**How does Priestley present Mr Birling as an unlikeable character?**

* **Introduction**

Start your essay by establishing the context of the play. Explain that it was written in 1945, but set in 1912, which was a period of great social inequality. Highlight that Priestley establishes Birling as an unlikeable character to emphasise the need for continued social change.

1. **Birling’s Over-Confidence**

Discuss how Priestley portrays Birling as a character who is over-confident in his opinions. Analyse how dramatic irony is used to undermine his credibility and make him appear foolish to the audience. It is clear that all his predictions are incorrect.

* *‘The Germans don’t want war’* ***+*** *‘The Titanic […] absolutely unsinkable’*

1. **Birling’s Greed and Individualism**

Explore how Birling’s attitudes reflect his greed and individualism. Make it clear that he rejects the idea of collective responsibility, and that his views are outdated and selfish. Remember to mention that the newly elected Labour government promised to introduce a series of measures to help look after all citizens, especially the most vulnerable (a concept referred to as the Welfare State).

* ‘*A man has to make his own way*’ **+** ‘*As if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive*’

1. **Birling’s Irritability**

Focus on Birling’s irritability towards the other characters, particularly Eric and the Inspector. Analyse how these interactions convey his sense of superiority. Discuss how this alienates him from both the audience and the other characters, reinforcing his unlikeable nature.

* ‘*Just let me finish, Eric*’ **+** ‘*How do you get on with our Chief Constable, Colonel Roberts?*’

1. **Birling’s Refusal to Accept Responsibility**

Explore Birling’s role in Eva Smith’s suicide and emphasise his refusal to accept responsibility. Write about his total lack of empathy and concern for her, and make sure that you draw a contrast with the reactions of Eric and Sheila. Discuss how Birling’s dismissal of Eva vividly shows the consequences of exploitative business practices and reinforces the need for further social change.

* *‘She’d had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go’* **+** *‘Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages?’*
* **Conclusion**

Conclude your essay by summarising that Priestley presents Birling as an unlikeable character who highlights the flaws of exploitative capitalism. Remember to mention that Priestley wanted to convey a message about the importance of social change and collective responsibility.