Act 4 Scene 1 Discussion Point and Questions

*Scene: Friar Laurence’s cell. When Juliet arrives at Friar Laurence’s cell, she is upset to find Paris there making arrangements for their wedding. When Paris leaves, the panicked Juliet tells the friar that if he has no solution to her problem, she will kill herself. The friar explains his plan. Juliet will drink a potion he has made from his herbs, which will put her in a deathlike coma. When she wakes up two days later in the family tomb, Romeo will be waiting for her, and they will escape to Mantua together.*

**Background: Sleeping potions were common. The one Friar made probably involved a medicinal plant called mandrake. When mixed with opium or hemlock, it served as a popular and powerful anesthetic. Since the Friar is an herbalist, he had access to these ingredients.**

1. Why does Friar wish he can slow down the wedding preparations?
   1. So he can figure out what to do
2. According to Paris, why does Capulet want Juliet to marry so quickly?
   1. To be distracted from her grief over Tybalt
3. How does Paris's expression of love compare to Romeo's when he first met Juliet?
   1. Paris praises Juliet's beauty too; however, Paris's expression is much less emotional. He does not use poetry or show his complete idolatry of Juliet as Romeo did. Paris also discusses his ownership and control of Juliet, which Romeo did not do.
4. Why doesn't Friar Lawrence suggest that Juliet take the sleeping potion that night?
   1. He needs to get a message to Romeo and get Romeo back to Verona before the effects wear off.
5. Think of a time you had to do something that you did not want to do. How does that memory help you understand how Juliet feels about marrying Paris?
   1. Gloom, rising panic, etc.
6. How can you tell Juliet does NOT want to marry Paris?
   1. "Leaping from a tower's battlements," "going near serpents or bears," "Becoming a thief," "Going into a charnel house or new grave"
7. Does Juliet hate Paris?
   1. No. She loves Romeo and doesn't want to betray him. Paris is in the way.
8. What reason does Juliet give for offering an apology to her father?
   1. She says that she has learned from Friar Lawrence that she should repent for being disobedient.
9. What is the real reason for Juliet's apology?
   1. To fool her father so that she may be left in peace to follow through with Friar Lawrence's plan.
10. By making an apology, Juliet regains her father's favor. Why do you think Capulet is so quickly convinced?
    1. He hears what he longs to hear
11. According to Friar's plan, what will happen when Paris comes to wake Juliet?
    1. Juliet will seem dead so her body can be taken to the family vault.

Act 4 Scene 2 Discussion Points and Questions

*Scene: Capulet’s house. Capulet is making plans for the wedding on Thursday. Juliet arrives and apologizes to him, saying that she will marry Paris. Capulet is so relieved that he reschedules the wedding for the next day, Wednesday.*

1. Why would Shakespeare have chosen to begin Scene 2 with a light, humorous conversation?
   1. Comic Relief—also appropriate for planning a party
2. What is ironic about Capulet's praise of Friar Lawrence?
   1. He has taken many secret actions for which Capulet would condemn him, if he only knew of them.
3. What does moving the wedding up one day do to Friar Lawrence's plan?
   1. Undermines his plan. Juliet will not be able to wait until Wednesday night to take the potion. Furthermore, it will be very difficult for Friar Lawrence to get word to Romeo about Juliet's feigned death and plan to have Romeo come and take her to Mantua (40 miles from Verona; it takes long to get a message to travel that distance in that time period).

Act 4 Scene 3 Discussion Points and Questions

*Scene: Juliet’s bedroom. Juliet sends her mother and the nurse away and prepares to take the drug the friar has given her. She is confused and frightened but finally puts the vial to her lips and drinks.*

1. In her anxious state, what does Juliet suspect about Friar Lawrence's motives for giving her the potion? Do you think she really believes this is true?
   1. She suspects that he is motivated by fear of being dishonored for his role in the plot, so he gave her poison that will kill her. She probably doesn't believe this because she reminds herself that he is a holy man and can be trusted.
2. What is Juliet afraid of as she prepares to take the potion?
   1. She is afraid that she will wake up before Romeo arrives. If she does, she fears she will suffocate or that she will go crazy at the sight of the corpses and kill herself with the bone of a nearby corpse.
3. Are her fears justified?
   1. Waking up in a family cemetery would stir up fears and imagination of most people.

Act 4 Scene 4 Discussion Points and Questions

*Scene: Capulet’s house. It is now the next morning, nearly time for the wedding. The household is happy and excited as everyone makes final preparations.*

**Background: The Capulets have reason to hurry as they prepare overnight for the wedding. Elizabethan wedding feasts typically had three or more large courses. The food preparation alone could take days. During such a feast, a wealthy family employed many servants with specific tasks.**

1. No questions.

Act 4 Scene 5 Discussion Points and Questions

*Scene: Juliet’s bedroom. The joyous preparations suddenly change into plans for a funeral when the nurse discovers Juliet on her bed, apparently dead. Lord and Lady Capulet, Paris, and the nurse are overcome with grief. Friar Laurence tries to comfort them and instructs them to bring Juliet’s body to the Capulet family tomb. The scene abruptly switches to humor, in a foolish conversation between the servant Peter and the musicians hired to play at the wedding.*

1. Once they realize Juliet is dead (or so they think), how do the nurse and Lady Capulet express their love for Juliet?
   1. With Juliet gone, the nurse wishes that she herself had never been born. Lady Capulet wishes that she could die along with her daughter.
2. What seems to be Capulet's concern? Who gets angry with him?
3. What is Friar Lawrence's "comforting" words about Juliet's death to the Capulets? Do you agree with his view on death?
4. How might Friar Lawrence's advice to the family be different if he did not know that Juliet was alive?
   1. He might not have encouraged the family to take Juliet's body to the tomb quickly. He might express greater regret and loss. He might sympathize more with the grief-stricken family.
5. Consider the Capulets' horrible discovery. How is Friar Lawrence's plan going (or not going) as anticipated?