Mrs Birling: Now stop it, you two. Arthur, what about this famous toast of yours?

Birling: Yes, of course. (*clears his throat.*) Well, Gerald, I know you agreed that we should only have this quiet little family party. It's a pity Sir George and – er – Lady Croft can't be with us, but they're abroad and so it can't be helped. As I told you, they sent me a very nice cable – couldn't be nicer. I'm not sorry that we're celebrating quietly like this-

Mrs Birling: Much nicer really.

Gerald: I agree.

Birling: So do I, but it makes speech-making more difficult-

Eric: (*not too rudely*) Well, don't do any. We'll drink their health and have done with it.

Birling: No, we won't. It's one of the happiest nights of my life. And one day, I hope, Eric, when you've a daughter of your own, you'll understand why. Gerald, I’m going to tell you frankly, without any pretences, that your engagement to Sheila means a tremendous lot to me. She'll make you happy, and I’m sure you'll make her happy. You're just the kind of son-in-law I always wanted. Your father and I have been friendly rivals in business for some time now – though Crofts Limited are both older and bigger than Birling and company – and now you've brought us together, and perhaps we may look forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together – for lower costs and higher prices.

Gerald: Hear, hear! And I think my father would agree to that.

**TASK #1** – Why do you really think Sir George and Lady Croft are not at the party?

**2. ‘Lower costs and higher prices…’**

**TASK #4** – What kind of character is Eric here?

**TASK #2** – Highlight everywhere where Mr Birling mentions Sheila in his engagement speech. What do you notice? What does this tell you?

**TASK #3** – Does Mr Birling actually care about Sheila’s engagement? Discuss your ideas using quotations from the text.

**TASK #6 –** ‘You’re just the son-in-law I always wanted’ – Which of Gerald’s qualities does Mr Birling like?

**TASK #5** – How does this extract enforce Mr Birling as a capitalist?

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

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