Important things from Act 1:

**Characters**:

Make sure you know who belongs to which house…if you get them mixed up throughout the play, then nothing going on will make sense to you.

CAPULETS: Juliet, Tybalt, Lord & Lady Capulet, Nurse

MONTAGUES: Romeo, Benvolio, Lord & Lady Montague, Mercutio (not a Montague…but Romeo’s bestie. He’s related to the Prince.)

Others: Rosaline, Count Paris, Prince Escalus

**Basic Overview / Commentary from me:**

Scene 1:

1. Fight between servants of both houses in the square.
   1. The whole “bite your thumb at me, sir” bit is the Shakespearean version of flicking someone off. It’s offensive and would for sure cause a fight, but because they say “I bite my thumb, but not at you”…they’re trying to get away with it.
   2. Benvolio & Tybalt are dramatic foils; this will become more evident later, but what you need to know is Benvolio = peacekeeper and Tybalt = hothead who likes to fight.
2. Prince Escalus says the next person from one of these houses that is responsible for breaking the peace will die. Keep this in mind for later. [“If you ever disturb our streets again / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace”]
3. Montague asks Benvolio to figure out what’s wrong with Romeo. His father says that he’s seen crying every morning and he hides in his room away from the sun.
4. Romeo makes an appearance and he’s depressed, moping, crying, etc. (I really dislike Romeo; I think he’s such a sissy.) He’s in love with someone named Rosaline who does not return his favor because she has promised to be chaste forever (#virgin).
5. Benvolio pulls a total bro move here and tells Romeo to forget her by “giving liberty unto thine eyes. / Examine other beauties.” Basically, forget her by looking at other girls. Romeo is melodramatic and says that he can’t make him forget his love for her.

Scene 2:

1. Basically, Count Paris wants to marry Juliet and Lord Capulet is like “wait, she’s too young” since she isn’t quote 14 yet [“She hath not seen the change of fourteen years”] and Paris counters with “Younger than she are happy mothers made,” meaning there are girls younger than her who are already married and having babies. (This was normal during their time period. Weird to us, normal to them.)
2. Capulet says for Paris to woo her. If she agrees to marry him, then Capulet is fine with it; he wants her to have a choice. However, he’s hosting a party at his house and he invites Paris so that he may see lots of other women…so he’ll maybe choose one of them instead.
3. He gives a list of people to his servant to go invite, but his servant can’t read so he can’t find those people. He runs into Benvolio & Romeo (though he has no idea who they are) and asks them to read the list for him. While he’s reading, Romeo discovers that Rosaline will be at this party and even though it’s a Capulet party, he decides he’s going to go.

Scene 3:

1. Here is where me meet the nurse! I love her. She’s so crass and it’s hilarious. The nurse exists for comic relief in this play.
2. Lady Capulet tells Juliet about Paris wanting to marry her and Juliet is not all about that.
3. The nurse regales us with a tale of when Juliet was a baby and she fell down face forward and her husband said “Dost thou fall upon thy face? / Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit, wilt thou” basically implying that when she’s older she’ll spend a lot of time on her back with men. Baby Juliet has no idea about his double meaning and says yes, which makes the nurse laugh. She continues to bring this up until both Juliet and her mom are like “seriously? Shut up.”
4. Juliet promises to consider Paris at the party tonight but makes no promises.

Scene 4:

1. More of Romeo moping.
2. Mercutio, Romeo & Benvolio are on their way to the Capulet party. Romeo says it’s not a good idea because he had a dream about it. Mercutio says he had a dream that told him dreamers often lie, which means that you can’t count on dreams to mean anything.
   1. Mercutio’s GIANT monologue about Queen Mab…make sure you read over it. Queen Mab is a fairy who brings dreams to people and he rambles on and on and on until Romeo tells him to shut up because he’s talking about nothing. Mercutio is like “exactly. Dreams are nothing. Quit worrying.”
3. Romeo ends the scene saying he’s worried that going to the party will lead to his death. (Foreshadowing)

Scene 5:

1. There’s a lot that goes down in this scene but what you really need to remember is the meeting between Romeo & Juliet.
   1. Romeo spots Juliet across the room and asks a servant who she is because she’s so beautiful and it makes him think he never knew what love was until now (Rosaline who?): “Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! / For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.”
2. Tybalt finds out Romeo is at the party and goes to tattle to his uncle, but Lord Montague doesn’t care. He tells Tybalt to leave them alone and Tybalt gets super mad and leaves.
3. When Romeo & Juliet meet on the dance floor they do this whole pilgrim / handholding thing that gets confusing, but it’s all metaphorical and weird Shakespearean flirting. They kiss. They fall in love. Then the nurse calls her away because he dad wants her.
   1. Romeo asks who she is and the nurse says she’s a Capulet. Then Juliet asks who Romeo is and the nurse goes to find out, tells her he’s a Montague and then she freaks out: “My only love sprung from my only hate!”

**Random Things**:

* Romeo & Juliet fulfill the archetype of star-crossed lovers. They’re forbidden to love each other but they do anyway and that ends in death (which you find out from the prologue).
* Make sure you know the dramatic irony from the prologue, the foreshadowing throughout this act, and any other literary devices that are present (allusions, metaphors, etc.)