

Act One – Mrs Johnstone & Mrs Lyons make an agreement

How is Mrs Lyons presented when she is first introduced in the play? (pg. 7)

Describe her character and how you feel towards her?

In her first appearance in the section Mrs Lyons is presented sympathetically. She lives in a house large enough for the children that she and her husband planned but could not have. She laughs, maybe patronisingly, at Mrs Johnson's superstition but agrees to remove her new shoes from the table (pg. 9)

Her desperation for children, and the lengths to which she will go, become more apparent in her second appearance when she learns that Mrs Johnstone is expecting twins. (pg.10)

How does Mrs Lyons react when she finds out that Mrs Johnstone is expecting twins? Has her character changed from first appearance, how do you feel towards her now?

“Look at the conversation between the two & remember find your evidence & put your quotes in, it’s only going to make your essay easier to complete at the end”.



Think about why Russell might have decided to make Mrs Lyons more sympathetic at the start of the play. Could it be to make her later manipulations and deteriorating mental health more shocking? Or perhaps to encourage the audience to have some sympathy for her as a woman who can never fully come to terms with being unable to have a child of her own?

What do you think?

There are notable differences between the two characters, one as discussed was how they perceived the ideal childhood earlier. Another difference is their contrasting dialogue; or the differences in the way they speak.

Mrs Johnstone's speech is full of abbreviations, contractions & language choices suggesting her Liverpool 'dialect' & 'accent'.

Describe what we mean by the terms dialect & accent?

Give examples of this from her conversations with Mrs Lyons.

Mrs Lyons speech is in Standard English and is much more formal. Can you find examples of the different ways they both refer to the same thing?

Why does Russell use these differing language choices, what is he trying to reflect to the audience?

Complete the Key Points table below about Mrs Lyons.

Key Point	Evidence(quotes) /further meaning
In her first appearance, she is presented sympathetically.	Childless & with her husband away, Mrs Lyons seems desperate & vulnerable at the beginning of the play
Her manipulation of Mrs Johnstone seems calculating and heartless.	Mrs Lyons plays on Mrs Johnstone's fears frightening her into silence.
Her final act in the play is to draw Mickey's attention to Linda's infidelity.	The final vindictive act casts her in the role of villain.

Key quotation: 'A child of one's own'.

Before Edward is born, Mrs Lyons has an idealised concept of parenthood.

'I'd keep him warm in the winter.....

'An adopted child can become one's own'

However her determination to prevent any contact between Edward & his birth family seems to contradict that belief as she tries to make Edward her 'own'. This contrast between her ideal of parenthood & the reality is, perhaps, what drives her to the bitter revenge of pointing out Edward & Linda's affair to Mickey.