Shakespeare's Grammar: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, and Adverbs

Shakespeare often used words that could have more than one meaning, and that could be used as an adjective, adverb, verb or noun, depending on the word's context. You will see that 'rack' as a noun can mean 'cloud formations', 'shred of a cloud', or a 'machine of torture'. When used as a verb, however, 'rack' can mean 'stretch' or 'increase'.

Look at the ways in which Shakespeare has used the words below and see if you can answer the questions.

1. **fell**
   a) as an adjective, it can mean ........................................... or ...........................................
   b) as an adverb, it can mean ..............................................
   c) as a noun, it can mean ..................................................
   d) In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Snug describes his character as 'A lion fell'. Is he using 'fell' as an adjective, adverb or noun? ..............................................

2. **fleet**
   a) as a verb, it can mean .............................................. or ..............................................
   b) as a noun, it can mean ..................................................
   c) In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia refers to how 'all the other passions fleet to air'. Is 'fleet' being used here as a verb or a noun? ..............................................

3. **sort**
   a) as a noun, it can mean ..................................................
      .................................................. ..................................................
      .................................................. .................................................. or ..................................................
   b) as a verb, it can mean ..................................................
      ..................................................
      ..................................................
      .................................................. or ..................................................
   c) In *Hamlet*, Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, 'I will not sort you with the rest of my servants'. Is 'sort' being used here as a noun or a verb? ..............................................

4. **rash**
   a) as an adjective, it can mean .............................................. or ..............................................
   b) as an adverb, it can mean ..............................................
   c) as a verb, it can mean ..............................................
   d) In *Othello*, Desdemona asks Othello why he speaks 'so startlingly and rash'. Is 'rash' being used here as an adjective, adverb or verb? ..............................................