**TASK #3** – ‘Mrs Birling is not a typical maternal figure.’ Highlight evidence in the text that helps you prove this statement correct and explain your choices.

**Challenge: how does Mrs Birling speak to/treat Sheila and Eric?**

**TASK #1** – How is Mrs Birling presented through Priestley’s use of stage directions? Explain your ideas.

Which words stand out in the stage directions and what do they indicate?

**Challenge: refer to technique/word class**

Mrs Birling: **(*rebuking them*)** I'm talking to the inspector now, if you don't mind. **(*to inspector, rather grandly*.)** I realize that you may have to conduct some sort of inquiry, but I must say that so far you seem to be conducting in a rather peculiar and offensive manner. You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate--

Gerald: (*cutting, rather impatiently*) Mrs Birling, the inspector knows all that. And I don't think it's a very good idea to remind him--

Sheila: (*cutting in*) It's crazy. Stop it, please, mother.

Inspector: (*imperturbable*) Yes. Now what about Mr Birling?

Mrs Birling: He's coming back in a moment. He's just talking to my son, Eric, who seems to be in an excitable silly mood.

Inspector: What's the matter with him?

Mrs Birling: Eric? Oh – I'm afraid he may have had rather too much to drink tonight. We were having a little celebration here--

Inspector: (*cutting in*) isn't he used to drinking?

Mrs Birling: No, of course not. He's only a boy.

Inspector: No, he's a young man. And some young men drink far too much.

Sheila: And Eric's one of them.

Mrs Birling: **(*very sharply*)** Sheila!

Sheila: (*urgently*) I don't want to get poor Eric into trouble. He's probably in enough trouble already. But we really must stop these silly pretences. This isn't the time to pretend that Eric isn't used to drink. He's been steadily drinking too much for the last two years.

Mrs Birling: **(*staggered*)** it isn't true. You know him, Gerald -and you're a man – you must know it isn't true.

Inspector: (*as Gerald hesitates*) Well, Mr Croft?

Gerald: (*apologetically, to* Mrs Birling) I'm afraid it is, y'know. Actually I've never seen much of him outside this house – but- well, I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard.

Mrs Birling: **(*bitterly*)** And this is the time you choose to tell me.

**2. Mrs Birling and the Inspector**

**TASK #2** – What was the role of upper class women in the early 1900s?

Does Mrs Birling reflect this stereotype?

**Challenge: why has Priestley characterised her like this?**

**TASK #4 –** ‘We really must stop these silly pretences’ – What does Sheila mean here? If they stop these ‘pretences’, what would the impact be on the Birling family?

**Status –** Identify vocabulary which suggests that Lennie admires George.

What does this suggest about both men’s status in the relationship?