Act 1 Scene 2 Discussion Point and Questions

**Background:**

**Wealthy families in this time arranged alliances for stability and power. Fathers usually arranged marriages for their children, sometimes with the fathers of other wealthy families (or with an adult male who possesses wealth or political power). A father was expected to provide a dowry to the groom. Wives were expected to produce children, preferably male ones, to secure an heir to their family's fortune. They were also expected to support their husbands in their choice of potential spouses for their children. Children were expected to obey their parents without question.**

*Scene: A street near the Capulet house – the scene opens up with Count Paris, a young nobleman, asking Capulet for permission to marry his daughter, Juliet. Capulet says that Juliet is too young, but gives Paris permission to court her and try to win her heart. He also invites Paris to the party he's giving that night.*

1. When Paris asks to marry Capulet's daughter, what is Capulet's answer to Parris

Capulet answers that Juliet is too young to marry (lines 9-11). He urges Parris to wait another 2 years (line 10). He also says that Juliet's consent must be part of the decision (17-18)

1. What does his response say about Capulet's character?

He's a loving father and cares about his daughter's happiness. He is protective because it's his only living child. He respects his daughters feelings and opinions.

1. Is Capulet's attitude towards his daughter surprising based on the times?

It's surprisingly modern that he is letting her have choice in the matter. Also, women married young, but he didn't want Juliet to rush into marriage.

1. What does the conversation between Paris and Capulet tell us about Paris’ personality? Prove how you know.

Make a prediction for what will happen at the Capulet party.

1. In lines 48-49, what does Benvolio compare love to? How do his words apply to Romeo's thoughts about Rosaline?

Benvolio compares love to an infection and a poison. He says that a love that is going badly can be driven out by introducing a new love. The application is clear...Rosaline is the source of Romeo's pain, but finding another person to love will make that pain go away.

1. What is something surprising you learned about Rosaline?

She's a Capulet...might be why she doesn't give Romeo the time of day.

1. How does Benvolio think Rosaline will measure up against the other girls?

Benvolio thinks that Rosaline will not measure up; in fact, he thinks that she will go unnoticed next to the beauty of the other girls at the party

Act 1 Scene 3 Discussion Point and Questions

**Background: Most wealthy families employed nurses for their children. Nurses were usually taken from the poorer classes and were often hired because a child of their own had recently died, as was the case with Juliet's nurse's daughter, Susan (lines 19-20). Nurses sometimes stayed on with the family to raise the child, and often developed strong emotional bonds (sort of like a nanny). The nurse is the one who will recount stories from Juliet's childhood. While the nurse at times seems silly, she is devoted to Juliet. She serves a very important part in loyalty to the Capulet family.**

**At the time of the play, marriages were arranged by families for social and economic reasons. Life spans were shorter then, so people married younger and parents often made marriage plans for their children long before the wedding occcured. Romantic love was not seen as a requirement for a sound marriage.**

*Scene: Capulet's house - In this scene, you will meet Juliet, her mother, and her nurse. The nurse, a merry and slightly crude servant, has been in charge of Juliet since her birth. Once she starts talking, she can't stop. Just before the party, Juliet's mother asks if Juliet has thought about getting married. Lady Capulet is matchmaking, trying to convince her daughter that Paris would make a good husband. Juliet responds just as you might if your parents set up a blind date for you—without much enthusiasm.*

1. Characterize the Nurse, Lady Capulet, and Juliet in relation to each other.

Religious; also acts very familiarly towards Lady Capulet, even though she is the woman's servant; she has a crude sense of humor; foil to the formal, refined Lady Capulet, and to the less mature, but mannerly Juliet.

1. Has a parent or family member ever tried to persuade you to do something that you did not want to do? How might that experience help you understand Lady Capulet's speech to Juliet?

Lady Capulet is trying to get her own way without starting an argument with Juliet

1. What features of Paris does Lady Capulet emphasize? What's her motivation?

Paris's good looks and his wealth. She wants Juliet happy, but she wants her to marry someone who is socially acceptable and who can provide for her.

1. Do you think that Lady Capulet provides a strong and effective argument in favor of Paris?

Handsome-ness would be persuasive to a young teenager; this approach is more likely to be successful than an outright demand from Lady Capulet.

1. How do Lady Capulet and Romeo's idea of love align?

Both believe that love springs from physical attractiveness/beauty

1. How do Juliet's parents' differ in their opinions for Juliet's marriage?

Capulet: Doesn't want his daughter to marry too early, wants her to have choice in the matter; Lady Capulet: encourages her to become a bride and mother early (both want her happy)

1. How might Lady Capulet's desire for Juliet to marry Paris lead to conflict later on?

Juliet is going to fall in love with Romeo, so if her parents want her to marry another man, there will be conflict.

1. What is the Nurse’s relationship like with Juliet?
2. What is the Nurse’s one wish for Juliet and why?
3. When Lady Capulet asks Juliet how she feels about being married, what is Juliet’s answer and what does her response reveal about her character?
4. Explain Juliet’s answer to her mother when asked if she can love Paris. What does it reveal about her knowledge of being in love? What is her attitude toward love and marriage?