**GCSE English Literature Assessment 1**

How does Priestley present the character of Mr Birling at the start of the play?

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| **Key Moments** |
| 1. Birling is a ‘prosperous manufacturer’ who claims to be enjoying ‘one of the happiest nights’ of his life 2. He is not from the aristocracy and appears to be aware of his lower position in the social hierarchy 3. He is proud of being a ‘hard-headed business man’ 4. He makes a series of incorrect predictions about the future 5. He is unfairly dismissive of Eric 6. He believes that ‘a man has to make his own way’ 7. He displays a ‘touch of impatience’ when the Inspector first enters 8. He calls Eva Smith a ‘ringleader’ and fails to show any remorse for ‘throwing her out’ 9. He clearly feels uncomfortable during the questioning and tries to intimidate the Inspector |

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| **Key Points** |
| * Priestley’s use of dramatic irony undermines Birling’s credibility as a character He is **arrogant** * Birling obviously sees the marriage as an ideal opportunity to accumulate more wealth He is **greedy** * His eagerness to tell Gerald about the knighthood shows the importance of social class in 1912 He is **pretentious** * Birling’s relationship with the Inspector is characterised by antagonism He is **selfish** * Priestley invites the audience to judge Birling when he refuses to accept his role in the suicide He is **irresponsible** |

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| **Academic Writing Targets** |
| 1. Practise following the statement-evidence-inference-zoom-explanation (SEIZE) model of analysis 2. Proof-read each paragraph before moving on 3. Use ‘Priestley’ instead of ‘writer’ and ‘play’ instead of ‘novel’ or ‘book’ 4. Practise embedding short quotations into your sentences 5. Practise using the verbs ‘suggests’, ‘shows’ and ‘highlights’ |

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| **Reflection Questions** |
| 1. What do Priestley’s use of stage directions reveal about Birling’s initial attitude towards the Inspector? 2. What does the ‘bees in a hive’ simile suggest about society and what does Birling’s dismissal of it reveal? 3. What social inequalities are evident in the play so far? |