aeneas' speech in responding to the following: what connections between love and war has the play posited up to this point?

ACT 2

6. In Act 2, Scenes 1 and 3, describe the interchange between Thersites, Ajax, and Achilles -- what are the terms of his denunciation of these famous warriors? And how do they treat him in turn -- what attitude do Ajax and Achilles, respectively, take towards this scold? In what sense might their opposing viewpoints be said to feed off each other, or even to require each other?

7. In Act 2, Scene 2, when the question of turning Helen over to the Greeks and thereby ending the war comes up, what argument between Troilus (and Paris) and Hector (and Helenus) ensues? Why exactly does Troilus think it would be wrong to give in, and why does Hector think otherwise? Why does he nevertheless come round to Troilus' side? How does this interchange affect your view of Hector?

ACT 3

8. In Act 3, Scene 2, as Troilus awaits his long-sought encounter with Cressida, what fear most besets him? How does Cressida respond to Troilus? What kinds of declarations do the two lovers make? Characterize them. On the whole, what understanding of the concept "love" emerges from this scene?

9. In Act 3, Scene 3, the one-time Trojan priest Calchas, who has defected to the Greeks, calls in a favor -- he wants his daughter Cressida returned to him in the Greek camp in exchange for the captured Trojan Prince Antenor. Ulysses offers a plan for getting Achilles involved again in the war against Troy. What is his plan, and how does he follow up on it in his encounter with Achilles? According to Ulysses, what is the basis of military reputation?

ACT 4

10. In Act 4, Scenes 2-5, Cressida will indeed have to be turned over to the Greek Diomedes. How do Troilus and Cressida view themselves and each other after they first consummate their love? Then, after they find out about Cressida's imminent departure, how do they respond to that disastrous news?

11. In Act 4, Scene 6, how does Cressida conduct herself when she is introduced to the Greek warriors halfway between Troy and the Greek camp? How does Ulysses assess her character? To what extent does his view seem accurate?

12. In Act 4, Scene 7, Hector gets his challenge match with Ajax. How does the contest go? How do the Greek and Trojan warriors behave after it is concluded? What does Achilles do to shatter the good mood? At this point, what assessment can you offer regarding the relative worth of Hector and Achilles?

ACT 5

13. In Act 5, Scene 1, Thersites again targets our favorite Greek warriors, this time including Patroclus. Again, in what sense might these opponents be said to need one another? Overall, how would you characterize the role and significance of Thersites up to this point in the play?

14. In Act 5, Scene 2, Troilus is guided by Ulysses to the tent where he may see how Cressida bears herself in the presence of the Greek Diomedes. What does Cressida do, and how does she justify it to herself? How, in this and the next scene (Act 5, Scene 3), does Troilus deal with what he has witnessed?

15. In Act 5, Scene 5, we learn that Hector has just killed Patroclus, throwing the Greek camp into dismay, but of course his friend's death at last brings Achilles into the battle. What happens in the initial contest between Hector and Achilles -- the great event so long awaited for much of the Trojan War? How does this contest between Hector and Achilles conclude in Act 5, Scenes 7-9? This is obviously not the Achilles we find in Homer's *Iliad* -- what principle seems to motivate him in these scenes?

16. In Act 5, Scene 4, with Ajax proudly hanging back and the Greek army in a seemingly anarchic state, Thersites plans to sit back and enjoy the pageant of bloody foolery. What observations does he make, and what role does he end up playing in the fighting in this scene and in Act 5, Scene 8? What kind of impact does his behavior have on your view of the other fighting that occurs around these scenes?

17. By Act 5, Scenes 9-11, Hector has been slain by Achilles, and the Trojans are left to register the grievous loss. Troilus strikes Pandarus and bids him be gone, and the latter complains of his sufferings from venereal disease and his ill usage by Troilus. To what extent should we hold Pandarus responsible for the outcome of the love match between Troilus and Cressida? What was "in it" for him with regard to the matchmaking, anyway?

18. General question. By the end of the play, would you say that Troilus has become thoroughly disillusioned and cynical (like Pandarus), or that he has transferred his quest for an object to idealize to the war? Explain your rationale by referring to Troilus' words and actions in the concluding scenes.

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TWELFTH NIGHT, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Assigned: Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night*. (Norton Comedies 689-750).

ACT 1

1. Romantic-era critic William Hazlitt's 1817 essay on *Twelfth Night* suggests that Shakespeare writes a "comedy of nature" in which "the foibles and follies of individuals are of nature's planting, not the growth of art or study." In Act 1, Scene 1, to what extent might Hazlitt's statement be taken as a key to understanding Duke Orsino? To what excess or "foible" is he prone, and why, judging from what we learn of Countess Olivia in this scene, might she be an appropriate focus for Orsino's affections?

2. In Act 1, Scene 2, what is the situation on the Illyrian coast? That is, what has happened to Viola and her brother? What plan does Viola announce to the Captain when he mentions Countess Olivia, and in what sense does the principle underlying this plan distinguish her as this comic play's central character?

3. In Act 1, Scene 3, what is Sir Toby Belch's attitude towards his niece Countess Olivia's insistence on mourning for her departed brother? What seems to be his philosophy of life generally? What accounts for his interest in Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and by means of what advice does Toby urge Andrew to pursue his courtship of Olivia?

4. In Act 1, Scene 4, what is the basis of the intimacy that forms so quickly between Duke Orsino and Viola (disguised as "Cesario"; from now on I'll write "Viola/Cesario")

since the disguise won't be lifted until Act 5)? Why does the Duke think his suit to Olivia will succeed better if he employs "Cesario" as his intermediary?

5. In Act 1, Scene 5, we meet Countess Olivia. Why does Olivia disdain Duke Orsino's affection for her, if we might conjecture a reason besides the stated one of loyalty to her departed brother? Why does she grant a hearing to the Duke's current attempt? How does this scene represent Olivia's falling in love with Viola/Cesario, and how much control does she have over her situation once she falls in love?

6. In Act 1, Scene 5, how does Viola/Cesario manage the task of wooing by proxy for Duke Orsino, and how does she/he respond to Countess Olivia's defensive witticisms and other comments meant to deflect Orsino's persistent attentions? In sum, how does Viola/Cesario conceptualize courtships between men and women?

7. In Act 1, Scene 5, we also meet Olivia's maid Maria, her steward Malvolio, and the Clown Feste. Discuss Olivia's bantering with the latter -- how does each assess Malvolio? What argument does Feste advance to prove Olivia a fool, and more broadly, when he says to Olivia, "Any thing that's mended is but / patch'd; virtue that transgresses is but patch'd with / sin, and sin that amends is but patch'd with virtue" (47-49), how might we take his observation as a means by which to judge the errors and excesses of the play's characters, Olivia included?

ACT 2

8. In Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2, first Antonio and Sebastian converse after the latter has been rescued from the shipwreck that he believes drowned his sister Viola. Characterize the affinity that seems to be struck up suddenly between Antonio and Sebastian. Moreover, in Scene 2, how does Viola/Cesario process the complication that has arisen since her proxy wooing of Olivia in the service of Duke Orsino?

9. In Act 2, Scenes 3 and 5, Sir Toby and Maria plot against Malvolio -- what has he done to earn their scorn, and what exactly do they plan to do to him? What makes their plan appropriate to Malvolio's character, and what's the connection between this deception-plot and the larger action of the play (i.e. the love-pursuits of Viola, Olivia, and Orsino)?

10. In Act 2, Scene 4, Viola/Cesario is by now in as strong a state of passion for the Duke as the Duke is for Olivia. What advantages does Viola's gender-disguise afford her in getting some perspective on the situation into which her own strong feelings have cast her? How much control does she have over her actions and her fate does she have at this point in the play (or elsewhere, if you want to refer to additional scenes)?

11. In Act 2, Scene 5, Malvolio falls head-first into the trap that Maria and Sir Toby have set for him. How does he interpret the alleged signs of Olivia's affection, and in the process of doing that, how does he size up his own worth and his prospects going forward as well as reveal himself to be a hypocrite based upon the puritanism we have seen from him in earlier appearances?

ACT 3

12. In Act 3, Scene 1, how does Feste sum up for Viola/Cesario his role as a Fool? What is Viola/Cesario's estimation of Feste's qualities and speech?

13. In Act 3, Scene 1, characterize the impasse between Viola/Cesario and Olivia with regard to the latter's passion for this servant of Duke Orsino. How might Olivia's passion for Viola/Cesario be differentiated from that of Orsino for Olivia?

14. In Act 3, Scene 2, what advice does Sir Toby give Sir Andrew about his role as lover? What opinion of Sir Andrew does he hold by this point in the play, and why?

15. In Act 3, Scene 4, Malvolio is carted off to a "dark room" as a madman after his bizarre attempt to woo Olivia. By what words and gestures does he advance his suit, and how does Olivia take his ridiculous attempt at courtship? What does he think he has accomplished?

16. In Act 3, Scene 4, Sir Andrew is led to make his challenge against Viola/Cesario as a fellow suitor to Olivia. What limitations of her gender-based disguise does Viola run up against in this scene? As for Sir Toby, what evaluation does he offer regarding male rhetoric about honor and violence (see 3.4.176-96)?

ACT 4

17. In Act 4, Scenes 1 and 3, Sebastian is at first surprised to find Olivia enamored of him and then agrees to a very sudden proposal of marriage by Olivia since, of course, she mistakes him for Viola/Cesario. Why does he agree? What meditation does he offer regarding the affinity between love and madness, and how might his observations on this point be connected to the larger action of the play, which has been much concerned with this affinity and with the extent to which we can control or influence what happens to us?

18. In Act 4, Scene 2, Sir Toby and the Clown Feste have some more fun at the expense of the imprisoned Malvolio. What reservations is Sir Toby starting to have about the plot against Malvolio, and why? What observations does the "Fool" Feste (first as Sir

Topas and then in his own person) make about insanity in the course of his chat with Malvolio? In particular, what seems to be the significance of Topas's reference to Pythagoras and the doctrine of the reincarnation or the transmigration of souls?

ACT 5

19. In Act 5, Scene 1, how (by what device) does Shakespeare untie the comic "knots" tied in the first four acts -- namely the confusion, frustration, and trouble caused by Viola's gender disguising as well as the disillusionment and injury created by Sir Toby and Maria's schemes against Malvolio and Sir Andrew? What insight/s about desire, courtship, and self-control might we gain from watching all this confusion and passion unfold and then be resolved before our eyes?

20. With regard to Act 5, Scene 1, some critics have taken Malvolio's claims to victim-status rather seriously. It's fair to say that Malvolio's unhappy situation and parting threats inject a sour note into what is otherwise a symphony of happy marriages. But how might his punishment be interpreted as essentially just? How does Malvolio violate the comic spirit or impulse that otherwise reigns in this play--what quality does he lack that has helped the other characters get through their difficulties and arrive at happy endings?

21. The Clown Feste is perhaps one of Shakespeare's most interesting "fools," and he's quite a musical fool, too, with songs gracing Acts 2.3, 2.4, 4.2, and at the very end of 5.1. What significance do these songs (address at least the final song and any one other) hold for the play's broader concerns? How, that is, do they relate to such broader topics as love, sanity and insanity, the inevitability of change, death, and any other issues you find relevant? What meanings do the characters for whom Feste sings seem to derive from his songs?

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THE WINTER'S TALE, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. *The Winter's Tale*. (Norton Romances 191-271).

ACT 1

1. In Act 1, Scene 2, how does the text represent the onset of Leontes' jealousy? When, exactly, does he first become jealous? How does he interpret what he sees and hears

before and after this onset? How might the first scene be described as a setup for Leontes' unsettling transformation?

2. What effects does Leontes' insane behavior have on those around him? How does Camillo in particular handle his predicament? How does his reaction compare to one or more other servants who suffer unjustly at the hands of their masters in Shakespeare's plays?

ACT 2

3. In Act 2, Scene 1, how does Hermione defend herself against the charges Leontes levels against her? How does she compare in this regard to, say, Desdemona from *Othello*, Cordelia from *King Lear*, or Imogen from *Cymbeline*? (You might want to consider also her remarks during the trial scene in Act 3, Scene 2.)

4. In Act 2, Scenes 2-3, what role does Paulina play with respect to Hermione? How do her speech and attitude towards Leontes contrast with those of the Lords and of Antigonus, men who wait upon the King?

5. In Act 2, Scenes 1 and 3, what considerations play upon Leontes? How do these scenes chronicle the breakdown of Leontes' authority in his own court? How does this King's brand of "tyranny" in wielding power compare to that of either Cymbeline or King Lear?

ACT 3

6. In Act 3, Scene 2, Hermione goes on trial and is absolved by the god Apollo's unambiguous oracle. How does its reading affect Leontes? What brings the king to express remorse -- what cures him of the state he's been in since jealously first took hold of him, and what resolution does he make? Leontes' change of heart may seem unrealistic, but in what sense might it be said to ring true?

7. In Act 3, Scene 3, Antigonus deposits the infant Perdita upon the "seacoast" of Bohemia, and himself meets a bad end, as we learn from the famous stage direction, "Exit pursued by a bear." What justification is there for the fate Antigonus suffers, and how does the Clown's relation of it afterwards amount to more than comic relief? In other words, how does the death of this character, combined with the abandonment of Perdita and her discovery by an old Shepherd, move the drama forwards both plotwise and thematically?

ACT 4

8. In Act 4, Scene 1, what powers does "Time" claim with regard to dramatic representation? What does "Time" ask of the play-going audience of Shakespeare's day or, indeed, of any audience in any age?

9. In Act 4, Scenes 3 and 4, Autolycus enters the play with a song and takes part in the shepherds' festivities. What ethos informs this character's actions? What does he do in these scenes, and what effects do his actions have on others? How, if at all, does his presence at the festivities alter your perception of them?

10. In Act 4, Scene 4, Florizel (Polixenes' son) courts Perdita in a rustic setting. Describe the style of their courting: how do they describe each other's person and their affection for each other? What are their concerns for the present and their hopes for the future? How does their interaction offer us a "counter-vision" of sexuality, one that opposes Leontes' dark imaginings about Hermione in Act 2?

11. In Act 4, Scene 4, Polixenes (in disguise) engages Perdita in a conversation about the relationship between artifice and nature. What position does each hold on this relationship -- why doesn't Perdita care for gillyvor flowers, and what argument does Polixenes make against her view? What larger implications does this conversation have for the redemptive role Perdita plays in *The Winter's Tale*?

12. In Act 4, Scene 4, Polixenes reveals his true identity and spoils the intended wedding of his son Florizel with Perdita. Why does the King object to this marriage? Explain his concerns in terms of dynastic matters or statecraft. What claims does Polixenes make regarding his rights as a father, aside from these obvious matters of state?

ACT 5

13. In Act 5, Scene 1, what evolution has Paulina's relationship with Leontes undergone by this late stage of the play? Why does she continue to trouble the repentant king's already troubled conscience about what he has done to his wife and child? What promise does she extract from him?

14. In Act 5, Scene 1, how do the newly arrived Florizel and Perdita represent themselves to King Leontes? How does he receive them?

15. In Act 5, Scene 2, how does Leontes learn the true identity of Perdita as his long-lost daughter? How is the conversation between the Shepherd, the Clown, and Autolycus

connected to or illustrative of the play's more significant resolutions in this final act? To what extent does the traditional "rustics *versus* court-dwellers" argument matter in *The Winter's Tale*? Is it central, or are other oppositions, patterns, and themes more important? Discuss.

16. In Act 5, Scene 3, Paulina stages the marvelous (but feigned) transformation of a supposed statue made by the Italian Julio Romano into the living Hermione. Paulina has, of course, known that Hermione was alive all the while. What is gained from the particular manner in which Hermione is revealed to Leontes and the entire court?

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THE SONNETS, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Assigned: Shakespeare. Selected *Sonnets*. Read at least the following: 15-16, 20, 30, 35, 41-42, 55, 60, 73, 77, 83, 87, 88, 94, 97, 106-07, 110-11, 116, 124, 129-30, 133-34, 138, 144. (Norton Romances 597-659).

Note: The rhyme pattern for an English sonnet is abab cdcd efef gg. Three quatrains (four-line units) and a concluding couplet that comments in some manner on the subject of the quatrains. "Sonnet 130" illustrates the possibilities of this structure well: the three quatrains make fun of Petrarchan over-praising, and the final couplet overturns the mocking tone by genuinely praising the love object. "Sonnet 73" with its succession of metaphors and neat summation-couplet, exemplifies the "sugared style" of many of the poems (i.e. the piling up and development of a series of metaphors, often one per quatrain) of sonnetry. The 154 sonnets are divided broadly between 1-126, which are supposedly addressed to "a fair young man" and 127-54, which are addressed to "a dark (-haired) lady."

SONNETS TO OR ABOUT THE YOUNG MAN

SONNET 15

1. In "Sonnet 15," examine the progression of metaphors in the first and second quatrains and the shift to personification in the third quatrain ("quatrains" are four-line units). How is this progression typical of Shakespeare's sonnet form?

2. In "Sonnet 15," how is "Time" a kind of artist, one that rivals the poet himself?

3. What claim does the poet make in the final couplet? Explain how the word "ingraft" (i.e. graft, engraft) is central to this claim -- what is the provenance of this word, and

what does it mean in the context of this poem? Consider how the term "ingraft" figure relates to the theme of "nature" developed earlier in the sonnet.

SONNET 16

4. How does "Sonnet 16" turn against the claim set forth in "Sonnet 15"? What paradox does the final couplet reinforce?

SONNET 20

5. How does "Sonnet 20" construe the difference between male friendship and sexual relationships between men and women? Moreover, in what way is the speaker playful in describing the male friend's gender and appearance?

SONNET 30

6. Examine the basic conceit of "Sonnet 30" (as evidenced in words such as "sessions," "summon up," "expense," "cancelled," "pay," etc.): to what is the speaker comparing the process of grieving and loss?

7. In "Sonnet 30," observe the poem's rhetorical sequence: "When... Then... Then... But if..." Is the antithetical final couplet (13-14) convincing? Why or why not? Which part of the sonnet predominates -- the first three quatrains taken as a unit or the final couplet? Explain your rationale for responding as you do.

SONNET 35

8. In "Sonnet 35," what seems to be the nature of the "trespass" that the speaker's friend has committed? How is the speaker complicit in this trespass, even if indirectly? How does this sonnet pay testament to the confusion that accompanies strong emotional connections between friends or lovers?

SONNETS 41-42

9. What event or situation do "Sonnets 41-42" describe when taken together? How does the speaker try to resolve his dilemma? How convincing do you find this attempt, and why?

SONNET 55

10. In "Sonnet 55," the addressee is promised a species of immortality. How, then, is poetry supposedly better than the "gilded monuments" of the great? When the speaker

says the addressee will "live" (14) in the sonnet, what kind of immortality is meant? How do you interpret the poem's concluding thought that the addressee will "dwell in lovers' eyes" (14)?

SONNET 60

11. Consider "Sonnet 60's" three quatrains separately -- how does each reiterate or inflect the basic idea that the speaker is conveying? How does the poet's "verse" (13) supposedly defeat the effects of time?

SONNET 73

12. In "Sonnet 73," what different metaphors govern the three quatrains? How do these metaphors represent the passage of time and the speaker's stage of life? Is time construed as an enemy as in some of the other sonnets, or does this poem treat it differently? Explain.

SONNET 77

13. In "Sonnet 77," what engagement with the sonnets does the speaker enjoy for the addressee? What power does writing possess, in the context of this sonnet?

SONNET 83

14. In "Sonnet 83," how does the speaker differentiate himself and his verse from the rival poet and his efforts? What does he identify as the cause of his temporary falling-out with the addressee of the sonnet?

SONNET 87-88

15. In "Sonnet 87," how does the speaker characterize his friendship with "the fair youth"? What is required on the part of the older friend (the poet), and what privileged status is granted to the younger?

SONNET 94

16. What distinction does "Sonnet 94" make between the moral power of self-possession and physical attractiveness? At what point does this sonnet transition from idealism to disillusionment?

SONNET 97

17. In "Sonnet 97," what states of mind does the speaker associate with winter, autumn, and summer, respectively? How does the speaker's current sensibility affect his perceptions of natural processes going on around him?

SONNET 106

18. In "Sonnet 106," the speaker exalts the excellence and attractiveness of the addressee at the expense of all previous verse. What were those previous poets, then, describing? But in what respect do present poets -- the speaker included -- also fail? What is it that they are unable to describe?

SONNET 107

19. Compare "Sonnet 107" to "Sonnet 55," another poem about the poet's ability to grant or attain immortality through verse. What twist does the present sonnet add to the basic theme -- how will the poet himself triumph over Death? What value will the sonnets have for their addressee?

SONNET 110-11

20. Taken together, what story do "Sonnets 110-11" tell about the speaker's conduct? What reference to his profession as poet/actor does the second of the two sonnets apparently make?

SONNET 116

21. What ideal of love does "Sonnet 116" advance? Against what less idealistic definition or understanding of that concept does the poem declare itself, by implication? Is the concluding couplet an effective way to end the argument? Why or why not?

SONNET 124

22. In "Sonnet 124," how does the speaker delineate an unchanging, ideal love by means of negations and references to the realm of politics? How do you interpret the final couplet, with its ambiguous reference to "fools of Time, / Which {i.e. who} die for goodness, who have lived for crime" (13-14)?

SONNETS TO THE DARK LADY

SONNET 129

23. Consider the imagery in "Sonnet 129" -- how does such imagery constitute a departure from Shakespeare's "sugared style" (i.e. the piling up and development of a series of metaphors, often one per quatrain) of sonnetry? Why is the subject that the poem deals with difficult to render in images?

24. Explain how the rhythmic and descriptive qualities of "Sonnet 129" accord with its theme. (Reading the poem aloud will help you respond.)

SONNET 130

25. How does "Sonnet 130" call into question the old Petrarchan manner in love poetry? What counter-standard of excellence does the poem advance to replace Petrarchan idealism?

SONNET 133-34

26. How might "Sonnets 133-34" be interpreted as a disillusioned remake of "Sonnets 41-42"? How do the economic references to debt, bonds, and so forth help the speaker describe the confusions inherent in the kind of love triangle in which he is enmeshed?

SONNET 138

27. How does "Sonnet 138" deflate courtly pretensions regarding love and expression? Since the poet dismisses "simple truth" (8), what quality or attitude keeps the relationship between the two lovers sound? In responding, refer to the final couplet and its ambivalent use of the word, "lie." What does "lie" mean in this context?

SONNET 144

28. How does "Sonnet 144" describe the "dark lady" as nothing less than the source of corruption and evil? What is the threat presented by female sexuality in this poem, with its traditionalist misogynistic leanings? How does the speaker situate himself between his male friend and the "dark lady"?

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