Unit 2 — Political Discourse, Advanced — Teacher copy

Track E · Klasse 13 · Niveau E (Basisfach / Leistungsfach) · Abitur year

Niveau E

1. Vocabulary

Match each item to its meaning or use it in a sentence.

Term	Your note
dog whistle	
framing battle	
scripted spontaneity	
agenda-control	
loaded antithesis	
ad hominem	
whataboutism	
ideological scaffolding	
prebuttal	
talking-point discipline	
register-shifting	

2. Reading

Read the text and use it for the activities below.

Reading — three PMQs paraphrased

Speaker A answers a question on housing by shifting to the broader cost-of-living frame. *Speaker B* answers a question on immigration by deploying a loaded antithesis (*not whether but how*). *Speaker C* answers a question on climate policy by attacking the questioner's constituency record. All three speakers are, technically, answering. None is doing what the question asked.

Vocabulary — advanced rhetorical analysis

dog whistle, framing battle, scripted spontaneity, agenda-control, loaded antithesis, ad hominem, whataboutism, ideological scaffolding, prebuttal, talking-point discipline, register-shifting.

3. Practise

Niveau E — controlled

1. Match: dog whistle → coded signal to a base; whataboutism → deflect via counter-accusation; scripted spontaneity → rehearsed casualness.

2. T or F: agenda-control means refusing to answer; register-shifting means changing accent; loaded antithesis hides agreement inside contrast.

Niveau E — productive

3. Identify in each PMQs paraphrase: agenda-control tactic + register-shift + one rhetorical move.

4. Your turn

Rhetorical-analysis essay, 450 words. Pick one of the three PMQs. Identify rhetorical structure, register-shifts, and any dog-whistle vocabulary. Use 6 advanced rhetorical terms + 4 integrated quotes + 7 academic discourse markers + 2 cleft structures.

Sample

Speaker B's answer to the housing question is, technically, an answer; politically, it is a framing battle conducted at speed. The questioner asked: what will the government do about the 47,000 social-housing waiting list in this constituency? The Speaker's response opens with a loaded antithesis — *the question is not whether but how* — that refuses the binary the questioner implicitly offered. Accordingly, by the third sentence the topic has migrated from social housing to the broader cost-of-living frame, where the Speaker has prepared talking-point discipline. The agenda-control move is recognisable but not, in this case, dishonest; it is, more specifically, a register-shift from constituency-particular to national-general, and the data the Speaker cites is real. By contrast, the dog-whistle vocabulary is where the analyst has to be most careful. The phrase *those who play the system* sits inside what looks like a neutral defence of housing allocation rules; the phrase, however, has a documented coded history in this party's communications since 2018. It is precisely the phrase, more than any single argument, that signals to the activist base. More specifically, the scripted-spontaneity at the close — a self-correction that lets the Speaker repeat the dog-whistle phrase while appearing to reject it — is the most structurally manipulative move in the answer. In this regard, what looks like agenda-control is also a small, repeatable trick: include the loaded phrase, frame it inside a self-correction, and trust the activist base to hear the phrase, not the correction. It is precisely the layered structure that makes the answer rhetorically effective and analytically interesting. The questioner's reply, in the next exchange, successfully forces the Speaker back to the 47,000 figure. The Speaker concedes the figure. The *concession* is, predictably, framed inside a second loaded antithesis — *not whether the figure is real but what we are doing about it*. The PMQs format rewards this kind of layered control. Caution is warranted; not every redirected answer is a dog whistle. Some are simply policy disagreement.

5. Further reading / listening

- Sam Leith, *You Talkin' to Me?* (later chapters).
- George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (framing).

6. Teacher answer key

Controlled. 1. all true.

2. F (agenda-control means redirecting), F (register-shifting = formal-to-informal etc.), T.

Productive. 3. Open.