Questions on Act 1

NB Page numbers relate to the 1988 Heinemann Educational edition of the text.

Pages 2-3
1. Why does Mr Birling go on about the Port?
2. Why does he fail in what he tries to do?
3. What does Sheila mean by ‘purple faced old men’?
4. What does ‘reproachfully’ mean? Dictionaries are at the back of the room.
5. What does Mrs Birling criticise Arthur for?
6. What does this show about her?
7. What secret do we find out about Gerald?
8. Why does the writer introduce this so early on?
9. What does Mrs Birling say about Arthur and his work?
10. How does Sheila’s view differ?

Pages 4-5
1. What do we find out about the Birlings’ link to the Crofts?
2. What is Arthur really hoping for with the marriage?
3. What bad point does Eric reveal about Sheila?
4. Why is this introduced here?

Pages 6-7
1. How does Arthur define himself?
2. Think about what you know about the history of the time. What is Arthur wrong about and why?
3. Describe Arthur’s views on money and business.
4. What does Arthur say about war?
5. Do you agree?
6. How does this make him appear to the audience?
7. What phrase does Arthur repeat three times?
8. What else is he wrong about?
9. What impression does this give us?

Pages 8-9
1. What do we find out about Lady Croft’s views?
2. Why does this worry Mr Birling?
3. How does Mr Birling try to impress Gerald?
4. What does he mention about his past?
5. What is he worried about?
6. When Gerald says, ‘You seem to be a nice well-behaved family’ what does it hint at?
8. What does Mr Birling say about women and clothes?

Pages 10-11
1. How does Mr Birling justify the Inspector calling to Gerald?
2. What does Gerald say about Eric? How could this be a clue?
3. How is Inspector Goole described?
4. How does Mr Birling try to intimidate the Inspector?
5. How does the Inspector stress the pain the girl died in?
6. Who seems most upset by her death?