Shakespeare's Grammar: Nouns and Verbs

Shakespeare often used words that could have more than one meaning, and that could be used as a verb or noun, depending on the word's context. Look at the entry for 'force'. You will see that 'force' as a noun can mean 'violence'; used as a verb, 'force' can mean 'make happen using power' or 'bring about'.

Shakespeare used the following words as nouns as well as verbs:

- rate
- presage
- monster
- import
- grace

Is each of these words used as a noun or a verb in the sentences below? Circle the correct answer, then explain its meaning.

1. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the Nurse criticizes Capulet for shouting at Juliet, 'to **rate** her so'.

   **noun / verb**
   Meaning .................................

2. In *Twelfth Night*, Fabian says that Cesario shows in his face 'no great **presage** of cruelty'.

   **noun / verb**
   Meaning .................................

3. In *King Lear*, France thinks that Cordelia's offence 'must be of such unnatural degree / That **monsters** it'.

   **noun / verb**
   Meaning .................................

4. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Lawrence says his letter to Romeo was 'full of charge, / Of dear **import**'.

   **noun / verb**
   Meaning .................................

5. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus tells everyone to 'Do **grace** to Caesar's corpse'.

   **noun / verb**
   Meaning .................................

You can look up words in bold in your Oxford Illustrated Shakespeare Dictionary to help you.