**Lesson 2 Context**

**Task 1 -** In you literature exam you will be expected to show an awareness of what was happening socially when the play was set and written. A03 is the understanding of the relationship between ideas within the text and the context of the text (what was happening at the time it was set/written).

1. Read the following pieces of historical and social information
2. Highlight the pieces that are relevant to the question: *How is Mr Birling presented in the play so far?*

Complete the following context quiz: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=zz3XjXy17EC3-HVbUS2fe48zv6YWp7dAkeICTpoHhsVUQTNGQjIwNEg5QTZXUEVIUlk5TUNQN1NUOC4u>

**E.G.** Mr Birling is presented by Priestley as the epitome of capitalist views and ideals. This is immediately presented at the beginning of the play when he prepares a speech for Gerald and Sheila’s engagement party. The first part of it sounds genuine and kind-hearted but suddenly it turns into a speech about him and his business. He refers to the engagement as an alliance between ‘friendly rivals’ which will support his drive on “lower costs and higher prices”. This highlights straightaway that he is selfish and views the situation as a way to profit himself. The audience are supposed to loathe this character because his mentality contrasts with the society of the 1940s as people lived in a more socialist Britain after the end of the Second World War and the election of the Labour party in 1945.

* During the 1930's Priestley became very concerned about the consequences of social inequality in Britain, and in 1942 Priestley and others set up a new political party, the Common Wealth Party, which argued for public ownership of land, greater democracy, and a new 'morality' in politics. The party merged with the Labour Party in 1945, but Priestley was influential in developing the idea of the Welfare State, which began to be put into place at the end of the war.

* The national coal strike of 1912 was the first national strike by coal miners in Britain. Its main goal was securing a minimum wage. After 37 days the government intervened and ended the strike by passing the Coal Mines Act, establishing a minimum wage for the first time.

* On 14 April 1912, four days into the crossing and about 375 miles (604 km) south of Newfoundland, the Titanic hit an iceberg. The glancing collision caused Titanic's hull plates to buckle inwards along her starboard side and opened five of her sixteen watertight compartments to the sea; the ship gradually filled with water. A disproportionate number of men were left aboard because of a "women and children first" protocol followed by some of the officers loading the lifeboats. The disaster was greeted with worldwide shock and outrage at the huge loss of life and the regulatory and operational failures that had led to it.

* Whilst the catalyst for World War one was the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, there were in fact a number of causes. One issue was that many of the allies disliked the fact that the central powers were countries which had a very powerful elite who wanted more power and resisted democracy.

* At the start of the Twentieth Century (1900s), women had a very stereotypical role in British society. If married, they stayed at home to look after the children while their husband worked and brought in a weekly wage. If single, they did work which usually involved some form of service such as working as a waitress, cooking etc. Many young women were simply expected to get married and have children.

**Task 2 -** After completing the context quiz have a think about the following

Mr Birling is confident about the future for his family and business. He gives a speech about his predictions for the future. But the audience of 1946 know what is coming, and it’s not what Mr Birling thinks.

1. He says that conflicts between workers and bosses will come to nothing. But there were many strikes between 1912 and 1945, including the General Strike of 1926, which saw the country grind to a halt for nine days.  
     
   What would Mr Birling’s confidence in his speech make the audience think about him?  
     
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   Challenge: what is the technique called when the audience know more than the characters?  
     
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   Task 3 - Finish the PEAZR paragraph.  
     
   Mr Birling is shown to be a naive and foolish character who is out of touch with reality.  
     
   This is shown when Mr Birling refers to events surrounding the war as ‘silly little war scares’  
     
   This suggests…  
     
   The use of the word…suggests…  
     
   The use of the word…suggests…  
     
   This would make the reader feel…