

## Mrs Johnstone

Mrs Johnstone has been pregnant eight times by the age of 25 and she looks much older. Although her life has been reduced to a weary struggle to survive, she is a fighter who does not give up. She still dreams and hopes for better times when she can again go dancing and be called as beautiful as Marilyn Monroe. Her husband has abandoned her, yet she shows no bitterness towards him, just sad acceptance. Russell doesn't present her as showing jealousy or resentment.

## Mrs Lyons

Mrs Lyons is a well-off, non-working wife living in a house large enough for a family, but she and her husband have been unable to have children and this leaves her feeling empty. She is so desperate for her own child that she uses her advantages and Mrs Johnstone's disadvantages to force Mrs Johnstone to give her one of the twins. Her actions are surely best explained by her desperate unhappiness rather than by her evil. She loves children and wants to give her twin a wonderful upbringing.

### REVIEW



- 1 Where did Mr and Mrs Johnstone meet?
- 2 How many children did Mrs Johnstone have by the age of 25?
- 3 What job does Mrs Johnstone get?
- 4 Why is Mr Lyons unwilling to adopt a child?
- 5 What does Mrs Lyons do that brings out Mrs Johnstone's superstition?
- 6 What surprising news does Mrs Johnstone receive from the Gynaecologist?
- 7 How does Mrs Lyons plan to fool people into thinking that she has had a baby?
- 8 How do we know that Mrs Lyons is desperate to have a child?
- 9 What does Mrs Lyons believe all women suffer from in pregnancy?
- 10 Why does the Narrator say that 'there's no going back, for anyone'?
- 11 Mrs Johnstone remembers the removal of their table while they were eating their tea with a 'wry laugh'. What does 'wry' suggest about Mrs Johnstone's laugh?
- 12 Why is it urgent for Mrs Lyons that Mrs Johnstone hands over one of the twins?
- 13 What does Mrs Lyons stop Mrs Johnstone from doing when the baby is about to cry?
- 14 What excuse does Mrs Lyons give for sacking Mrs Lyons?
- 15 How does Mrs Lyons use superstition to terrify Mrs Johnstone into giving up her rights to the twin?
- 16 What might the Narrator mean when he says that 'the devil's got your number'?
- 17 In what ways are Mrs Lyons and Mrs Johnstone similar?
- 18 How is Mrs Lyons able to persuade Mrs Johnstone to give her a baby?
- 19 Why does Mrs Johnstone say 'that nothing's yours/On easy terms'?
- 20 To what extent could Mrs Johnstone be described as a 'victim'? Write a paragraph explaining your thoughts.