between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

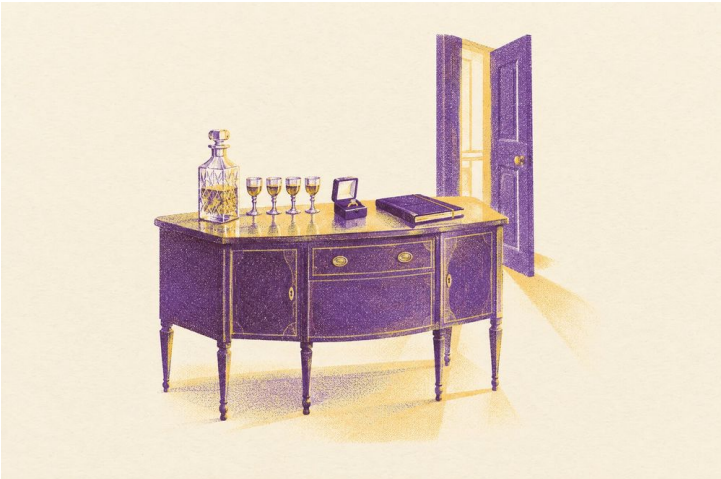
An Inspector Calls: The Birlings at dinner

What does Priestley show us about the Birlings before anyone says a word?

Lesson 3 of 31 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification



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What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our An Inspector Calls scheme for Literature Paper 2, Section A. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared task, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model and an exit ticket. Most Master tasks are What–How–Why paragraphs, and some are creative or other forms: in this lesson, a story opening.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters. For students working towards a grade 4.
Strengthening	Prompts for What, How and Why, a paragraph planner and a checklist. For students working at grades 5 and 6.
Soaring	A debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner. For students aiming at grades 7 to 9.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

In the full scheme

- 31 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels

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- Four Feedback Loop progress checks with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks
- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with a teacher guide, level guidance and annotated model answers
- A Soaring stretch booklet for students aiming at the top levels
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson
- The revision workbook and the model answer pack, to print for every student
- Every licence for the scheme also includes its 30 Raising Achievement drills for intervention sessions

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Lesson 3: The Birlings at dinner

SEQUENCE 1: CONTEXT AND THE OPENING · 60 MINUTES

What does Priestley show us about the Birlings before anyone says a word?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain what the set and the lighting at the start of Act 1 tell the audience about the Birlings
- Analyse how Priestley's stage directions describe each member of the family and Gerald
- Write the opening of a story set at a wealthy family's dinner in 1912, using what Priestley's stage directions show about class

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lesson 1 and the KS3 terms. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–18	Know	Pre-teach "substantial", "intimate", "portentous", "provincial" and "dandy". Students read the opening stage directions in their own copies, using the scene guide, then note one adjective for each character.	4–7
18–28	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about the turn at "but not" and what it says about the house, then students annotate their copy of the play. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	8
28–33	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	9–10
33–53	Master	Students write the opening of a story set at a family celebration in 1912, seen through the eyes of a parlourmaid, using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model opening in the last five minutes and ask students to check their full stops and the punctuation of any speech (AO6).	11–12
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	13

Do Now answers

1	In which year did Priestley write the play, and in which year is it set?	Written in 1945; set on an evening in spring 1912
2	What is a welfare state, and when did the NHS begin?	Government help for people who are ill, old or out of work; the NHS began in 1948
3	Which party won the general election of July 1945?	Labour
4	What were Priestley's BBC radio talks of 1940 called?	Postscripts
5	What does complacent mean?	Too pleased with yourself to see a problem or danger

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Vocabulary

substantial	large, solid and expensive-looking
intimate	warm, private and close, as among family and friends
portentous	trying hard to sound important and serious
provincial	from outside London, in a way that upper-class people looked down on
dandy	a man who cares a great deal about fashionable clothes

Reading

Act 1: the opening stage directions

In your copy, read the stage directions at the start of Act 1, from the description of the dining room to the first line that anyone speaks.

Before anyone speaks, Priestley tells the director, the actors and the reader a great deal. Read the stage directions slowly: they are part of the play.

The set is the dining room of a large house that belongs to a prosperous manufacturer. Look for the phrase "substantial and heavily comfortable" and the words that come straight after it. The house is expensive, yet it does not feel like a home.

The lighting at the start is "pink and intimate". Find the instruction about when it will change, and keep it in mind for Lesson 5.

The family is in evening dress, celebrating Sheila's engagement to Gerald Croft. Edna, the maid, is clearing the table.

Now read each character description. Mr Birling is in his middle fifties and "rather portentous". Mrs Birling is about fifty and "a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior". Sheila is in her early twenties and in high spirits. Gerald is about thirty and "rather too manly to be a dandy". Eric, also in his early twenties, does not seem comfortable. Ask yourself: who is at ease in this room, and who is not?

Word help **manufacturer**: someone who owns a factory that makes goods

Explode the quotation

Method

A stage direction built on contrast. Two words about wealth come first, then "but not" turns to two words about warmth.

Zoom in

"heavily" makes the comfort sound weighty and solid, like money on display. Nothing about it is light or easy.

"substantial and heavily comfortable, but not cosy and homelike"

Effect

The audience sees a house built to impress. The family looks wealthy, yet something warm and loving is missing.

Purpose

Priestley wants his 1945 audience to see the Birlings' wealth as cold from the start. A home full of costly things and short of care prepares us for a family that shows no care for Eva Smith.

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Hinge question

The lighting at the start is "pink and intimate". What does this suggest about the Birlings?

A. The play begins early in the morning, at sunrise.

B. The Birlings cannot afford good lamps, so the room is dim.

C. The family feels warm, safe and pleased with itself, as if it sees the world through rose-tinted glasses. **(the right answer)**

What the answers tell you

B means the student is reading the lighting as a fact about money: point back to "substantial and heavily comfortable" and start them on Securing. A means the student is reading the colour literally: explain that stage lighting sets a mood, and that this light will change when the Inspector arrives, then start them on Securing or Strengthening.

Why the answer is right

The soft pink light shows how cosy and safe the family feels, a feeling the play is about to break.

Master task: story opening

Write the opening of a story set at a wealthy family's celebration dinner in 1912, seen through the eyes of a parlourmaid who notices more than the family think.

Securing aiming for a 4

A frame for each part of the opening, stage directions to borrow from and a word bank.

"substantial and heavily comfortable, but not cosy and homelike"

"pink and intimate"

"rather portentous"

"a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior"

Strengthening aiming for grades 5 to 6

Prompts for each part of the opening and a success checklist.

Open with the maid in the room, noticing one detail the family would never notice

Describe the dining room and the light, so that the room looks comfortable but feels cold

Show each person at the table through one gesture or line of speech, as Priestley's stage directions do

End the opening with a moment that hints something is wrong, which only the maid sees.

Soaring aiming for grades 7 to 9

Write the opening so that the reader senses, through the maid's eyes alone, that the family's comfortable evening will not last. Use the setting, the light and small details of behaviour, never a direct statement, as Priestley's stage directions do.

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