Teaching notes

Read the start of Act One, up to the point where Birling begins his speech.

Organise the class into five groups and give each group a different character to work on, using the quotations supplied.

Then organise the rotation activity as detailed below to share the ideas.
Group tasks

Step 1

• Each group needs a leader, a reader and a scribe.

• Look at the list of quotations you have been given for your character. Some are words spoken by the character, some are spoken by other characters and some are stage directions.

• Note down what is revealed about the character by these quotations.

• Also note any secrets you think they might be hiding.

Step 2 - Rotation

• Group leaders will move round to the next group and report on the character their original group explored.

• The rest of the group will make notes on the new character they are told about.

• Repeat every five minutes until the group leader has visited all the other groups.

Step 3 - Final rotation

• The group leaders should now have returned to their original groups.

• The rest of the group should take turns to tell the group leader the key points about the other characters.

Step 4 - Plenary

• What secrets do you suspect the characters are hiding?

• What predictions can you make?

• Write one key word to sum up each of the five characters based on what you have learnt today.
Character quotations

Mr Birling

- ‘You ought to like this port, Gerald. As a matter of fact, Finchley told me it’s exactly the same port as your father gets from him.’
- ‘Well, well - this is very nice. Very nice. Good dinner too, Sybil.’
- ‘Arthur, you’re not supposed to say such things—’
- ‘I’m treating Gerald like one of the family.’

Mrs Birling

- ‘Arthur, you’re not supposed to say such things—’
- ‘When you’re married you’ll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You’ll have to get used to that, just as I had.’
- ‘What an expression, Sheila! Really, the things you girls pick up these days!’
- ‘Now stop it, you two.’

Sheila

- ‘Yes - except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.’
- ‘Yes, that’s what you say.’
- ‘(Half playful, half serious, to GERALD.) So you be careful.’
- ‘Don’t be an ass, Eric.’

Eric

- ‘ERIC suddenly guffaws. His parents look at him.’
- ‘I don’t know - really. Suddenly I felt I just had to laugh.’
- ‘You’re squiffy.’
- ‘If you think that’s the best she can do—’

Gerald

- ‘(Politely) Absolutely first-class.’
- ‘In fact, I insist on being one of the family now. I’ve been trying long enough, haven’t I?’
- ‘Yes - except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.’
- ‘And I’ve told you - I was awfully busy at the works all that time.’