Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4: Birth - Notes, Summary, NCERT Answers and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4 Birth notes help you revise A.J. Cronin's story fast. You get a summary, characters, themes and NCERT answers. You also get 10 MCQs, a step-by-step revival table, a mistakes table and a revision box.

What is Birth about?

> Birth is an extract from A.J. Cronin's novel The Citadel. It is Chapter 4 of Snapshots, the Class 11 English supplementary reader. Young Dr Andrew Manson is called at midnight to deliver Joe Morgan's first child. The baby is born lifeless. Andrew refuses to give up, and after half an hour he brings the child to life.

The story is short, tense and full of feeling. It shows the moment a young doctor first feels truly useful. Use this table for quick facts.

Fact	Detail (from the NCERT text)
Chapter	Chapter 4, Snapshots (NCERT Supplementary Reader, Class 11 English Core, Reprint 2026-27)
Author	A.J. Cronin
Source	An excerpt from his novel The Citadel
Type	Prose extract, told in the third person
Main character	Dr Andrew Manson, newly out of medical school
Other characters	Joe Morgan, Susan Morgan, Susan's mother, the midwife
Setting	Blaenelly, a small Welsh mining town; Number 12 Blaina Terrace
Time	From nearly midnight to nearly five in the morning
Central conflict	A lifeless newborn versus a young doctor's refusal to give up
Ending	Mother and child both survive; Andrew feels he has done something real at last

You can read the full chapter free on the official NCERT textbook site.

What happens in Birth? (Summary)

> In this Class 11 Snapshots chapter, Andrew Manson returns late to Bryngower and finds Joe Morgan waiting. Joe's wife Susan is in labour with their first child after nearly twenty years of marriage. The baby is born lifeless at dawn. Andrew first saves the collapsing mother, then revives the child with hot and cold water.

1. A late-night call

It is nearly midnight when Andrew reaches Bryngower. He has had a disappointing evening with Christine, the girl he loves. Joe Morgan, a burly driller, has been pacing outside for an hour. His wife needs the doctor before time.

2. Number 12 Blaina Terrace

Andrew fetches his bag and walks with Joe to Number 12 Blaina Terrace. Joe will not come in, but he trusts Andrew to do well. Upstairs, in a small, clean but poorly furnished room lit by an oil lamp, Susan's mother and the midwife wait.

3. Waiting by the kitchen fire

The old woman fears Andrew may leave and come back later. He promises to stay. He drinks the tea she makes and sits by the kitchen fire. Outside, Joe's footsteps beat up and down the street.

4. Andrew's troubled thoughts

Andrew is tired and confused. He thinks of several unhappy marriages he has seen in town. His mind doubts marriage, but his heart is full of Christine. The old woman then tells him Susan does not want chloroform if it could harm the baby. Andrew assures her it will not.

5. A lifeless child

At half-past three, the nurse calls him. After an hour of hard struggle, the child is born at dawn. It is lifeless. A shiver of horror passes over Andrew.

6. Saving the mother first

Andrew faces a dilemma: try to revive the child, or save the mother. Instinctively, he hands the child to the nurse and turns to Susan. She has collapsed and is almost pulseless. He injects a medicine and works hard until her heart grows stronger.

7. The baby under the bed

Andrew asks for the child. The frightened midwife has put it under the bed. He pulls out a perfectly formed boy, white and limp. Andrew recognises asphyxia pallida. He remembers a case he once saw at the Samaritan hospital.

8. Hot and cold water

He orders hot and cold water and basins. He dips the child into icy water, then into hot water, again and again. Fifteen minutes pass with no breath. The midwife says the child is stillborn. Andrew does not listen.

9. The first cry

After half an hour, Andrew makes one last effort. He rubs the child with a rough towel and presses its chest. Suddenly the tiny chest heaves. The skin turns pink, and the child cries. Andrew walks out at nearly five o'clock, sure he has done something real at last.

Who are the characters in Birth?

> Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, has five key characters. Dr Andrew Manson is the young, determined doctor. Joe Morgan is the anxious husband and father. Susan Morgan is the mother. Susan's elderly mother longs for a grandchild. The midwife assists, but gives up on the child too soon.

Character	Who they are	Key traits (with proof)
Dr Andrew Manson	Assistant to Dr Edward Page in Blaenelly	Dedicated, quick-thinking, determined. Stays all night. Refuses to accept the baby is stillborn.
Joe Morgan	A burly driller; the father	Anxious and trusting. Paces the street all night. Married nearly twenty years.

Character	Who they are	Key traits (with proof)
Susan Morgan	Joe's wife; the mother	Devoted to her child. Asks that no chloroform be given if it would harm the baby.
Susan's mother	Tall, grey-haired, nearly seventy	Wise and watchful. Longs for a grandchild. Prays silently when the child lives.
The midwife	Stout, elderly nurse	Frightened and doubtful. Puts the child under the bed and calls it stillborn.
Christine	The girl Andrew loves (only mentioned)	Fills his thoughts before the crisis begins.

Character sketch of Andrew Manson

Andrew is a young doctor, new to his job. On this night he is tired and upset about Christine. Yet he stays, because he knows the case needs him.

In the crisis he acts fast. He saves the mother first, then fights for the child. When everyone gives up, he keeps going. His success gives him his first real sense of purpose as a doctor.

Character sketch of Joe Morgan

Joe is a big, strong mining driller. He has waited nearly twenty years for this child. He is too nervous to enter the house and paces outside all night. His simple trust in Andrew is touching.

Character sketch of Susan's mother

The old woman is calm and experienced. She watches Andrew closely and quietly. Her longing for a grandchild is as deep as her daughter's. When the child cries, she stands against the wall and prays.

Character sketch of the midwife

The midwife is elderly and experienced, but she panics. She hides the lifeless child under the bed. She begs Andrew to stop. Her doubt makes Andrew's persistence stand out even more.

How does Andrew save the baby in Birth?

> In Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, Andrew saves two lives in a set order. First he revives the collapsing mother. Then he finds the child and treats it for asphyxia pallida. Learn these steps in order. They answer most questions about Andrew's skill and determination.

Step	What Andrew does	Why it matters
1. Chooses the mother	Hands the child to the nurse; turns to Susan	Susan is collapsed and almost pulseless
2. Injects medicine	Breaks a glass ampule and gives an injection	Her heart grows stronger in a few minutes
3. Finds the child	Pulls the boy out from under the bed	Sees the white, limp body of asphyxia pallida
4. Recalls a case	Remembers a treatment seen at the Samaritan hospital	Book knowledge turns into action
5. Hot and cold baths	Plunges the child into icy, then hot, water again and again	The shock is meant to start breathing
6. Last effort	Rubs with a rough towel; presses and releases the chest	After half an hour, the chest heaves and the child cries

What are the main themes of Birth?

Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, has four main themes. They are dedication to duty, perseverance, the gap between textbook medicine and real practice, and the value of human life. The story shows that a doctor's true reward is saving a life, not money or praise.

Theme	Where you see it in the story
Dedication to duty	Andrew stays all night even though he is exhausted and upset.
Perseverance	He keeps working on the child for half an hour after others give up.
Theory versus practice	He uses a method he once saw, not just one he read about.
Value of life	A child longed for over twenty years is saved.
Professional fulfilment	He feels he has done something real at last.
Hope against despair	The story moves from a lifeless birth to a joyful cry.

Is the title Birth suitable?

Yes, and it works on two levels. It describes the birth of Joe and Susan's son. It also marks the birth of Andrew as a real doctor. That night, he finds the purpose of his work.

What do the difficult words in Birth mean?

Hard words in Snapshots Chapter 4, Birth, describe medicine, mood and the mining town. Asphyxia means lack of oxygen. A midwife helps women give birth. Consternation means shocked worry. Learning about twenty of these words makes the chapter's tense scenes much easier to follow.

Word	Simple meaning
Burly	Big and strong
Driller	A mine worker who drills rock
Surgery	A doctor's clinic (British use)
Premonition	A feeling that something will happen
Listless	Tired and without energy
Bach	A Welsh word of affection, like "dear"
Overwrought	Very tense and upset
Lethargy	A heavy, sleepy tiredness
Probing	Searching closely
Morbidly	In an unhealthy, gloomy way
Shrewish	Bad-tempered and nagging
Chloroform / ether	Drugs once used to make patients unconscious
Resuscitate	Bring back to life
Ampule	A small sealed glass tube of medicine
Hypodermic syringe	A syringe used to inject under the skin

Word	Simple meaning
Tallow	Hard animal fat used for soap and candles (NCERT footnote)
Asphyxia pallida	Unconsciousness from lack of oxygen, with very pale skin (NCERT footnote)
Ewer	A large water jug
Consternation	Shocked worry
Pantingly	With short, quick breaths
Iridescent	Shining with rainbow colours
Scullery	A room for washing dishes (NCERT footnote)

What are the NCERT answers for Birth?

> The NCERT exercise for Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, has three questions. The first asks why Andrew says he has done something real at last. The second asks how textbook medicine differs from real practice. The third asks about life-saving medical help. Our own model answers follow.

Questions are from the NCERT text. Answers are written by Nextoper.

Q1. "I have done something; oh, God! I've done something real at last." Why does Andrew say this? What does it mean?

Andrew says this after saving both Susan and her baby. Until now, his work in Blaenelly felt routine and empty to him.

That night, the child was born lifeless. Everyone else gave up, but Andrew kept trying. His skill and persistence brought a real life into the world.

So the line means he has finally done work that truly matters. It is his first deep sense of purpose as a doctor.

Q2. There lies a great difference between textbook medicine and the world of a practising physician. Discuss.

Textbooks teach facts, symptoms and standard treatments. Real practice adds pressure, emotion and quick choices.

Andrew must choose in seconds between the mother and the child. He works in a poor room lit by an oil lamp, with a frightened midwife. No book could tell him exactly what to do.

He succeeds because he remembers a real case he once saw and refuses to give up. Practice needs judgement, courage and persistence, not just knowledge.

Q3. Do you know of any incident when someone has been brought back to life from the brink of death through medical help? Discuss medical procedures such as organ transplant and organ regeneration that are used to save human life.

This is a personal and discussion question. Use a real incident you know, such as CPR saving someone after a heart attack.

Mention a few modern procedures. Organ transplants replace a failed kidney, liver or heart with a healthy donor organ. Organ regeneration research tries to repair or regrow damaged tissue. Newborn care units also save many premature babies today.

What MCQs come from Birth?

> Here are 10 practice MCQs on Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4. Nextoper wrote them. Each answer has a one-line reason from the NCERT text. They test facts, characters and meaning. Cover the answers, try each question yourself, and then check how you did.

1. Birth is an excerpt from which novel?
(a) The Keys of the Kingdom (b) The Citadel (c) The Stars Look Down (d) Hatter's Castle
Answer: (b) The Citadel, by A.J. Cronin.

2. Andrew Manson was an assistant to
(a) Dr Denny (b) Dr Bramwell (c) Dr Edward Page (d) Dr Joe Morgan
Answer: (c) Dr Edward Page, in Blaenelly.

3. What was Joe Morgan's job?
(a) Farmer (b) Driller (c) Shopkeeper (d) Teacher
Answer: (b) A burly driller in the mining town.

4. How long had Joe and Susan been married?
(a) Five years (b) Ten years (c) Nearly twenty years (d) Thirty years
Answer: (c) Nearly twenty years, and this was their first child.

5. Where did the Morgans live?
(a) Number 46 Marconi Street (b) Number 12 Blaina Terrace (c) Bryngower (d) Cardiff
Answer: (b) Number 12 Blaina Terrace.

6. What time was Andrew called upstairs to begin work?
(a) Midnight (b) Half-past one (c) Half-past three (d) Five o'clock
Answer: (c) Half-past three, by the kitchen clock.

7. Whom did Andrew treat first after the birth?
(a) The child (b) The mother (c) The midwife (d) Joe
Answer: (b) The mother, who had collapsed and was almost pulseless.

8. Where had the midwife put the child?
(a) In a cradle (b) On the table (c) Under the bed (d) In the kitchen
Answer: (c) Under the bed, among sodden newspapers.

9. What condition did the child have?
(a) Fever (b) Jaundice (c) Asphyxia pallida (d) Pneumonia
Answer: (c) Asphyxia pallida, shown by its white skin.

10. How did Andrew revive the child?
(a) With an injection (b) By alternating hot and cold water, then rubbing and pressing its chest (c) With oxygen (d) By calling another doctor
Answer: (b) Hot and cold baths, then rubbing and chest pressure.

What should you revise the night before the exam?

To revise Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, fast, learn one time trail and one number trail. Then remember five people and one big idea. The big idea is simple. Persistence turns a doctor's knowledge into a saved life, and gives his work real meaning.

Time trail: 12 - 3:30 - dawn - 5

- Nearly 12 - midnight; Joe waits at Bryngower
- 3:30 - Andrew is called upstairs
- Dawn - the child is born lifeless
- Nearly 5 - Andrew walks home with the night-shift miners

Number trail: 20 - 12 - 70 - 15 - 30

- 20 - years Joe and Susan have been married
- 12 - Blaina Terrace, their house number
- 70 - nearly the age of Susan's mother
- 15 - minutes of hot and cold baths with no breath
- 30 - minutes before the child finally breathes

Five people, five roles: Andrew saves. Joe waits. Susan gives birth. Her mother prays. The midwife doubts.

One big idea: Never give up on a life.

Self-check: can you answer these in one line?

Question	Tick when you can answer
Why was Andrew in a bad mood that night?	[ ]
Why did the old woman offer him tea?	[ ]
What did Susan say about chloroform?	[ ]
What dilemma did Andrew face after the birth?	[ ]
What made Andrew think of asphyxia pallida?	[ ]
How did the room look afterwards?	[ ]
What did Andrew feel as he walked home?	[ ]

What practice questions can you try on Birth?

These are Nextoper practice questions for Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4. They are not previous-year board questions. They follow the usual short-answer, long-answer and extract formats. Write full answers first. Then compare them with the summary, characters and themes on this page.

Practice question These questions are written by Nextoper for practice.

Short answer (about 40-50 words)

1. Why did Joe Morgan refuse to go into the house?
2. What was troubling Andrew as he sat by the kitchen fire?
3. Why did Andrew attend to the mother before the child?
4. How did the midwife react when Andrew kept working on the child?
5. Describe the room after the child was revived.

Long answer (about 120-150 words)

1. "Birth" is the story of two births. Explain.
2. Andrew's persistence saved a life. Describe how he refused to give up.
3. Write a diary entry by Andrew on the morning after the delivery.

Extract-based practice

Read: "All right, Joe," he said thickly. "Both all right."

a) Who says this, and when?
b) Why does the speaker's voice sound thick?
c) What had happened just before these words?

What mistakes do students make in Birth?

> Many notes on Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, contain errors. Students copy them and lose marks. Common slips include calling Andrew a medical student and giving the wrong order of treatment. Others place the story in Bryngower or give the baby the wrong gender. Check each fact below against the NCERT text before you write.

We found several of these errors in notes that currently rank online. Every correction is checked against the NCERT chapter.

Common mistake	What the NCERT text actually says
Calling Andrew "a medical student"	He is newly out of medical school and already practising as Dr Page's assistant.
"The story is set in Bryngower"	The town is Blaenelly. Bryngower is where Andrew lives and works.
"Joe Morgan is a coal miner"	The text calls him a burly driller.
"Andrew revived the child first"	He saved the mother first, then turned to the child.
"The baby was a girl"	The child is a boy, perfectly formed.
"Pantingly means to beat loudly"	It means breathing in short, quick gasps.
"The midwife saved the baby"	The midwife called it stillborn. Andrew kept trying and saved it.
Calling it Chapter 7	It is Chapter 4 in the 2026-27 Snapshots reprint. Chapter 7 was its number in older books.

What is the short answer on Birth?

> Short answer: Birth is Chapter 4 of Snapshots, a Class 11 English book. It is an excerpt from A.J. Cronin's novel The Citadel. Young Dr Andrew Manson delivers Joe and Susan Morgan's first child, but the baby is

What do students ask about Birth?

> Students most often ask who wrote Birth and what it is about. They also ask how Andrew saved the child. Two more common questions are about Joe Morgan and the meaning of Andrew's final words. Short, exam-ready answers to all five follow. Each one is based on the NCERT text.

Who wrote Birth?

A.J. Cronin wrote Birth. It is an excerpt from his novel The Citadel. It is Chapter 4 of Snapshots, the NCERT supplementary reader for Class 11 English.

What is Birth about in short?

A young doctor, Andrew Manson, delivers a child who is born lifeless. He saves the mother first. Then he refuses to give up on the baby and brings it to life.

How did Andrew save the child in Birth?

He dipped the child in hot and cold water again and again. Then he rubbed it with a towel and pressed its chest. After half an hour, the child breathed and cried.

Who is Joe Morgan in Birth?

Joe Morgan is a burly driller in Blaenelly. He and his wife Susan have been married nearly twenty years. He calls Andrew to deliver their first child.

What does "I've done something real at last" mean?

It means Andrew finally feels his work truly matters. Saving a life gives him his first deep sense of purpose as a doctor.

What is the key takeaway from Birth?

> Birth, Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 4, teaches one key lesson. Knowledge saves lives only when it is joined with courage and persistence. Andrew kept going when everyone else gave up. That night, a child was born, and so was a real doctor.

Revise the time trail, the number trail and the six revival steps. With those, you can answer almost any question on this chapter. Next, try the practice questions without looking back.

Related notes

- Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 3: Mother's Day notes
- Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 5: The Tale of Melon City notes
- All Class 11 English Hornbill and Snapshots notes

Sources

1. NCERT, Snapshots, Chapter 4, "Birth" by A.J. Cronin (Reprint 2026-27). ncert.nic.in
2. CBSE Academic, Class 11 English Core (Code 301) curriculum. cbseacademic.nic.in

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