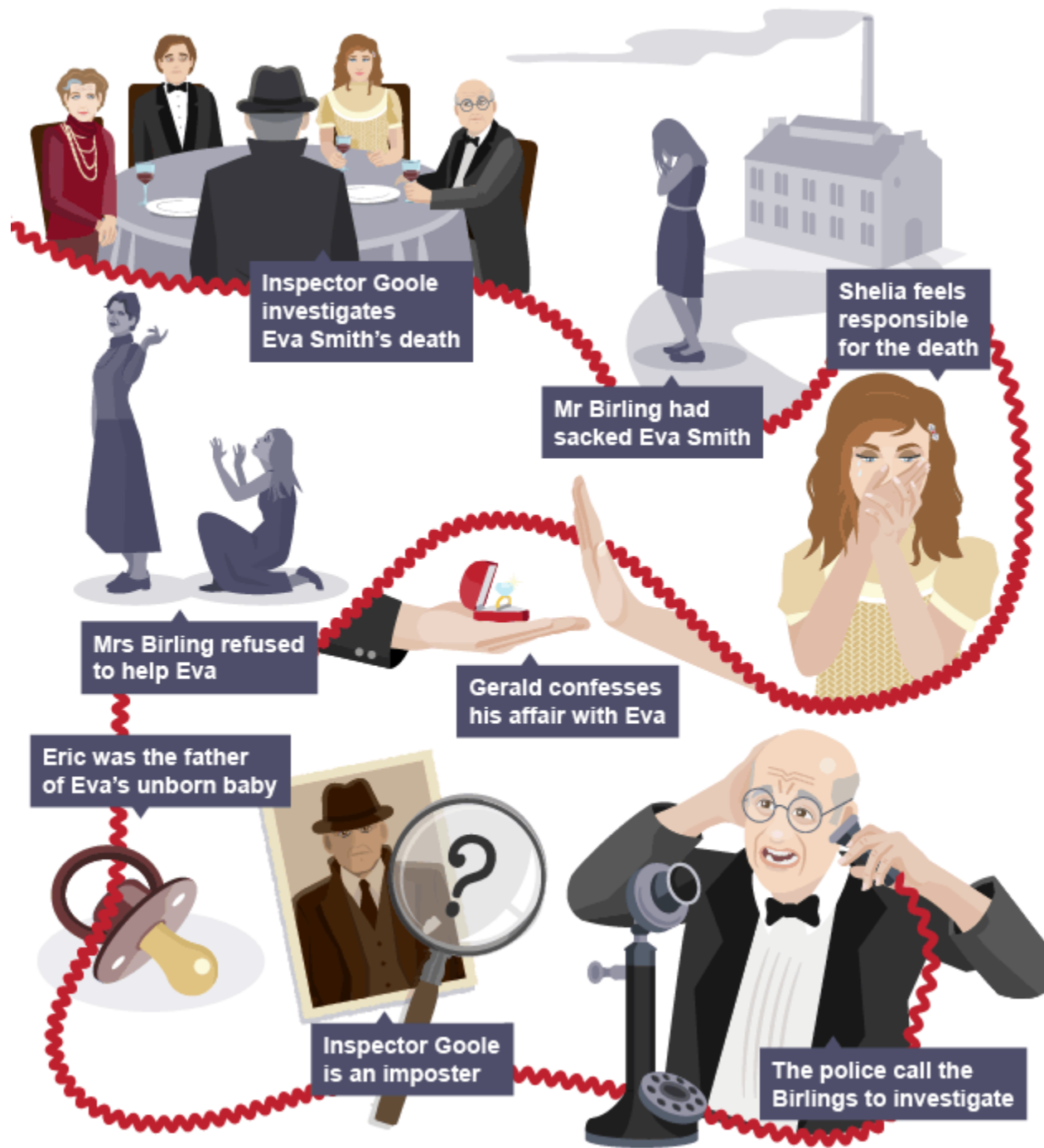


GCSE English Literature

An Inspector Calls by J.B Priestley
Knowledge organisers



Act summaries

Act 1	Act 2	Act 3
<p>When Act 1 opens, the Birling family has gathered together to celebrate Sheila Birling's engagement to Gerald Croft. Arthur Birling congratulates his daughter and prospective son-in-law on the match, and then he assures them that their country's future will be filled with success. Sheila, her mother Sybil, and her brother Eric talk outside the room while Arthur and Gerald drink another glass of port. Arthur tells Gerald that he expects to be knighted soon, which should appease Gerald's mother, Lady Croft. Eric returns to the room. Arthur instructs both young men on the importance of placing oneself and one's family above all others.</p> <p>The maid, Edna, informs Arthur that an inspector named Goole is at the door. Arthur tells her to show him in. Inspector Goole tells Arthur that Eva Smith, a young woman from a lower social class, has committed suicide. When Arthur sees the girl's picture, he reveals he used to employ her but fired her for leading a strike. Sheila enters the room. She is shocked when she learns about the young woman's suicide. Eric and Sheila both believe Arthur should have been kinder to her, while Gerald sides with Arthur.</p> <p>The inspector shifts his attention to Sheila. He shows her the picture, and Sheila leaves the room in tears. Arthur accuses the inspector of intentionally upsetting his daughter and threatens to inform the Chief Constable of his behavior. The inspector tells Arthur that other members of the family are connected to Eva's death. Arthur leaves the room to talk with his wife. Sheila returns. She confesses she asked the manager at Milwards clothing store to fire Eva, since she believed the girl insulted her. Unlike her father, she expresses regret for her actions. The inspector then reveals that Eva changed her name to Daisy Renton, and Gerald reacts negatively to the name. As the inspector goes with Eric to find Arthur, Sheila accuses Gerald of having an affair with Eva. He confesses. The inspector returns.</p>	<p>Sheila decides she wants to be witness to everyone else's interrogation by Inspector Goole, since she cannot live with the idea that she is the only person to blame for Eva's death. Gerald accuses her of being petty. Sybil enters the room and tries to charm the inspector, promising to be forthcoming to help speed his investigation. Sheila warns her mother not to promise her honesty. She knows that it will end badly. Sybil accuses the inspector of disturbing her family. When the inspector asks for Arthur's whereabouts, Sybil says he is calming down Eric. Sheila reveals that Eric has a drinking problem, much to her mother's shock.</p> <p>Arthur Birling reenters the room, and Inspector Goole begins interrogating Gerald. Gerald tells the inspector that he met Eva while she was using the name Daisy Renton. He offered to let her stay in his friend's apartment for a few months. She became his mistress. They saw each other during the spring and summer. When fall arrived, he broke off the relationship, and Eva moved out. Once Gerald has finished his story, Sheila returns his ring.</p> <p>At this point Inspector Goole shifts his focus to Sybil. He knows that Sybil recognizes the girl in the photograph when he shows it to her and asks her to explain how their paths crossed. The gathered group hears the front door. Birling goes to see if Eric has left the house. Shortly after, he returns to inform everyone that Eric has left. Sybil explains she met Eva when the young woman asked for help from the Brumley Women's Charity Organization. Eva initially lied to the committee, claiming her husband had abandoned her. When pressed, Eva said she was pregnant and that the father had been stealing money to support her. She wanted assistance so she would not have to rely only stolen money.</p> <p>Allowing her prejudice to direct her decision, Sybil rejected Eva's application for charity and turned the other charity leaders against her. Inspector Goole criticizes her for abandoning a woman in need, but Sybil insists the father should be punished for Eva's death, not her. Arthur and Sybil expect Inspector Goole will leave to hunt down the father. Instead, he says he must wait for Eric's return. At this point, Arthur and Sybil realize Inspector Goole suspects Eric is the father of Eva's unborn child. Eric enters the room.</p>	<p>Eric immediately recognizes that the other people in the room know what he has done. His mother tries to hold on to her denial, insisting she knows he is incapable of committing such an offense. Eric steels his nerve with a drink and then explains how he met Eva. She was at the Palace bar. He was drunk, and he demanded that she let him follow her home. He then forced his way into her room. Later, he met her again. Once more, he followed her home. They slept together multiple times during the next few weeks. She then told him she was pregnant.</p> <p>Feeling responsible for Eva's wellbeing, Eric offered to marry her, but she refused. To support Eva, Eric stole money from Arthur's business with the intention of paying it back later. He gave the money to Eva. When she learned he was stealing the money, she refused to accept any more from him. The inspector tells Eric about how Sybil rejected Eva's application for financial support. He accuses his mother of killing Eva and his unborn child. The inspector tells the Birlings that, although they failed to help Eva, there are millions more people like her who suffer every day from peoples' carelessness and self-centered prejudices. He warns that those who abandon the least fortunate among them will be punished one day, and then he leaves the house.</p> <p>The Birlings begin to suspect that Inspector Goole is not an actual inspector. Gerald Croft confirms this suspicion when he returns to the house. He asked a local police sergeant about Goole. As Croft explains, "He swore there wasn't any Inspector Goole or anybody like him on the force here." The family members all realize that none of them saw the photograph of the young girl at the same time, so the inspector could have been showing a different picture to each person. Arthur, Sybil, and Gerald laugh off the situation as a failed prank. Eric and Sheila, however, refuse to ignore the dark side of their identities that Inspector Goole uncovered. Arthur insists that Eric has to repay every cent he stole from the company. Gerald offers Sheila back the engagement ring, but she refuses. The telephone rings and is answered by Arthur. Shocked, he tells the family that a woman just committed suicide, and that an inspector is coming to question them.</p>

Key Context - Edwardian Britain (Pre-WW2)

Industrial Britain

- During the Industrial revolution in the 18th-19th Century, many people had moved to cities from the countryside to work in factories
- Cities had grown rapidly, meaning that they became overcrowded, unhygienic and full of slums
- Many large factories had been built, owned by industrialists, that offered thousands of jobs to working class people. The pay was very low.
- Industrialists were often working class men who had made their money by establishing factories. They were often greedy, exploitative and cruel.
- During this time, society was based largely on capitalist principles. Those in power cared about money, and it was believed that anyone could get rich if they worked hard enough. Society was focused on the individual, and many people believed it was "every man for themselves"



Class division

- Society was deeply divided by class during the Edwardian period
- The upper and middle classes lived happily and in comfort, often in the peaceful and hygienic suburbs and small towns.
- The poor, who mostly worked in factories, often lived poor housing. They often struggled to feed themselves and their families.
- Sometimes, workers went on strike to stand up for better wages. Often, they were unsuccessful and forced back to work in the same terrible conditions.



Women and Men

- Women were seen as second-class citizens and were expected to be submissive towards men.
- Men were seen as powerful, impressive and the head of the household.
- Often, a woman's only option for having a secure and happy life was to get married. Women who did not marry were seen as strange and were often outcast.
- Amongst the upper classes, there was a culture of toxic masculinity amongst many men. This meant that men often used their power and influence to exploit and use women for their own pleasure.
- Many women were expected to stay at home and take care of children, or work in stereotypically female roles. They were seen as incapable of having the same skills or talent as men.
- Many poor women were forced to take low-wage jobs in order to support themselves and their families. This often led to them working in factories for very low wages.
- Some very poor women resorted to prostitution in order to survive, which was often very dangerous.
- Women were not allowed to vote until 1928.
- Sometimes, women had children "out of wedlock" (unmarried). This was seen as scandalous and immoral; many women who had children without being married were social outcasts and regarded as inferior in society.



Technological advancements

- During the Edwardian period, technology advanced. For example, the HMS "Titanic" set sail in 1912, and was one of the largest and fastest ships to ever sail across the Atlantic ocean to America from Britain.



World War 1

- World War 1 broke out in 1914, after tense political relations between European countries such as Germany and the Balkans for several years
- It is now known as the "Great War", as it resulted in the tragic deaths of 9 million soldiers and 13 million civilians worldwide.



Key Context – WW2 Britain and its aftermath

Families and homes

- World War 2 lasted from 1939 to 1945.
- During that time, the population in Britain faced great hardship.
- Many families lost loved ones in the war; over 350,000 soldiers died in battle, leaving their loved ones without fathers, brothers and sons in the aftermath of the war.
- Many civilians were also killed; over 70,000 people were killed on the streets of Britain due to deadly bombing of British towns and cities in the time period now known as the Blitz
- Thousands of homes were destroyed, and many families became homeless
- Rationing (the limit of certain goods such as food) lasted throughout the war and beyond. People had to "make do and mend" meaning that they had few nice things or luxuries. Often, families went hungry or ate very little due to food shortages.
- After the war, people were desperate for a change. They wanted a government that cared deeply about the welfare of the people. They needed reassurance that they would get the homes, healthcare and financial security that they felt they deserved, after the difficulties they had faced during and after the war.



The Role of Women

- While men went out to fight, women stayed at home.
- Many women were involved in the "war effort", being appointed to take on jobs usually done by men. This included ambulance drivers, factory workers, pilots and manual labour on farms.
- For the first time, women were seen as capable and seen as more equal to men; society began to be less sexist, and women found themselves having more opportunities to prove themselves than before the war
- After the war, women and men who supported equality wanted a fairer future, where women were given more respect and an equal status



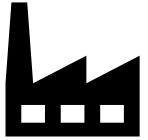
The 1945 general election

- In 1945, after the end of the war, the country went to the polls to vote.
- The Labour party (who believed in socialist principles) won by a landslide victory. They had promised to build new homes, set up a national health service, and provide benefits for people who were in financial difficulty. The landslide victory showed that the British public was changing; they cared more about social equality and the poor than ever before.

Key Context – J.B. Priestley

A Bradford Childhood

- Priestley was born in the Northern city of Bradford in 1894
- Bradford was an industrial town, famous for its mills that employed many thousands of working class people
- As a young man, Priestley witnessed the hardship that many working class people faced.



Young soldier “Jack”

- Priestley, then known as “Jack”, was enlisted into the British army as a soldier during WW1.
- While there, he saw the unequal way in which working class soldiers were treated in comparison to upper class soldiers. Working class soldiers, he said were “cannon fodder”, sent out to fight on the front line, while the upper class soldiers (often promoted into high ranks) were protected and away from the fighting.
- Priestley saw this as hugely unjust, and it made him determined to fight for social equality.



During WW2

- During WW2, Priestley had a radio show that many thousands of people listened to. On the radio, he often shared his political views about the government and the war. He often had strong messages, where he expressed his views about the inequalities he saw in society.



Social and political views

- Priestley was a socialist; he believed strongly that the government should care for all people, and give financial support to those who struggled. He was a strong supporter of the Labour Party.
- When Labour were elected in 1945, Priestley championed their success.
- Priestley was also a strong advocate for women; he believed that men and women should be equal, and often spoke out about gender injustice.



Top quotes list

1. Giving us the port, Edna? - Birling, Act 1
2. The Germans don't want war... The Titanic - she sails next week - unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable - Birling, Act 1
3. When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.- Mrs Birling, Act 1
4. a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself - Mr Birling, Act 1
5. the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense- Mr Birling, Act 1
6. Birling: All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light. // Edna does, then goes out.// - Act 1
7. she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course - The Inspector, Act 1
8. A chain of events.- The Inspector, Act 1
9. it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms. - The Inspector, Act 1
10. I don't accept any responsibility - Mr Birling, Act 1
11. I'd have let her stay - Eric, Act 1
12. it's better to ask for the earth than to take it - The Inspector, Act 1
13. But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people. Sheila, Act 1
14. (eagerly) Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame - and I'm desperately sorry - Sheila, Act 1

15. You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt.- The Inspector, Act 2
16. you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down - Sheila, Act 2
17. Sheila: (with sharp sarcasm) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald. Gerald: all right - I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done. - Act 2
18. You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here - Sheila, Act 2
19. Inspector: (coolly) we often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable. The Inspector, - Act 2
20. Girls of that class - Mrs Birling, Act 2
21. I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame. - Mrs Birling, Act 2
22. well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - Eric, Act 3
23. you killed her - and the child she'd have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you - Eric, Act 3
24. there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us... We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.- The Inspector, Act 3
25. (excitedly) By jingo! A fake! Mr Birling, Act 3
26. Everything's all right now, Sheila. - Gerald, Act 3
27. Sheila: (bitterly) I suppose we're all nice people now. - Act 3
28. We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3

Setting

- An Inspector Calls is a three-act play with one setting: the dining room of 'a fairly large suburban house belonging to a fairly prosperous manufacturer'
- Priestley's description of the set at the beginning of the play script stresses the solidity of the Birlings' dining room: 'It is a solidly built room, with good solid furniture of the period'. But a later section of this scene-setting - on the walls are 'imposing but tasteless pictures and engravings', and the 'general effect is substantial and comfortable and old-fashioned but not cosy and homelike' - suggests that although the Birling's have wealth and social standing, they are not loving to one another or compassionate to others.
- The setting of the play in a single room also suggests their self-absorption, and disconnectedness from the wider world. It also creates a sense of claustrophobia, highlighting the cage that the older Birlings have created, from which the younger Birlings must break free
- Throughout the course of the Inspector's investigation, and the testimony of Gerald and each of the Birlings, the supposedly respectable city of Brumley is revealed to be a place of deep class divisions and hypocrisy
- The play begins with the characters' corrupt, unpleasant natures safely hidden away (a respectable group in a respectable home, enjoying that most respectable event, an engagement party); it ends with naked displays of hypocrisy.
- The stage is an attempt to represent what looks like the real world on the stage - so it is as though the audience is peering into someone else's life through an invisible wall. This is called verisimilitude.
- Verisimilitude: Seeming true or having the appearance of being real.
- The setting for act 1 is 'the dining room of a fairly large suburban house' with 'good solid furniture of the period'. The 'general effect' is that the dining room should appear 'substantial and heavily comfortable'.
- The stage curtain forms the invisible fourth wall and when it rises the audience can see beyond the fourth wall into the lives of the characters.
- The house is 'fairly large' and 'suburban' - implies prosperity
- 'Good solid' furniture indicates Birling's wealth and solid position in society - there is a link between Birling's physical appearance and the furniture - this has positive and also negative connotations
- The house lacks emotional warmth, like the characters
- The Birlings live a sheltered life, removed from and above the concerns of ordinary, working class people
- The 'door' is a convention used to create tension and build expectation - this is a device commonly used in horror and gothic films

Props

- Champagne, port decanter, cigars - luxuries associated with indulgence - indicate the Birlings are celebrating
- Port is a marker of social class - Birling wants to drink the same port as the port drunk by the Croft family indicating his desire to be on a similar social standing to the superior Croft family
- quite clearly Mr Birling is in control of the distribution of the port cigars and cigarettes, displaying that he's in charge of the proceedings
- However, as the first scene progresses, he allows both Gerald and Eric to help themselves to the port . This creates an opportunity for a director to emphasise Eric's drink problem by pouring himself a large shot
- this action suggests Mr Birling's obliviousness to his sons and happiness and the problem drinking that is a cause of this
- Edna the maid, clears away the first pops from the table, showing she is a menial and that this sort of work is beneath the Birlings . Edna's work is nearly invisible to them, taking place with little comment and without any thanks. This neatly manifests the Birlings lack of appreciation and obliviousness to working people
- The prop of the ring and ring case are also important . Gerald produces the ring with a dramatic, romantic flourish. When Sheila rejects the ring, she rejects Gerald's offer of marriage. Hence , the ring and attitudes to it economically convey the changing dynamics of Sheila and Gerald's relationship
- Photographs in the play are a source of mystery, tension and suspense.
- The telephone is also used to create tension in the last moments of the play when it rings sharply this creates a sense of shock.
- Costumes in the play are also significant . At the start of the play, Priestley tells us that the Birlings and Gerald are in evening dress of the period. The females clothes unless clear. However a costume designer may well choose costumes to establish a difference between

Lighting

- At the start of act one , Priestley is quite specific about the lighting it should be pink and intimate
- this lighting suits the domestic scene and the romantic occasion being celebrated
- There is only one other lighting instruction in the entire play when the inspector enters the lighting should be **brighter and harder**. Clearly the intention is to dispel the earlier intimate atmosphere and change the dynamic. Light brightening is associated with things being revealed and bright light can be harsh, while harder light suggests an altogether tougher atmosphere appropriate for the inspectors interrogation of the suspects

Sound effects

- Though Priestley doesn't use music, off stage sound effects feature significantly in an inspector calls
- As with the references to off stage rooms, these ambient sound effects help generate a 3 dimensional representation of the Birlings house . Used sparingly, at various moments of the play, sounds from off stage also immediately create tension
- For instance Mr Birlings speech in act one is interrupted suddenly and significantly with the sharp front doorbell. The adjective sharp is important as it implies the noise is sudden and shrill comment but also that it cuts through Mr Birlings bombastic blustering. The doorbell could symbolise how the capitalist speech of Mr Birling is being interrupted by socialism.
- The door slamming is also used to create tension.
- At the end of the play , the telephone rings sharply. Once again , the sound cut through and immediately transformed the atmosphere on stage. At this point in proceedings, Mr and Mrs Birling are almost hysterical, giddy with relief , and are laughing at the appalled reaction of their children. Once again it is Mr Birling who is interrupted, just as he's accusing his children of not being able to take a joke. As there have been 2 phone calls already in the final scene, one to the police station and the other to the hospital , the audience can guess that this one will also convey some crucial information. The Birlings reaction to the sound implies that they to come to the same conclusion. Silence, like the stillness at the end of act two when the inspector holds up a hand, creates dramatic anticipation. Silence is a space waiting to be filled.

Proxemics

- Proxemics is a study of body language and personal space and their significance in human relationships. It is used to explore how characters occupy the stage and how character relationships are depicted. For example, simple power dynamics can be indicated by characters standing up or sitting down. Allegiances, by how characters either group together or separate themselves from others.
- At the start of an inspection calls, for example, Priestley is specific about who is sitting where around the table. As hosts, Mr and Mrs Birling sit at each end, with Eric on one side and Sheila and Gerald on the other. The senior Birlings or authority over the children arranged between them is thus immediately signalled.
- Another sign of Mrs Birling status, and of the importance of middle class etiquette to the Birlings, is that when she rises from the dinner table the other characters also rise. In contrast, when Edna enters with news that the inspector has arrived the men do not rise from their sitting position.
- Priestley does not specify where the inspector sits when he is invited to by Mr Birling, but directors will be tempted to place the inspector somehow pointedly apart from the others. In the Stephen Daldry production we've already mentioned, the inspector remains outside the house, at ground level, while Mr Birling descends only partly down a spiral staircase from the elevated house to address him.
- Examples of embedded stage directions that employ proxemics appear at the end of act one. At this point in the play, the inspector has just revealed that even changed her name to Daisy Renton, eliciting a startled Watt from Gerald. Then the inspector and Eric exit the room, leaving the newly engaged couple, Gerald and Sheila, alone on a stage for the first time what follows is a tense, awkward conversation especially so for Gerald. This highlights an emotional gap opening up between them as they begin to see each other in a new light. Sensing this, Gerald tries to bridge this gap. The stage direction says approaching her and his line listened darling is left dangling uselessly in mid air. She responds no that's no use. The fact that Gerald has to approach Sheila implies they are standing physically apart.
- In act 3, when the inspector reveals to Eric that Daisy had gone to his mother's charity to plead for help, Eric is driven nearly wild with grief and rage. Although Priestley doesn't use a stage direction to tell the actor to physically get up, the reactions of the other characters function as embedded stage directions for example, Sheila says Eric, don't - don't -. Mr Birling says get back or I'll -. these lines suggest he might be physically struggling to hold Eric back.
- When Mrs Birling collapses into a chair, this action manifests the Birlings exhaustion and defeat. however, when Gerald Croft re enters the house and begins to raise questions about what we have just witnessed, everyone becomes gradually more animated. Mr Birling, in particular, rediscovers some energy. There are more stage directions signalling movement at the climax of act 3. Birling goes to the telephone and then goes to the sideboard, raises his glass, points at his children. Sheila moves towards the door. Gerald holds up the ring. These physical movements help convey a growing sense of energy, excitement and an almost giddy release of tension. The final scene builds to a small crescendo before the telephones sharp ring and the following moment of complete silence brings it to a crashing stop.

Dramatic Irony

- Priestley uses heavy dramatic irony when Arthur state opinions that the audience, with the advantage of hindsight, knows to be incorrect. Dramatic irony is rarely a subtle technique, but Priestley's use of it is exceptionally blunt. This could be considered clumsy, but it underlines the fact that *An Inspector Calls* is a play with a point to make, and a character whose sole job is to make it.
- One reason Priestley set the play in 1912 was so that he could use dramatic irony to make Mr Birling seem to the audience to be an arrogant and complacent fool.
- Priestley uses heavy dramatic irony, particularly when we are first introduced to Mr Birling. Birling, it seems, gets absolutely everything wrong: he dismisses silly pessimistic talk about Labour trouble and about the possibility of a war. Whereas of course the audience know World War One will break out just two years after the play is set to. His confidence that we are in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity is, of course, horribly misplaced. If we haven't already got the message that this man is a dangerous idiot, full of hot air, then he is made to cite the Titanic as conclusive evidence that the world is progressing in an unstoppably positive direction. Not only that, he then predicts that in 20 or 30 years time (i.e. the post World War Two period coming, the period in which the play's original audience would have lived) everyone will have forgotten these capital versus Labour agitations and all these silly little war scares. Birloing also dismisses the warnings of writers: these Bernard Shaws and HG Wells (writers who in this regard at least, history proved to be right)

Dramatic Irony

- Priestley uses entrances and exits to create tension and build drama
- The most dramatic exit is the Inspector's as he leaves after his "fire and blood" speech
- The most dramatic entrance is Eric's entrance
- When Sheila becomes appalled by her parents' behaviour she moves towards the door as if literally trying to escape from a world that seems like a gilded prison

Conversational Analytics

- Mr. Birling is the first to speak and he dominates the conversation for the first few pages, speaking far more lines than any other character. He also sets the topic and controls the agenda of the conversation, firstly by proposing a toast to Gerald and Sheila and Secondly by offering his thoughts on the current state of the world. He is deferred to by the highest status character present, Gerald Croft, who responds eagerly to Birling's unsubtle prompts for approbation, chips into the conversation only when prompted and addresses Birling as Sir. Birling holds forth, sometimes at considerable length, in effect, overstepping his turn and hogging the conversation. He is also the one who asks questions. Moreover, he is able to both interrupt his wife without any reproach and also to brush aside other characters' attempts to interrupt him, such as his sons and later his wife's.
- When the Inspector arrives, Birling initially continues in this dominant role, issuing commands such as sit down, again taking the lead in the conversation and asking a series of questions. Noticeably, the Inspector and Birling address each other and neither Eric or Gerald are involved at all in the discussion, emphasising their secondary importance. Very quickly though, the power dynamic shifts. After only a few exchanges, or conversational turns, the Inspector forcefully interrupts Birling and completely ignores what he was saying. From then on, the Inspector takes full control of the conversation and soon becomes the character asking all of the others questions that they have no choice but to answer.

Character of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton



Key points (AO1)

- She is symbolic of the suffering, oppressed working class and of exploited women in society. Her death is used to indicate the consequences of selfishness and greed, particularly amongst capitalist upper classes.
- She is voiceless in the play; we hear about her but never hear her speak, symbolising the powerlessness of the working class. She is also faceless; this encourages the audience to give her the face of whoever they may have personally impacted through their own greedy and individualistic actions.
- Her name is significant. Eva is reminiscent of Eve, who in Christian tradition is the first woman and therefore symbolic of womankind and even all of mankind. In the story of Genesis, Eve was an innocent person who was corrupted by the devil. In the same way, Eva is an innocent victim of the Birlings' corruption. Smith is also significant; it is an extremely common British surname, and is again used to demonstrate how she represents all people. The name Smith also originates from the trade of a blacksmith, whose trade involves heating metal to a high temperature and changing its form. Arguably, the Birlings' interaction with Eva causes their family life and perspectives to be agitated or heated up and changed significantly, so that they can never be the same again. Eva's alternative name, Daisy Renton, is also important. A daisy is a common British flower that is white, symbolising its innocence and purity, and small, symbolising its fragility. This symbolises the innocence and vulnerability of working class women, and highlights their need for protection. Daisies are often mown down, again symbolising how the poor are easily trampled on by the rich.
- Eva commits suicide by drinking disinfectant. This could symbolise how the poor are infected by the corruption of the rich. Also, the fact that she ingests such a strong substance indicates how women's bodies were often violated by rich men.
- Throughout the play, Eva is exploited by toxic masculinity and deep misogyny that runs through upper class British male society. Mr Birling comments only on her beauty, seeing her only as a pretty face, and both Gerald and Eric exploit her physically and emotionally for their own pleasure with little remorse.
- Throughout the play, we learn that Eva was a strong, capable and spirited character who shows resilience and determination despite her suffering. This highlights the strength and credibility of the poor; unlike the rich, as seen with Sheila and Eric, they persevere and show strength of character.
- She parallels the character of Sheila; as they have similar physical descriptions and are of similar age. This allows Priestley to comment on the inequality within society and highlight the divisive nature of social class, and how it creates undeserved privilege and undeserved persecution.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Suffering, oppressed, exploited, voiceless, powerless, symbolic, faceless, womankind, mankind, corrupted, innocent, victim, pure, fragile, violated, resilient, determined, credible, persecuted, collective suffering

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Throughout the play, the audience feel deep sympathy for Eva and the treatment she faced at the hands of the Birlings. We also admire her as a character, as we learn about her resilience, gracefulness of character and determination as an individual. In turn, this intensifies our hatred of the Birlings and highlights their despicable nature.
- Witnessing the suffering of a working class character would have particularly angered an audience in 1945. The Labour party had just come to power, highlighting how society had become more socialist. The 1945 audience would have seen Eva's suffering and felt inspired to enact change.
- Priestley was a socialist, and cared deeply about the lives of the poor due to his own life experiences. Therefore, he deliberately portrayed Eva in this way to force the audience to consider their own actions, and try to live a more socially responsible lifestyle.
- Priestley was an advocate for equality between men and women; he wanted the audience to feel sickened and horrified about Eva's treatment by Gerald, Eric, Mr Birling and Alderman Meggarty. By highlighting Eva's cruel treatment, Priestley forces the audience to consider how they can contribute more effectively to a world in which women are respected as individuals, rather than sexualised objects.

Character of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton

Key evidence

she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course -
The Inspector, Act 1

. She was a lively good-looking girl - country-bred, I fancy - Mr Birling, Act 1

Ring-leader, good worker, she'd had a lot to say, she'd a bit more spirit than the others
- Mr Birling, Act 1

A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it. - The Inspector, Act 1

The girl had been causing trouble in the works. I was quite justified. - Mr Birling, Act 1

after two months, with no work, no money coming in, and living in lodgings, with no relatives to help her, few friends, lonely, half-starved, she was feeling desperate -
The Inspector, Act 1

There are a lot of young women living that sort of existence in every city and big town in this country, Miss Birling. If there weren't, the factories and warehouses wouldn't know where to look for cheap labour. Ask your father. - The Inspector, Act 1

you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down -
Sheila, Act 2

it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms. - The Inspector, Act 1

And it just suited her. She was the right type for it, just as I was the wrong type. She was very pretty too - with big dark eyes - Sheila, Act 1



You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt. - The Inspector, Act 2

she looked young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down here. And obviously she wasn't enjoying herself. Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his - Gerald, Act 2

she was desperately hard up and at that moment was actually hungry. - Gerald, Act 2

She was young and pretty and warm hearted - and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life - you understand? - Gerald, Act 2

She was - very gallant - about it. - Gerald, Act 2

well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty -
Eric, Act 3

This girl killed herself - and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her - The Inspector, Act 3

there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, - The Inspector, Act 3

Character of Inspector Goole

Key points (AO1)

- The Inspector is an omniscient, all-knowing moral force for good. His purpose is not to convict them of a crime, but to force the Birlings to recognise the immorality of their actions and change their attitudes.
- He is a personification of socialist values, urging the Birlings (and the audience) to consider their own actions and how they affect others. By speaking on behalf of Eva, who cannot speak herself, Priestley suggests that socialism can act as a protector and advocate for the poor.
- At times, he is God-like, almost acting as an angelic force who has come to expose the sins of the Birlings. He sets about forcing confessions of vices from the characters, similar to the role of a Priest, accepting confessions of sins in the Catholic Church. He uses biblical language to warn them of the consequences of their sins.
- He is opposed to, and exempt from the immorality and corruption of society. For example, he refuses to drink alcohol, symbolising his rejection of immoral values and vice.
- Unlike the Birlings, the Inspector sees Eva Smith as an individual, calling her by her name, which symbolises his socialist belief that the lower classes are just as significant as upper class people
- The Inspector's appearance is plain, simple and unimpressive, yet his values and morals are strong and striking. This juxtaposes him with the fancily attired Birlings, and may demonstrate that capitalism is superficial and materialistic, whereas socialism is more about actions than appearance, and demonstrates how the values of socialism are stronger than the values of capitalism. The Inspector's unremarkable appearance also makes him universal; he could be anyone, from any class or background. This highlights how everyone can and should adopt the values of socialism.
- Throughout the play, he uses powerful, shocking language to describe Eva's death. This emphasises his message and the brutal treatment of the working class.
- He is the antithesis or foil to Mr Birling, symbolising the opposing nature of socialism and capitalism. Upon his arrival, he undermines the authority of Mr Birling, which symbolises how capitalism is capable of being reformed by socialist values.
- He has the greatest impression on Sheila, who demonstrates the Inspector's ability to change the mindset of people, particularly the younger generation who have the power to move away from the mistakes of the past.
- He is methodical and controlled in his actions and speech, which makes him seem trustworthy and believable. This contrasts with Mr Birling's frantic and angry manner.
- At the end of the play, he is revealed to not be a real Inspector, yet his message has still had a profound impact on the audience and younger generation. By removing his persona, we focus more on his message than him as an individual person.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Omniscient, all-knowing, moral, force for good, socialist, advocate for the poor, God-like, angelic, exposing, Priest-like, biblical, sympathetic, kind, caring, plain, simple, physically unimpressive, striking, strong, juxtaposed, unmaterialistic, universal, role-model, powerful, shocking, antithesis, foil, impressive, methodical, controlled, trustworthy, believable, credible, respectable, admirable, vehicle, mouthpiece, impactful

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- The Inspector is a role model for the audience, teaching them how to treat others and how to behave.
- The audience respect and admire the Inspector. They are impressed by his power and control, which in turn makes them impressed by his moral message.
- The Inspector is used as a vehicle or mouthpiece to present Priestley's own views regarding the need for socialist change. This was particularly important in 1945, as after the war, society wanted change, which was signalled by the Labour party's landslide victory in 1945
- His advocacy for women would have also impressed the audience; women wanted change after their important role in WW2, so they would have been impressed by his message
- His strong message has a profound impact on the audience, forcing them to examine their own behaviour and consider how they contribute to the suffering of others

Character of Inspector Goole

Key evidence

The Inspector need not be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period.- Stage Directions, Act 1

Burnt her inside out, of course. - Act 1

One person and one line of inquiry at a time. Otherwise, there's a muddle - Act 1

what happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened to her afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.- Act 1

You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt. - Act 1

it's better to ask for the earth than to take it. Act 1

. In fact, I've thought that it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms. Act 1



A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it. - Act 1

I think you did something terribly wrong - and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it. - Act 2

cutting in, massively ... harshly ... sternly ... steadily ... calmly - Act 1

Gerald: After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.

Inspector: Sometimes there isn't much difference as you think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line. - Act 1

Mrs Birling: you seem to have made a great impression on this child, Inspector.

Inspector: (coolly) we often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable. - Act 2

Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges. - Act 2

Sheila: (slowly, carefully now) you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down. And it'll be all the worse when he does.- Act 2

No, he's giving us the rope - so that we'll hang ourselves. - Sheila Act 2

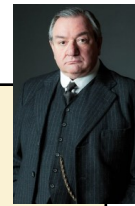
This girl killed herself - and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. - Act 3

One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. - Act 3

Character of Arthur Birling

Key points (AO1)

- Birling is a personification of capitalist ideology and symbolic of the deadly sin of greed and pride. His large, materialistic appearance and views are symbolic of his attitude. He behaves pompously and values wealth above everything else, including his own family. Capitalism affects even his most intimate relationships; he married his wife for her social status and has no connection with his children, particularly Eric. This symbolises the heartless, cold nature of capitalism.
- Priestley uses dramatic irony to portray Birling as foolish and unlikable. For example, he makes thoughtless remarks that *the Germans don't want war* and that the Titanic is *unsinkable*; Priestley does this to discredit capitalism, showing how it itself is foolish, ignorant and blind to reality.
- Despite his success, he has lower class origins, as many Industrialists at the time had, and clearly feels insecure about his status, so he proudly boasts of his position, and is deeply fearful about scandals that may damage his reputation. He is looked down upon by higher class men and those from respected families, so is seen as a class imposter by many above him in societal rankings. This has been done by Priestley to critique capitalism and to reveal the cycle of oppression caused by social class division. His constant desire to prove himself leads to greater cruelty and oppression of his workers.
- He is dismissive of the Inspector's message and rejects all claims that his actions began the chain of events. He is reluctant to accept responsibility, which symbolises how the older generation and capitalist values are damaging to future progress and equality. He juxtaposes his children, Eric and Sheila, who acknowledge their moral failings.
- He is trapped in a cycle of immorality, and despite undergoing the same investigation as his children, lacks to change attitude. He is a static character. Here, Priestley conveys the underlying message that the flaws of the current society are caused by the upper class and older generation's resistance to change.
- He is a foil or the antithesis to the Inspector, symbolising the opposing natures of capitalism and socialism. While Birling attempts to dominate the Inspector, he becomes increasingly out of control, symbolising the power that socialism has to squash capitalism.
- He is condescending towards women, seeing his daughter Sheila as a pawn in his business empire, and failing to see Eva Smith as a capable individual. Significantly, the only thing that he remembers about Eva is her pretty appearance.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Capitalist, greedy, prideful, large, materialistic, pompous, wealthy, Industrialist, cold, heartless, foolish, unlikable, ignorant, blind, thoughtless, insecure, lower-class, fearful, class imposter, oppressed, cruel, oppressing, dismissive, static, older generation, juxtaposes, trapped, immoral, flawed, resistant to change, foil, antithesis, condescending, misogynistic

1945 audience response (AO3)

- From the outset of the play, the audience dislike Birling for his dominance, pride, greed and lack of humanity. We recognise his ignorance and foolishness early on through Priestley's use of heavy dramatic irony, which makes us find him abhorrent and despicable. For example, when he makes the statement *The Germans don't want war*, the 1945 audience would have been deeply upset by this throwaway comment. Many audience members would have lost relatives in the first world war, which happened just two years after Birling's comments in 1912. For him to make such a flippant remark about such a deadly conflict would have immediately angered the audience and deepened their hostility towards him.
- Priestley did this intentionally in order to expose the callousness and blindness of capitalism. As a socialist, Priestley wanted a more equal and fair society, so by exposing capitalist views as foolish, the alternative values of socialism presented by the Inspector seem more humane, kind and logical.
- Birling's static character and failure to change makes the audience deepen their dislike of him and the values that he symbolises; he is the anti-role model of the play, and we must do everything that we can to avoid behaving as he does

Character of Arthur Birling

ARTHUR BIRLING is a heavy looking, rather portentous looking man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech. His wife is about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior - Act 1

Giving us the port, Edna? That's right... you ought to like this port, Gerald, as a matter of fact, Finchley told me it's exactly the same port your father gets from him. - Act 1

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 - Act 1

And to that I say - fiddlesticks! The Germans don't want war. - Act 1

Titanic - she sails next week ... unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.. - Act 1

I gather there's a very good chance of a knighthood - so long as we behave ourselves, don't get into the police court or start a scandal - eh? - Act 1

clothes mean something quite different to a woman. Not just something to wear - and not only something to make them look prettier - but - well, a sort of sign or token of their self-respect. - Act 1



a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself - Act 1

the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense - Act 1

Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Act 1

We were having a nice family celebration tonight. And a nasty mess you've made of it now, haven't you? Act 1

Birling: (excitedly) By jingo! A fake! Act 3

Eric: Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble - that's why. Act 3

Birling: (angrily) Yes, and you don't realize yet all you've done. Most of this is bound to come out. There'll be a public scandal. Act 3

Birling: (triumphantly) There you are! Proof positive. The whole story's just a lot of moonshine. Nothing but an elaborate sell! (He produces a huge sigh of relief.) Act 3

Key dramatic techniques

- In act 1, Priestley includes **long dramatic monologues** spoken only by Birling, that are longer than any other character in the play. This emphasises his selfishness and dominance, and makes him appear greedy and self-absorbed.
- Priestley uses **dramatic irony** to portray him as foolish and unlikable. For example, complete confidence in "the Germans don't want war" as he goes "to that I say - fiddlesticks", is received by the contemporary audience in 1945 as ignorant, as these people have most likely lost loved ones and have strong memories of both WWI and WWII
- The use of **one setting and one room** for the play symbolises the Birling's close-minded views and self-centredness

Character of Sybil Birling



Key points (AO1)

- Mrs Birling is the personification of capitalist ideologies and is a source of greed and pride in the play. She is a symbol of the hypocrisy of the upper classes, who have positive public reputations (such as her involvement in the Brumley Women's Charity) but at heart are cruel and callous.
- Despite being female, she perpetuates misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs, and is therefore complicit in the oppression of women. She does this because she is desperate to preserve the status quo and maintain convention. She resists the idea that women should be allowed to vote, so is seen in some ways as a traitor to her own gender. She is dismissive about her daughter, calling her a child and hysterical and does not empathise with the womanly struggles that Eva Smith faced, despite being a mother herself. Through this, Priestley exposes that patriarchal values are perpetuated by women too; misogyny is not just the fault of toxic masculinity but conservative women too.
- Her family relationships are cold; she recognises that marriage is a means to secure financial security and social status rather than love, and there is significant emotional distance between her and her children. She opposes the stereotypical image of women as maternal, warm people.
- She rejects the Inspector's message of collective responsibility, maintaining that Eva's situation was her own fault. Therefore, she does not see the need for social change and remains a static character throughout the play.
- While at the start of the play, Sheila is a victim of her mother's influence, she rejects her more and more, until they become foils of one another. This is demonstrated by Sheila's change in language, at first mirroring her mother's words and later becoming more vocal in her own right.
- Mrs Birling is a foil to the Inspector and throughout, feels outraged at the Inspector's investigations and claims. She attempts to pompously use her social status to influence him, but fails, demonstrating the failure of capitalism to ultimately triumph over socialism.
- Mrs Birling maintains a repugnance for Eva Smith throughout the play, highlighting the snobbish and ignorant attitude of the rich towards the poor. She is oblivious to the lives, struggles and suffering of the poor, instead accepting convenient truths and reinforcing her pre-existing beliefs with prejudice. She cares deeply about her public image, so is appalled by Eva Smith's use of her surname. Priestley does this in order to expose the toxic nature of the class system and the hypocrisy of the rich.
- Arguably, she is the coldest character in the play, as she unlike the others makes a conscious choice to turn away the pregnant Eva, knowingly endangering her and her unborn baby's life.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Capitalist, greed, pride, hypocritical, cruel, callous, misogynistic, patriarchal, complicit, conservative, conventional, gender traitor, cold, prideful, static, foil, outraged, pompous, repugnant, snobbish, ignorant, prejudiced, materialistic, toxic, conscious, knowing, deliberate, calculated

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- From the outset of the play, the audience develop a deep dislike for the cold, pompous and old-fashioned Mrs Birling. Priestley does this in order to manipulate the audience's views about capitalism and the older generation, making us see these values as outdated, self-centred and cruel.
- A 1945 audience would have been angered by her attitude towards women. This was a time of great progress for women, so to see Mrs Birling actively turning against her own gender in order to maintain her own status would have seemed traitorous and selfish.
- Mrs Birling is perhaps the most hated character in the play by the audience. Unlike the other characters, who all unknowingly contributed to Eva's suffering (Mr Birling, for example, did not know that Eva would become homeless, and Eric and Gerald did to some extent try to empathise with her as an individual), Mrs Birling deliberately and knowingly turned her and her unborn child away onto the streets to a life of destitution and poverty. Priestley does this deliberately to expose the true cruelty and pride of the rich, and of the capitalist system.

Character of Sybil Birling

Key evidence

His wife is about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior - Act 1

When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.- Act 1

I think Sheila and I had better go into the drawing room and leave you men- Act 1

Mrs Birling: please don't contradict me like that. And in any case I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class--Act 1

Mrs Birling: that - I consider - is a trifle impertinent, Inspector.

// Sheila gives short hysterical laugh//

now, what is it, Sheila?

Sheila: I don't know. Perhaps it's because impertinent is such a silly word.
-Act 1

You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate-
-Act 2

Mrs Birling: I don't think we want any further details of this disgusting affair--
-Act 2



Inspector: (calmly) It's an organization to which women in distress can appeal for help in various forms. Isn't that so?

Mrs Birling: (with dignity) Yes. We've done a great deal of useful work in helping deserving cases.
-Act 2

Mrs Birling: first, she called herself Mrs Birling--

Birling: (astounded) Mrs Birling!

Mrs Birling: Yes, I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence - quite deliberate - and naturally that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case. -Act 2

Mrs Birling: I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame. -Act 2

Mrs Birling: But I didn't know it was you - I never dreamt. Besides, you're not the type - you don't get drunk-. -Act 3

Sheila: So nothing really happened. So there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn. We can all go on behaving just as we did.

Mrs Birling: Well, why shouldn't we?
-Act 3

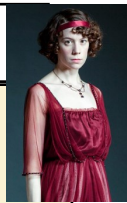
Eric: you killed her - and the child she'd have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you-. -Act 3

You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.-
Inspector, Act 3

Key dramatic techniques

- The single setting of one room emphasises the Birling's close minded and self-centred lifestyle
- Mrs Birling is hardly absent from the stage, symbolising the pervasive nature of capitalism and her dominant position in the family
- The lighting is "pink and intimate" at the start, as if the Birlings are looking through 'rose-tinted glasses'. But it becomes "brighter and harder" when the Inspector arrives, as if a spotlight is turned on their cosy lifestyle.

Character of Sheila Birling



Key points (AO1)

- At the start of the play, Sheila fits the familiar literary type of the ingenue - a young, innocent, virtuous, virginal and naive woman who is protected from the harshness of the world. She is subordinate to the men in her life, her father and fiancée, and because of this she embodies the way that many women were trapped and controlled by the patriarchal values of Edwardian Britain. However, from the start of the play, we also realise that Sheila is not entirely a weak character. She fights with her brother and uses shocking language, which foreshadows her journey throughout the play as she emerges as a strong, individual and independent-minded character.
- By showing how Sheila breaks free from Edwardian patriarchy, Priestley demonstrates how younger generations of women were reshaping society, with women growing in power and independence.
- At the start of the play, Sheila takes on the capitalist, materialist values of her parents, and behaves in a childish, spoilt and immature manner. She reflects the sin of envy and pride, having Eva callously sacked from Milwards due to her own insecurities. This highlights the cruel and cold nature of the rich and how they use the poor for their own benefit.
- Sheila juxtaposes her father when she learns of Eva's death, reacting with horror and sympathy. To some extent, her shock about the treatment of a young woman similar in age to her reveals her ignorance about the struggles of the poor, but also emphasises how different she is to her parents, highlighting Priestley's hope in the future generation to turn away from the cruelty of the past.
- When Sheila learns of Gerald's relationship with Eva, she maturely and calmly returns his ring. This symbolises her break from patriarchy, which inspires the audience to consider their own views about gender in return.
- During the play, she aligns with the Inspector and almost becomes his assistant, questioning and challenging her family and Gerald and forcing them to confess further. This symbolises her growing acceptance of socialism and rejection of capitalism.
- When the Inspector is revealed as a fake, Sheila remains changed by the messages she has learnt, and morally condemns her parents for their heartless relief. However, while Sheila changes more than any other character in the play, we never truly get to see her put her new views into action. This suggests that the audience are the ones that need to learn Sheila's lessons, and they are the ones who have the power to truly act differently.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Ingenue, young, innocent, protected, subordinate, trapped, controlled, powerful, forthright, strong, individual, open-minded, empathetic, breaks free, childish, spoilt, immature, envious, prideful, cruel, snobbish, cold, exploitative, juxtaposes, horrified, shocked, ignorant, younger generation, hope, mature, calm, assistant, changed, transformed

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Many of Priestley's audience members in 1945 would have been Sheila's age in 1912. Therefore, the audience immediately have common ground with Sheila and identify with her as a character. Like the audience, Sheila is a representative of a new generation wanting to make society fairer, kinder and less prejudiced.
- Sheila is the audience's role model and the person that Priestley wants us to behave most like; many of us have selfishly or spitefully spoken out in a fit of anger, and Sheila's mistakes are common mistakes that many would make. Priestley wants us to examine our own behaviour, as Sheila does, and like her, change to become kinder, more humane people.
- Sheila's break away from the patriarchy would have strongly resonated with the 1945 audience. Many women had grown in social status and society was becoming more equal due to women receiving the vote in 1928, and becoming valuable employees during WW2. Sheila's journey to independence symbolises the new journey that women were taking to become more equal citizens.

Character of Sheila Birling

SHEILA is a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited - Act 1

Mummy.. Daddy ... darling- Act 1

Mrs Birling: Now, Sheila, don't tease him. When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

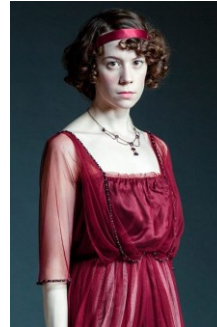
Sheila: I don't believe I will. (half playful, half serious, to Gerald.) So you be careful.
Act 1

Key evidence (Act 1 and 2)

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. Mr Birling - Act 1

Sheila: (taking out the ring)
Oh - it's wonderful! Look - mummy - isn't it a beauty?
Oh - darling - (she kisses Gerald hastily.) Act 1

Sheila: (rather distressed)
Sorry! It's just that I can't help thinking about this girl - destroying herself so horribly - and I've been so happy tonight. Oh I wish you hadn't told me. What was she like? Quite young? Act 1



Sheila: But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people. Act 1

He produces the photograph. She looks at it closely, recognizes it with a little cry, gives a half-stifled sob, and then runs out Act 1

I was absolutely furious. I was very rude to both of them, and then I went to the manager and told him that this girl had been very impertinent - and - and -
Act 1

Sheila: (eagerly) Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame - and I'm desperately sorry Act 2

Sheila: (slowly, carefully now) you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down. Act 2

impertinent is such a silly word.. Act 2

Sheila: (rather wildly, with laugh)
No, he's giving us the rope - so that we'll hang ourselves.
Act 2

Sheila: but just in case you forget - or decide not to come back, Gerald, I think you'd better take this with you. (she hands him the ring.)... You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here
Act 2

Key dramatic techniques

- After Sheila learns of Eva's death, she runs off stage. When she returns, she tells of her involvement with Eva and begins to change. This exit and re-entrance is a visual symbol of her transformation. After this point, she refuses to leave, highlighting her strength of character and willingness to face up to her mistakes.
- At the start, simple and childish language is used by Priestley to depict Sheila's habit to be childish and naive: "I'm sorry, Daddy" being one example when she's admiring her ring rather than listening to her father's speech.
- But by the end she is confident and assertive. Priestley uses simple, plain and direct language here - almost the same as the Inspector: "we drove that girl to commit suicide."
- She also directly disagrees with her parents. She tells them that they're wrong to think that the Inspector was a "joke" and points out that they "began to learn something" before they decided it was a hoax.

Character of Sheila Birling

Sheila: (with feeling)
Mother, I think it was
cruel and vile.- Act 2

. The point is, you don't
seem to have learnt
anything.- Act 3

Sheila: (bitterly) I
suppose we're all nice
people now. - Act 3

And don't let's start
dodging and pretending
now. Between us we drove
that girl to commit
suicide.- Act 3

// Sheila moves towards door.//

Going to bed, young woman?

Sheila: (tensely) I want to get out of this.
It frightens me the way you talk.

Act 3



Key evidence (Act 2 and 3)

Key dramatic techniques

Character of Eric Birling



Key points (AO1)

- At the start of the play, Eric is introduced as an outsider to the rest of his family; he has a drinking problem and has a strained relationship with his family, which highlight his discontentment and difference from the start. This symbolises the discontentment of the younger generation and their desire to break away from the cage of their parents' values.
- Eric's involvement with Eva Smith is made out to be the most shocking of all. It is left until last for dramatic effect, and his parents react with great upset towards his behaviour. This is because Eric does what none of the other Birlings have - by having a relationship and child with a working class woman, Eric's behaviour exposes how the upper and working classes are in reality the same, which the older Birlings find utterly unbearable, as it breaks down the artificial barriers that they use to justify their own position in society.
- Eric's treatment of Eva Smith, where he drunkenly forced himself upon her and sexually objectified a disempowered working class woman, highlights the toxic masculinity and misogyny that pervaded the Edwardian upper classes. His behaviour reveals the dark heart of rich masculine identity that he, any many rich men in society, have grown up accepting. As he realises the consequences of his own actions, it is as though he undergoes a transformation where he realises the true nature of his despicable actions. When we learn that he stole fifty pounds from Mr Birling's office, we get further insight into the damaging masculine world that he is part of; men at this time were expected to hide their emotions and prove their masculinity. Priestley suggests that this toxic behaviour is damaging to both men and women.
- Despite this, Eric is innately moral, and similarly to Sheila, he develops socialist views as he empathises with the working classes and challenges the hypocrisy of his parents' behaviour and beliefs. Unlike his father, he shows strong emotions which would have been seen as feminine. However, Priestley suggests that emotion is human and necessary for society to improve. This highlights how the younger generation have the potential to break free from their toxic past.
- However, unlike Sheila, he only partially accepts responsibility for his behaviour. When he speaks about his involvement with Eva, he uses euphemisms and does not fully confess. His attempt to divert some of the blame causes him to be perceived as similar to the older generation to an extent. Priestley wants us to learn not to avoid responsibility and behave more like Sheila, than like the example set by her brother.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Alcoholic, strained, outsider, discontented, trapped, shocking, cruel, masculine, toxic, objectifying, misogynistic, drunken, damaged, moral, socialist, empathetic, emotional, evasive, younger

1945 audience response (AO3)

- The audience develop sympathy for Eric from the start of the play; he is clearly an outsider and is mocked and scorned by his parents. He clearly struggles emotionally and lacks family love. Priestley does this to build a connection with Eric from the start; this makes us still side with him despite the alter revelations about his violent and cruel behaviour.
- We see that Eric is a victim of the toxic masculinity and poor parenting that he has grown up in and cannot escape. To an extent, it is not Eric's fault that he behaves the way that he does. By doing this, Priestley suggests that the problem is the society in which Eric has grown up in, rather than him as an individual. This is because Priestley wants us to see the negative effects of capitalism and toxic masculinity so that we learn socialist messages from the play.
- Eric's emotion and remorse when he hears about the poor treatment of Eva makes us see him as a morally superior character to his father and mother. This again makes us side with Eric.
- Eric symbolises the younger generation along with Sheila. Priestley wants the audience to learn and continue the lessons that these characters have taught them. If Eric can redeem himself after such cruel behaviour, then anyone can make amends for the mistakes they have made in the past. By showing that Eric does not fully redeem himself, Priestley almost challenges the audience to behave better than Eric rather than try to copy him.

Character of Eric Birling

ERIC is in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive. - Act 1

Arthur Birling: Giving us the port, Edna? That's right. (he pushes it towards Eric.) - Act 1

Eric suddenly guffaws. His parents look at him.

Sheila: You're squiffy.
- Act 1

Eric: (eagerly) Yes, I remember - (but he checks himself.)

Birling: Well, what do you remember?

Eric: (confused) Nothing.
- Act 1

Eric:
(involuntarily)
My god!
- Act 1

if they didn't like those rates, they could go and work somewhere else. It's a free country, I told them.

Eric: It isn't if you can't go and work somewhere else.
- Act 1

Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices. And I don't see why she should have been sacked just because she'd a bit more spirit than the others. You said yourself she was a good worker. I'd have let her stay - Act 1



This isn't the time to pretend that Eric isn't used to drink. He's been steadily drinking too much for the last two years.

Mrs Birling: (staggered)
it isn't true. - Act 1

// Eric goes for a whisky. His whole manner of handling the decanter and then the drink shows his familiarity with quick heavy drinking. The others watch him narrowly.// - Act 3

you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble - Act 3

Inspector: You went with her to her lodgings that night?

Eric: Yes, I insisted - it seems. I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that - well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - and I threatened to make a row.

Inspector: so she let you in?

Eric: Yes. And that's when it happened. And I didn't even remember - that's the hellish thing. Oh - my God! - how stupid it all is!
- Act 3

you killed her - and the child she'd have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you-- Act 3

We did her in all right - Act 3

Eric: Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport-- Act 3

Key evidence

Key dramatic techniques

- The use of one room and a single setting emphasises the claustrophobic nature of the values that Eric has grown up with
- Eric's re-entry at the end of Act 2 is the climax of the story, signalling the dramatic revelation that he is the father of Eva's baby. This makes Eric's story seem the most shocking and dramatic.
- Eric is absent for much of the play, and has many less lines than Sheila. This emphasises how he has been oppressed and caged by the toxic masculinity that he has grown up in.
- Eric uses euphemisms when describing his relationship with Eva. This highlights how he evades the truth and struggles to face up to his actions fully

Character of Gerald Croft

Key points (AO1)

- Gerald is a metonym for the Edwardian aristocratic class, the class of people higher than the industrialist Birlings. As a result of this, he is polished, self-assured and ingratiating, symbolising the pride of the aristocracy. He is part of an exclusive elite in society who are far removed from the lives of the working class. Even his name symbolises this - a croft is an enclosed piece of land. This highlights how the aristocracy live in a bubble removed from others and lack awareness of the suffering of the poor.
- He is a womanising cad who uses his wealth and power to exploit Eva and expose the Inspector's true identity. Despite being young like Sheila and Eric, he does not care about his actions once he realises that the Inspector is a fake. This highlights the callousness and moral indifference of the aristocracy.
- Gerald's confession is the most questionable. Unlike Mr and Mrs Birling, he tells the truth and does not lie or cover up his responsibility. However, he tells the story with a distinct lack of remorse. In his version of events, he creates a role for himself as a chivalric hero who saved a poor damsel in distress. However, it is easy to see how Gerald might be lying about why he became involved with Eva that night; we know that the Palace bar is a place where prostitutes work, so it is likely that he was looking for sexual pleasure, and when he remarks that he saw Eva looking at him, his condescending tone in describing her shows his masculine superiority and belief that women are subordinate to him. He is attracted to Eva's youth and vulnerability, which seems exploitative and predatory. His treatment of Eva is manipulative and controlling; he kept her in rooms owned by him, perhaps so that he could visit her and gain sexual pleasure from her whenever he liked, and he broke her heart, knowing full well that he could not have a relationship with someone like her. Could it be possible that Gerald is evading the truth?
- Alternatively, Gerald may truly believe that he was saving Eva and doing the right thing. To the audience, this may highlight the ignorance of the upper classes; they are so unaware of the struggles of the poor that their attempts at helping them in fact damage their lives further.
- At the end of the play, he finds a loophole that the Birlings can avoid their moral responsibilities, and fails to transform permanently like Sheila and Eric. He prevents the older Birlings from changing. This symbolises how the aristocracy and their selfish values may be holding back true change for society; they are dead weight that need to be eradicated so that change can truly come.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Aristocratic, polished, self-assured, ingratiating, prideful, elite, fashionable, confident, exclusive, removed, ignorant, womanising, wealthy, powerful, exploitative, careless, callous, morally indifferent, remorseless, chivalric, predatory, condescending, masculine, superior, dangerous, manipulative, controlling, cruel, evasive, morally ambiguous, static, selfish, preventing true change, dead weight

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley immediately creates distance between Gerald and the audience; he makes obscure references that we can't understand, which highlights how removed the aristocracy are from society.
- As a young soldier, Priestley saw how removed the aristocratic soldiers in WW1 were from the working class ones. Gerald's character may therefore be a reflection of the aloofness and arrogance of the working class.
- The moral ambiguity of Gerald makes us distrust him and see how the upper classes may use tactics to manipulate people and hide their true cruelty. This makes his behaviour particularly unsettling and highlights how the aristocracy are dangerous and manipulative.
- Gerald's objectification of Eva highlights the toxic masculinity that pervaded Edwardian society; his behaviour towards her is seen as predatory and lustful. This makes the audience deeply dislike Gerald as he clearly exploited Eva. This would have been particularly pertinent in 1945, when society was becoming more aware of gender inequality and attitudes towards women were becoming more equal.

Character of Gerald Croft

Key evidence

GERALD CROFT is an attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred man about town.. - Act 1

you ought to like this port, Gerald, as a matter of fact, Finchley told me it's exactly the same port your father gets from him.

Gerald: Then it'll be all right. The governor prides himself on being a good judge of port.
.. - Act 1

Sheila: (half serious, half playful) Yes - except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.

Gerald: And I've told you - I was awfully busy at the works all that time. - Act 1

Gerald, I'm going to tell you frankly, without any pretences, that your engagement to Sheila means a tremendous lot to me. ... 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. - Act 1

Birling: Cigar?

Gerald: No, thanks. Can't really enjoy them.. - Act 1

Birling: Rubbish! If you don't come down sharply on some of these people, they'd soon be asking for the earth.

Gerald: I should say so!
-- Act 1



Gerald: So - for god's sake - don't say anything to the Inspector.

Sheila: About you and this girl?

Gerald: Yes. We can keep it from him.
- Act 1

Gerald: After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.
Act 1

Gerald: I didn't propose to stay long down there. I hate those hard-eyed dough-faced women. But then I noticed a girl who looked quite different. She was very pretty - soft brown hair and big dark eyes- -- Act 2

She was young and pretty and warm hearted - and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life - you understand?-- Act 2

Sheila: (with sharp sarcasm) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

Gerald: all right - I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done.
- Act 2

. She was - very gallant - about it..
- Act 2

Gerald: (slowly) That man wasn't a police officer.
- Act 3

I insisted on Daisy moving into those rooms and I made her take some money to keep her going there. (carefully, to the Inspector.) I want you to understand that I didn't install her there so that I could make love to her. I made her go to Morgan Terrace because I was sorry for her- Act 2

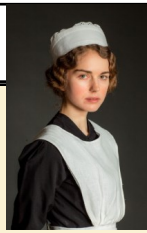
Gerald: Everything's all right now, Sheila.
- Act 3

Key dramatic techniques

- Gerald, along with the Birlings, wears expensive dinner clothes. This juxtaposes him with the inspector, and highlights his social superiority.
- Gerald's "attractive" appearance further emphasises his self-absorption and elitism
- We expect to hear Gerald's confession in Act 2, but the action diverts to Sybil. This creates tension and builds our curiosity.
- Gerald leaves in Act 2, which may signify his lack of remorse or desire to escape responsibility.
- Gerald uses derogatory language to describe women, which highlights his misogyny and toxic masculinity

Character of Edna

- **Key points (AO1)**
- Edna is the parlour maid of the Birlings whose name bears a striking resemblance to Eva. She is another representation of an oppressed working class woman and plays a marginalised and menial role
- She lacks agency and has no story or real voice of her own. She says and does little, in fact, so much that we are almost tempted to overlook her as a character and see her simply as a status symbol of a wealthy family.
- The play opens with Edna's name as Mr Birling asks her to give the family some port. This establishes the class divide between the Birlings and the working class, and also highlights how she is treated poorly; she is never thanked, only ordered in short, demanding imperative sentences.
- Her absolute silence during the Inspector's investigations highlights the vulnerability of the working classes; she has no agency to speak up, and does not out of fear and vulnerability; it is clear that she understands her lack of privilege, and fears that if she were to speak her mind she would lose her job, as happened to Eva. This drives her to keep silent.
- However, she is incredibly important in the play; she opens the door to the Inspector, and turns on the light more brightly symbolises socialism and the exposing of the Birling's wrongdoings. The stage directions here suggest that despite their oppression, the working classes have the power to usher in socialism and create change, but they cannot do it alone.
- Priestley uses nomenclature cleverly to signify the importance of Edna; the name means *rejuvenation* or *rebirth*, which signifies how the working classes are key to change in society.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Oppressed, working class, marginalised, menial, lacks agency, voiceless, characterless, story-less, vulnerable, overlooked, status symbol, objectified, powerless, unthanked, ordered, lack of agency, fearful, vulnerable, significant, usher

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- It is tempting to overlook Edna as a character, and Priestley does this on purpose to challenge the audience's views and highlight how we ignore the poor and working class.

Character of Edna

Key evidence

Arthur Birling: Giving us the port, Edna?
That's right. - Act 1

all right, Edna. I'll ring from the drawing room when we want coffee. Probably in about half an hour.

Edna: (going) Yes, ma'am.
- Act 1

EDNA, the parlourmaid, is just clearing the table, which has no cloth, of dessert plates and champagne glasses, etc., and replacing them with decanter of port, cigar box and cigarettes. - Act 1



Edna: (opening door, and announcing) Inspector Goole.
- Act 1

// Edna enters//

Edna: Please, sir, an Inspector's called.

Birling: An Inspector? What kind of Inspector?

Edna: A police Inspector. He says his name's Inspector Goole.

Birling: Don't know him. Does he want to see me?

Edna: Yes, sir. He says it's important.

Birling: All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light.

// Edna does, then goes out.//
- Act 1

Character of Alderman Joe Meggarty

- **Key points (AO1)**
- As an elected official (Alderman) who people have voted into power, horrible old Joe Meggarty is an example of the ways in which seemingly reputable people can act in disreputable ways. He is a respected member of Brumley high society yet frequents the Palace bar in search of prostitutes.
- Meggarty highlights the corruption and greed amongst the rich and powerful in society; men such as Meggarty abuse their power, when in fact they should be morally upstanding members of society.
- Gerald's description of him as half drunk and goggle eyed is revolting. Gerald also recounts how Meggarty wedged Eva into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his. Gerald's diction is interesting here: carcass is, of course, the body of a dead animal, almost as if he recognises that the type of sots and rogues that Meggarty represents our waste products of society.
- Again, Priestley's name choices interesting here: Joe is an everyman name, suggesting he represents any sleazy official who uses their societal position and status to exploit others.
- Mrs Birling's shocked reaction to Gerald's revelation: surely you don't mean Alderman Joe Meggarty prompts Sheila to reveal that his womanising is something that everybody knows about.
- Everybody except Mrs Birling, naturally. Her shocked reaction exposes not only the short-sightedness of the Edwardian upper class, but also their hypocrisy.
- Whereas she dismisses the idea that either could have behaved immorally, Mrs Birling is desperately unwilling to accept that those in positions of wealth and power can behave immorally.
- This desperation is also shown by Mr Birling, who sharply cuts Sheila off when she begins to tell of the poor girl who only escaped Meggarty with a torn blouse



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Powerful, exploitative, corrupt, official, reputable, disreputable, greedy, rich, powerful, elite, abusive, revolting, sleazy, exploitative, womaniser, hypocritical, immoral

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- The audience are shocked at the behaviour of someone who is supposed to be a moral member of society, and feel disgusted at Meggarty's treatment of Eva.
- The audience are forced to examine their own treatment of women and to consider how they may be complicit or contributing to a culture of toxic masculinity.
- By showing how those in power can be corrupt, Priestley forces the audience to consider their own elected officials, and to consider whether they should use their vote differently to vote for more credible leaders. This was particularly important in 1945, when the labour party had recently been elected. Priestley thought the party were morally upstanding and wanted them to remain in power. By highlighting Meggarty's corrupt nature, Priestley urges the audience to use their vote wisely to ensure those in positions of political power are elected for the good of the people.

Character of Alderman Joe Meggarty

Key evidence

Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his--

Mrs Birling: (cutting in) there's no need to be disgusting. And surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty?

Gerald: of course I do. He's a notorious womaniser as well as being one of the worst sots and rogues in Brumley--

Inspector: Quite right.

Mrs Birling: (staggered) well, really! Alderman Meggarty! I must say, we are learning something tonight.

Sheila: (coolly) of course we are. But everybody knows about that horrible old Meggarty. A girl I know had to see him at the town hall one afternoon and she only escaped with a torn blouse--

Birling: (sharply, shocked) Sheila!

- Act 2



Theme of Class



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, Priestley highlights the inequality between classes in the Edwardian era, and we see the damaging effects of the class system on both individuals and society as a whole
- Eva Smith and Edna symbolise the working class; we see how they are both exploited and oppressed, viewed more as commodities to fulfil the needs of the rich as opposed to being individuals themselves. For example, we see the objectification and abuse of Eva Smith, and see how Edna is completely voiceless and ignored as a character in her own right. Priestley suggests that this attitude is immoral and despicable, and that society should become a more equal place
- The Birlings symbolise the middle to upper class, who have roots in industry such as factories. Their materialism and obsession with money and status reveals this class of people to be self-centred, ignorant of the poor and prejudiced towards those less fortunate. They are portrayed in a negative light, highlighting Priestley's distrust of the rich and these attitudes. Priestley criticises the rich in order to make them seem like poor role models that the audience should not imitate.
- Gerald Croft is a symbol of the aristocracy, the most upper class of all of the characters. His sexual objectification of Eva Smith and his arrogance and lack of genuine care towards her, as well as his relief at the end of the play when the Inspector is revealed as a fake, could be seen to symbolise that the aristocratic classes are dead weight in society and are holding back society from making genuine progress. By portraying the aristocracy in a negative light, Priestley wants us to distrust them and see them as despicable.
- Interestingly, the most honest and likeable characters in the play are those that are poor (Eva) or see the poor as individuals (The Inspector, Sheila). This demonstrates how the poor are not lazy, idle money-grabbers as the rich believe them to be, but genuine and hardworking individuals who are deserving of fair treatment.
- The Inspector's message (as well as Priestley's own views) is that the class system and the exploitation of the working class is immoral, and if society was to be less divided, then it would be a happier and fairer place for all.

Key quotes (AO1)

- *it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms.* - The Inspector, Act 1
- *there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us* - The Inspector, Act 3
- *the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense-* Mr Birling, Act 1
- *You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.* - Inspector, Act 3
- *But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people.* - Sheila, Act 1
- *Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport-* Eric, Act 3
- *Arthur Birling: Giving us the port, Edna? That's right.* - Act 1

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Throughout the play, the audience develop deep sympathy for the powerless and voiceless working class, while coming to resent the hypocrisy and cruelty of the rich. This makes them despise the cruel and divisive class system, and encourages them to consider how they can work to make society a more fair and equal place for all people, regardless of their background.
- Priestley did this because he was a socialist; he believed in equality and wanted to make society fairer and more balanced.

Theme of Corruption



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, Priestley exposes to us the corrupt power. We see how those in power stay within a private, place no one else can enter. For example, we see how Arthur Birling, an influential employer and political figure in the town, is close friends with other powerful people such as Colonel Roberts, the chief of police, and Alderman Meggarty. This highlights how impossible it is for strong power structures to be broken or changed; those in power stay in power, and nothing changes.
- We see how those in power are corrupt as they use their power and influence to exploit others financially, emotionally and even sexually. For example, we see how Mr Birling exploits Eva and his other workers, paying them low wages and refusing to see them as individuals. Equally, Eric and Gerald, both powerful men, use their status and moneyed charm to sexually objectify Eva Smith, behaving immorally. We also see how Alderman Joe Meggarty, an elected official for the town of Brumley, is in fact a disgusting sexual predator who preys on the vulnerable Eva. Finally, we see how even Mrs Birling who works for a charity is corrupt; her position as the head of the charity makes her seem like a person who uses her power to do good, but in fact, we see how she uses her power to further trample Eva Smith down into deeper suffering and misery.
- This highlights Priestley's distrust of those who traditionally hold positions of power. Until the Labour party election in 1945, Priestley believed that many of the country's powerful people had been corrupt, and that there needed to be new, more trustworthy leaders who showed integrity and respect for all. Priestley believed strongly that the socialist Labour party were the party to take on the new role of governing Britain in the new post-war era, so that the country could break free from its historic cycle of corruption.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his- Gerald, Act 2
- **Gerald:** After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals. **Inspector:** Sometimes there isn't much difference as you think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line - Act 1
- Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges. - The Inspector, Act 2
- You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.- Inspector, Act 3
- You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate-Act 2
- Eric: Yes, I insisted - it seems. I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that - well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - and I threatened to make a row.

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Throughout the play, the audience develop deep dislike for the corrupt nature of those in power. This makes them despise the cruel and divisive class system, and encourages them to consider how they can work to make society a more fair and equal place for all people, free from corruption.
- Priestley did this because he was a socialist; he believed that a key element in achieving a fairer society was a government with integrity, care for others and trustworthiness.

Theme of Social Responsibility



Key points (AO1)

- The play's central message is the importance of social responsibility. By demonstrating how each of the Birlings' small actions have had significant, deadly consequences on the life and happiness of an innocent person, Priestley exposes how every action that we take as individuals has an impact on others. Therefore, we should not see ourselves as individual people but as a collective whole, a society or *one body* of people who should all be treated equally and fairly by everyone else.
- This is, in essence, the message of socialism. The Inspector is the mouthpiece for this message; his mission is to highlight to the Birlings the terrible consequences that their actions had on the life of Eva Smith, so that they can understand the importance of responsibility and change to become more socially responsible individuals.
- The Inspector succeeds in his mission with the younger characters of Eric and Sheila. They show genuine remorse and regret for their actions and vow to become more socially responsible people. This highlights Priestley's belief that the younger generation of 1912 (the audience of 1945) are the generation in whom he has hope, believing them central to societal change in order to make society more fair and caring.
- The Inspector fails in his mission to awaken social responsibility in the older generation, Mr and Mrs Birling, and the aristocratic Gerald. Unlike Sheila and Eric, these characters evade responsibility, believing that they have not done anything wrong. When the Inspector is revealed to be a fake, they have not changed and remain static characters who will continue to lack social responsibility and, it is suggested, cause the suffering of many more Eva Smiths in the future. This failure of the older generation and aristocracy to become more socially responsible highlights Priestley's belief that these groups are impeding progress and need to be held to account for their selfish attitudes, as they lead to the suffering of many innocent individuals.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Community and all that nonsense - Mr Birling, Act 1
- But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people! - Sheila, Act 1
- Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Mr Birling - Act 1
- One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. - The Inspector, Act 3
- Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.- Sheila, Act 3
- We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3
- By jingo! A fake! - Mr Birling, Act 3

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley's hope for the audience is that, by the end of the play, they will have understood the message of socialism explored in the story, and will reflect on their actions to become more socially responsible

Theme of Women



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, we see how women are subordinate to men, due to a culture of toxic masculinity and patriarchal values that pervade in the society of Edwardian Britain. These patriarchal values exist amongst all classes in society, but are most acutely felt by the poor, where women are objectified as commodities who are there to fulfil the desires of the rich.
- Priestley purposely created Eva Smith as female in order to expose the unjust and exploitative treatment of poor women in the Edwardian period. As we discover her story, we see how she is viewed primarily for her looks and is not seen as an individual, but rather as a beautiful object or plaything to be manipulated by the rich.
- In Act 1, we see how Birling exploited Eva in order to raise his profit. Notably, the first thing that he remembers about her is her beauty, which indicates his shallow attitude towards women, which is further reinforced by his sexist remark about their clothes being a token of their self-respect. Later, we also see how Sheila and Mrs Birling, despite being women themselves, show prejudice towards Eva due to her gender. They judge her for her looks and body, rather than seeing her as a person deserving of respect and care. Finally, we see how Gerald, Eric and other respectable men such as Alderman Meggarty objectify Eva and treat her as a toy for their own sexual pleasure.
- We also see sexist attitudes amongst the Birling family. At the start of the play, Sheila fulfils the stereotypical role of the ingenue, a young and innocent woman who relies on her relationships with men (here, her father and Gerald) for security and status. We also see her repeatedly called hysterical, which is a derogatory term used to describe female behaviour. We also see how her mother, Mrs Birling, perpetuates patriarchal attitudes, by accepting her subordinate role in the family rather than fighting against it. Many people argue that Mrs Birling is a traitor to her own gender, and is used to highlight how deep-rooted and damaging patriarchal beliefs are in society.
- However, as the play continues, Sheila loses her subordinate role and instead becomes a stronger, more wilful person in her own right, breaking free from her relationships with the men in her life. She rejects Gerald's engagement and opposes her father. This could symbolise the emergence of a less patriarchal society; Sheila as a young woman is becoming more equal to men.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Community and all that nonsense - Mr Birling, Act 1
- But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people! - Sheila, Act 1
- Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Mr Birling - Act 1
- One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. - The Inspector, Act 3
- Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide. - Sheila, Act 3
- We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3
- By jingo! A fake! - Mr Birling, Act 3

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley wanted the audience to feel sickened and appalled by the treatment of women in the play, and by seeing the awful sexist treatment of Eva, consider how patriarchal values are damaging and old-fashioned.
- Instead, Priestley wanted the audience of 1945 to consider how they could treat women with more respect and view them as equals to men.
- This was particularly pertinent in 1945. WW2 had just ended, and many women had been praised for showing their capabilities during the war, working in factories and doing "men's" jobs for the war effort. For the first time, women were proving themselves as equal to men, and Priestley wanted to emphasise this realisation in the play, too.

Theme of Men



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, Priestley highlights the damaging nature of toxic masculinity that pervades the society of 1912 Edwardian Britain. Throughout the play, we see how men are expected to live up to stereotypical behaviours that ultimately result in the damage of themselves and others. Priestley presents the male world as a place where deep connection and emotions are repressed, and where men are expected to live up to masculine ideals, engaging in stereotypical activities such as smoking, drinking, womanising and money-making in order to prove themselves as people.
- Mr Birling and Gerald symbolise this stereotypical masculine culture. They prize money, deride and objectify women and act with arrogance and nonchalance with ease. They do not talk about their feelings for fear of appearing weak, and they care little for the impact that their behaviour has on others, and using their masculine power to get what they want.
- However, while this male world comes easy to Gerald and Birling, we see how entrapping and toxic it truly is when we examine Eric's relationship with masculinity. It is clear that, from a young age, Eric has been pressured into living up to the masculine stereotype that his father wants him to be. Yet Eric, as a member of the younger generation (who symbolise change and hope) cannot truly fit into this cruel world. He suffers from an identity crisis, unsure of his place in his family and in the world. This is because, unlike his father, he shows empathy and has strong feelings that he is desperate to explore and express. As a result of his confusion, and being trapped in the role that his father wants him to live up to, he turns to drinking as a way to cope and feel at ease in society. Therefore, when we realise Eric's cruel behaviour towards Eva, Priestley encourages us to see him as a product of the toxic masculinity he is trying to live up to rather than a cruel individual determined to abuse an innocent girl.
- Through Eric, Priestley critiques the culture of masculinity and instead wants us, as Eric does, to turn away from these values to become more open, emotional and responsible. Eric's transformation from a toxic man to a more empathetic person is the journey that Priestley wants us all to make. His hope is that we will turn away from sexism and become more equal.

Key quotes (AO1)

- She was a lively good-looking girl - country-bred, I fancy - Mr Birling, Act 1
- When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had. - Act 1
- And it just suited her. She was the right type for it, just as I was the wrong type. She was very pretty too - with big dark eyes - Sheila, Act 1
- she looked young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down here. And obviously she wasn't enjoying herself. Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his- Gerald, Act 2
- She was young and pretty and warm hearted - and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life - you understand? - Gerald, Act 2
- well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - Eric, Act 3
- Sheila: You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald. Gerald: all right - I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done - Act 2

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley wanted the audience to feel sickened by the culture of toxic masculinity that pervades the play. This was particularly pertinent in 1945. For the first time, discussions about the fair treatment of women were being raised seriously due to the changing attitudes towards women that society had seen following their important role played in WW2.

Theme of Generational Differences



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, we see how the younger and older generations in the Birling family diverge in terms of their attitudes and behaviour, which symbolises how Priestley believes hope for a better society lies in the younger generation of 1912 (who are his audience of 1945) and their rejection of old, outdated ways of thinking. Priestley was writing at a time of great social change, where following the devastation of WW2 and the changing role of women in society, old fashioned patriarchy and class division were seen by him as damaging and preventing progress and a fairer society.
- The older generation, Mr and Mrs Birling, fail to accept responsibility for their actions and attempt to pridefully use their status to evade the truth, denying and lying about their involvement in the death of Eva Smith. They are snobbish and base their views on patriarchal and capitalist principles. Despite their deep involvement in the suicide of Eva Smith, they do not learn from the Inspector's interrogation, and when he is revealed to be a fake at the end of the play, notably express relief that things are *back to normal*.
- On the other hand, while at the start of the play, Sheila and Eric are a product of their parents' upbringing, sharing their views and behaving despicably, the crucial difference is that they demonstrate remorse and accept responsibility for their part in Eva's death. They vow to behave differently and consider how their future actions may have consequences for others. Once the true supernatural identity of the Inspector is revealed, Eric and Sheila remain changed by his message, unlike their parents, and criticise their parents for feeling relieved. Out of Eric and Sheila, Sheila is the true role model that Priestley wants us to follow; she has the most significant transformation, and symbolises the hope that Priestley feels about the younger generation to enact change. While Eric is also someone the audience should look up to, he does not change as fully as Sheila., which is perhaps a comment on the power of the toxic masculinity that he has lived in, and must continue to break free from.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Community and all that nonsense - Mr Birling, Act 1
- But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people! - Sheila, Act 1
- Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Mr Birling - Act 1
- One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. - The Inspector, Act 3
- Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.- Sheila, Act 3
- We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3
- By jingo! A fake! - Mr Birling, Act 3

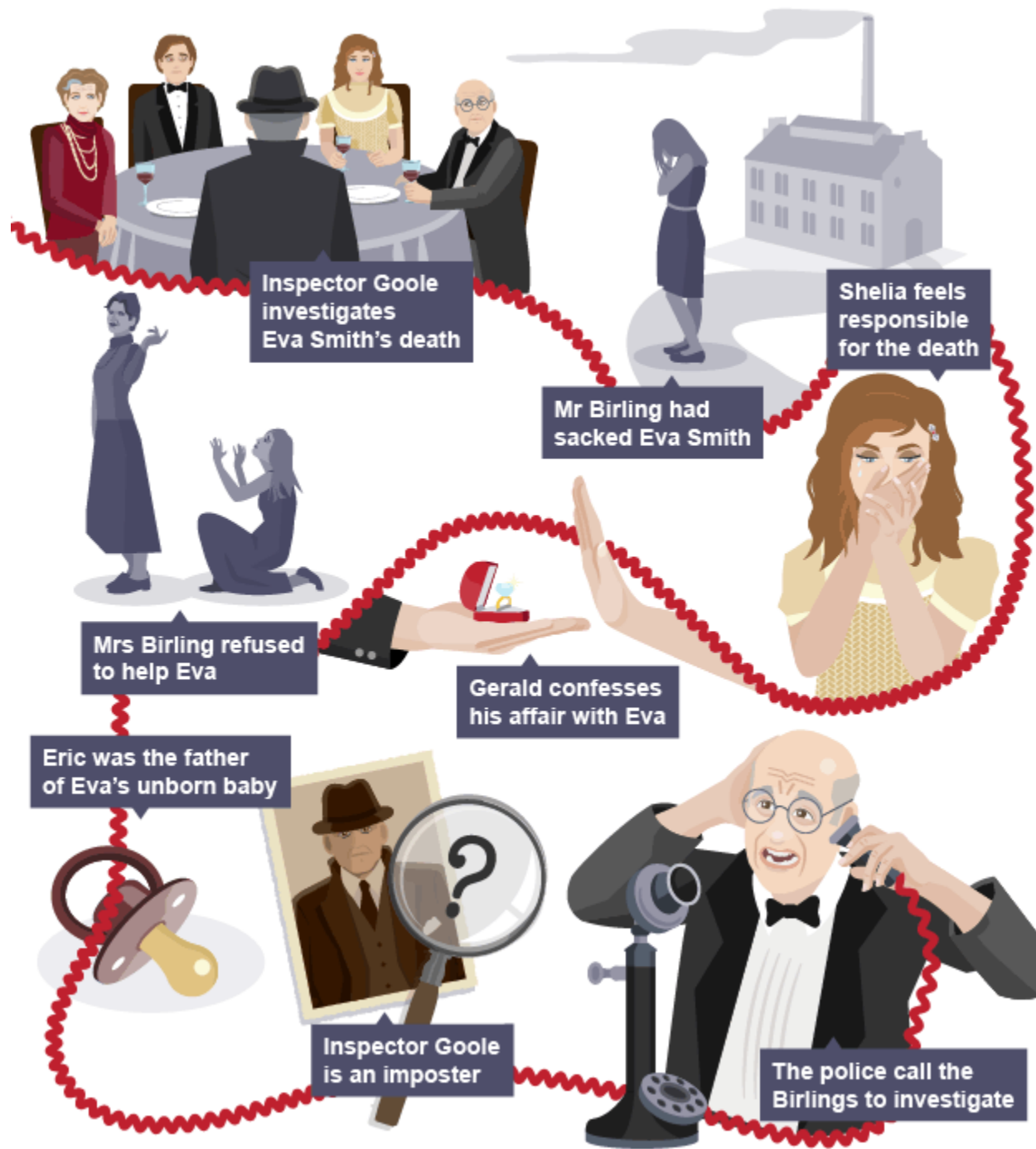
1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley wanted the audience to align with the younger generation. In 1912, many of his audience members (now middle aged) would have been of a similar age or younger than Sheila and Eric. Priestley does this in order to send a message to them, highlighting how the hope he has for a fairer society ultimately lies with them.
- Alternatively, Priestley wants the audience to despise the hypocrisy and callousness of the older generation; clearly, Priestley wants the audience to reject these old fashioned views and follow the lead of Sheila and Eric to carefully examine their own behaviour and become more socially responsible.



Ark Kings Academy
GCSE English Literature
Self-Quizzing

An Inspector Calls – J.B. Priestley



Act summaries

Act 1	Act 2	Act 3
<p>When Act 1 opens, the Birling family has gathered together to celebrate Sheila Birling's engagement to Gerald Croft. Arthur Birling congratulates his daughter and prospective son-in-law on the match, and then he assures them that their country's future will be filled with success. Sheila, her mother Sybil, and her brother Eric talk outside the room while Arthur and Gerald drink another glass of port. Arthur tells Gerald that he expects to be knighted soon, which should appease Gerald's mother, Lady Croft. Eric returns to the room. Arthur instructs both young men on the importance of placing oneself and one's family above all others.</p> <p>The maid, Edna, informs Arthur that an inspector named Goole is at the door. Arthur tells her to show him in. Inspector Goole tells Arthur that Eva Smith, a young woman from a lower social class, has committed suicide. When Arthur sees the girl's picture, he reveals he used to employ her but fired her for leading a strike. Sheila enters the room. She is shocked when she learns about the young woman's suicide. Eric and Sheila both believe Arthur should have been kinder to her, while Gerald sides with Arthur.</p> <p>The inspector shifts his attention to Sheila. He shows her the picture, and Sheila leaves the room in tears. Arthur accuses the inspector of intentionally upsetting his daughter and threatens to inform the Chief Constable of his behavior. The inspector tells Arthur that other members of the family are connected to Eva's death. Arthur leaves the room to talk with his wife. Sheila returns. She confesses she asked the manager at Milwards clothing store to fire Eva, since she believed the girl insulted her. Unlike her father, she expresses regret for her actions. The inspector then reveals that Eva changed her name to Daisy Renton, and Gerald reacts negatively to the name. As the inspector goes with Eric to find Arthur, Sheila accuses Gerald of having an affair with Eva. He confesses. The inspector returns.</p>	<p>Sheila decides she wants to be witness to everyone else's interrogation by Inspector Goole, since she cannot live with the idea that she is the only person to blame for Eva's death. Gerald accuses her of being petty. Sybil enters the room and tries to charm the inspector, promising to be forthcoming to help speed his investigation. Sheila warns her mother not to promise her honesty. She knows that it will end badly. Sybil accuses the inspector of disturbing her family. When the inspector asks for Arthur's whereabouts, Sybil says he is calming down Eric. Sheila reveals that Eric has a drinking problem, much to her mother's shock.</p> <p>Arthur Birling reenters the room, and Inspector Goole begins interrogating Gerald. Gerald tells the inspector that he met Eva while she was using the name Daisy Renton. He offered to let her stay in his friend's apartment for a few months. She became his mistress. They saw each other during the spring and summer. When fall arrived, he broke off the relationship, and Eva moved out. Once Gerald has finished his story, Sheila returns his ring.</p> <p>At this point Inspector Goole shifts his focus to Sybil. He knows that Sybil recognizes the girl in the photograph when he shows it to her and asks her to explain how their paths crossed. The gathered group hears the front door. Birling goes to see if Eric has left the house. Shortly after, he returns to inform everyone that Eric has left. Sybil explains she met Eva when the young woman asked for help from the Brumley Women's Charity Organization. Eva initially lied to the committee, claiming her husband had abandoned her. When pressed, Eva said she was pregnant and that the father had been stealing money to support her. She wanted assistance so she would not have to rely only stolen money.</p> <p>Allowing her prejudice to direct her decision, Sybil rejected Eva's application for charity and turned the other charity leaders against her. Inspector Goole criticizes her for abandoning a woman in need, but Sybil insists the father should be punished for Eva's death, not her. Arthur and Sybil expect Inspector Goole will leave to hunt down the father. Instead, he says he must wait for Eric's return. At this point, Arthur and Sybil realize Inspector Goole suspects Eric is the father of Eva's unborn child. Eric enters the room.</p>	<p>Eric immediately recognizes that the other people in the room know what he has done. His mother tries to hold on to her denial, insisting she knows he is incapable of committing such an offense. Eric steels his nerve with a drink and then explains how he met Eva. She was at the Palace bar. He was drunk, and he demanded that she let him follow her home. He then forced his way into her room. Later, he met her again. Once more, he followed her home. They slept together multiple times during the next few weeks. She then told him she was pregnant.</p> <p>Feeling responsible for Eva's wellbeing, Eric offered to marry her, but she refused. To support Eva, Eric stole money from Arthur's business with the intention of paying it back later. He gave the money to Eva. When she learned he was stealing the money, she refused to accept any more from him. The inspector tells Eric about how Sybil rejected Eva's application for financial support. He accuses his mother of killing Eva and his unborn child. The inspector tells the Birlings that, although they failed to help Eva, there are millions more people like her who suffer every day from peoples' carelessness and self-centered prejudices. He warns that those who abandon the least fortunate among them will be punished one day, and then he leaves the house.</p> <p>The Birlings begin to suspect that Inspector Goole is not an actual inspector. Gerald Croft confirms this suspicion when he returns to the house. He asked a local police sergeant about Goole. As Croft explains, "He swore there wasn't any Inspector Goole or anybody like him on the force here." The family members all realize that none of them saw the photograph of the young girl at the same time, so the inspector could have been showing a different picture to each person. Arthur, Sybil, and Gerald laugh off the situation as a failed prank. Eric and Sheila, however, refuse to ignore the dark side of their identities that Inspector Goole uncovered. Arthur insists that Eric has to repay every cent he stole from the company. Gerald offers Sheila back the engagement ring, but she refuses. The telephone rings and is answered by Arthur. Shocked, he tells the family that a woman just committed suicide, and that an inspector is coming to question them.</p>

Key Context - Edwardian Britain (Pre-WW2)

Industrial Britain

- During the Industrial revolution in the 18th-19th Century, many people had moved to cities from the countryside to work in factories
- Cities had grown rapidly, meaning that they became overcrowded, unhygienic and full of slums
- Many large factories had been built, owned by industrialists, that offered thousands of jobs to working class people. The pay was very low.
- Industrialists were often working class men who had made their money by establishing factories. They were often greedy, exploitative and cruel.
- During this time, society was based largely on capitalist principles. Those in power cared about money, and it was believed that anyone could get rich if they worked hard enough. Society was focused on the individual, and many people believed it was "every man for themselves"



Class division

- Society was deeply divided by class during the Edwardian period
- The upper and middle classes lived happily and in comfort, often in the peaceful and hygienic suburbs and small towns.
- The poor, who mostly worked in factories, often lived poor housing. They often struggled to feed themselves and their families.
- Sometimes, workers went on strike to stand up for better wages. Often, they were unsuccessful and forced back to work in the same terrible conditions.



Women and Men

- Women were seen as second-class citizens and were expected to be submissive towards men.
- Men were seen as powerful, impressive and the head of the household.
- Often, a woman's only option for having a secure and happy life was to get married. Women who did not marry were seen as strange and were often outcast.
- Amongst the upper classes, there was a culture of toxic masculinity amongst many men. This meant that men often used their power and influence to exploit and use women for their own pleasure.
- Many women were expected to stay at home and take care of children, or work in stereotypically female roles. They were seen as incapable of having the same skills or talent as men.
- Many poor women were forced to take low-wage jobs in order to support themselves and their families. This often led to them working in factories for very low wages.
- Some very poor women resorted to prostitution in order to survive, which was often very dangerous.
- Women were not allowed to vote until 1928.
- Sometimes, women had children "out of wedlock" (unmarried). This was seen as scandalous and immoral; many women who had children without being married were social outcasts and regarded as inferior in society.



Technological advancements

- During the Edwardian period, technology advanced. For example, the HMS "Titanic" set sail in 1912, and was one of the largest and fastest ships to ever sail across the Atlantic ocean to America from Britain.



World War 1

- World War 1 broke out in 1914, after tense political relations between European countries such as Germany and the Balkans for several years
- It is now known as the "Great War", as it resulted in the tragic deaths of 9 million soldiers and 13 million civilians worldwide.



Key Context – WW2 Britain and its aftermath

Families and homes

- World War 2 lasted from 1939 to 1945.
- During that time, the population in Britain faced great hardship.
- Many families lost loved ones in the war; over 350,000 soldiers died in battle, leaving their loved ones without fathers, brothers and sons in the aftermath of the war.
- Many civilians were also killed; over 70,000 people were killed on the streets of Britain due to deadly bombing of British towns and cities in the time period now known as the Blitz
- Thousands of homes were destroyed, and many families became homeless
- Rationing (the limit of certain goods such as food) lasted throughout the war and beyond. People had to "make do and mend" meaning that they had few nice things or luxuries. Often, families went hungry or ate very little due to food shortages.
- After the war, people were desperate for a change. They wanted a government that cared deeply about the welfare of the people. They needed reassurance that they would get the homes, healthcare and financial security that they felt they deserved, after the difficulties they had faced during and after the war.



The Role of Women

- While men went out to fight, women stayed at home.
- Many women were involved in the "war effort", being appointed to take on jobs usually done by men. This included ambulance drivers, factory workers, pilots and manual labour on farms.
- For the first time, women were seen as capable and seen as more equal to men; society began to be less sexist, and women found themselves having more opportunities to prove themselves than before the war
- After the war, women and men who supported equality wanted a fairer future, where women were given more respect and an equal status



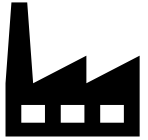
The 1945 general election

- In 1945, after the end of the war, the country went to the polls to vote.
- The Labour party (who believed in socialist principles) won by a landslide victory. They had promised to build new homes, set up a national health service, and provide benefits for people who were in financial difficulty. The landslide victory showed that the British public was changing; they cared more about social equality and the poor than ever before.

Key Context – J.B. Priestley

A Bradford Childhood

- Priestley was born in the Northern city of Bradford in 1894
- Bradford was an industrial town, famous for its mills that employed many thousands of working class people
- As a young man, Priestley witnessed the hardship that many working class people faced.



Young soldier “Jack”

- Priestley, then known as “Jack”, was enlisted into the British army as a soldier during WW1.
- While there, he saw the unequal way in which working class soldiers were treated in comparison to upper class soldiers. Working class soldiers, he said were “cannon fodder”, sent out to fight on the front line, while the upper class soldiers (often promoted into high ranks) were protected and away from the fighting.
- Priestley saw this as hugely unjust, and it made him determined to fight for social equality.



During WW2

- During WW2, Priestley had a radio show that many thousands of people listened to. On the radio, he often shared his political views about the government and the war. He often had strong messages, where he expressed his views about the inequalities he saw in society.



Social and political views

- Priestley was a socialist; he believed strongly that the government should care for all people, and give financial support to those who struggled. He was a strong supporter of the Labour Party.
- When Labour were elected in 1945, Priestley championed their success.
- Priestley was also a strong advocate for women; he believed that men and women should be equal, and often spoke out about gender injustice.



Top quotes list

1. Giving us the port, Edna? - Birling, Act 1
2. The Germans don't want war... The Titanic - she sails next week - unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable - Birling, Act 1
3. When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.- Mrs Birling, Act 1
4. a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself - Mr Birling, Act 1
5. the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense- Mr Birling, Act 1
6. Birling: All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light. // Edna does, then goes out.// - Act 1
7. she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course - The Inspector, Act 1
8. A chain of events.- The Inspector, Act 1
9. it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms. - The Inspector, Act 1
10. I don't accept any responsibility - Mr Birling, Act 1
11. I'd have let her stay - Eric, Act 1
12. it's better to ask for the earth than to take it - The Inspector, Act 1
13. But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people. Sheila, Act 1
14. (eagerly) Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame - and I'm desperately sorry - Sheila, Act 1

15. You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt.- The Inspector, Act 2
16. you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down - Sheila, Act 2
17. Sheila: (with sharp sarcasm) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald. Gerald: all right - I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done. - Act 2
18. You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here - Sheila, Act 2
19. Inspector: (coolly) we often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable. The Inspector, - Act 2
20. Girls of that class - Mrs Birling, Act 2
21. I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame. - Mrs Birling, Act 2
22. well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - Eric, Act 3
23. you killed her - and the child she'd have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you - Eric, Act 3
24. there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us... We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.- The Inspector, Act 3
25. (excitedly) By jingo! A fake! Mr Birling, Act 3
26. Everything's all right now, Sheila. - Gerald, Act 3
27. Sheila: (bitterly) I suppose we're all nice people now. - Act 3
28. We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3

Setting

- An Inspector Calls is a three-act play with one setting: the dining room of 'a fairly large suburban house belonging to a fairly prosperous manufacturer'
- Priestley's description of the set at the beginning of the play script stresses the solidity of the Birlings' dining room: 'It is a solidly built room, with good solid furniture of the period'. But a later section of this scene-setting - on the walls are 'imposing but tasteless pictures and engravings', and the 'general effect is substantial and comfortable and old-fashioned but not cosy and homelike' - suggests that although the Birling's have wealth and social standing, they are not loving to one another or compassionate to others.
- The setting of the play in a single room also suggests their self-absorption, and disconnectedness from the wider world. It also creates a sense of claustrophobia, highlighting the cage that the older Birlings have created, from which the younger Birlings must break free
- Throughout the course of the Inspector's investigation, and the testimony of Gerald and each of the Birlings, the supposedly respectable city of Brumley is revealed to be a place of deep class divisions and hypocrisy
- The play begins with the characters' corrupt, unpleasant natures safely hidden away (a respectable group in a respectable home, enjoying that most respectable event, an engagement party); it ends with naked displays of hypocrisy.
- The stage is an attempt to represent what looks like the real world on the stage - so it is as though the audience is peering into someone else's life through an invisible wall. This is called verisimilitude.
- Verisimilitude: Seeming true or having the appearance of being real.
- The setting for act 1 is 'the dining room of a fairly large suburban house' with 'good solid furniture of the period'. The 'general effect' is that the dining room should appear 'substantial and heavily comfortable'.
- The stage curtain forms the invisible fourth wall and when it rises the audience can see beyond the fourth wall into the lives of the characters.
- The house is 'fairly large' and 'suburban' - implies prosperity
- 'Good solid' furniture indicates Birling's wealth and solid position in society - there is a link between Birling's physical appearance and the furniture - this has positive and also negative connotations
- The house lacks emotional warmth, like the characters
- The Birlings live a sheltered life, removed from and above the concerns of ordinary, working class people
- The 'door' is a convention used to create tension and build expectation - this is a device commonly used in horror and gothic films

Props

- Champagne, port decanter, cigars - luxuries associated with indulgence - indicate the Birlings are celebrating
- Port is a marker of social class - Birling wants to drink the same port as the port drunk by the Croft family indicating his desire to be on a similar social standing to the superior Croft family
- quite clearly Mr Birling is in control of the distribution of the port cigars and cigarettes, displaying that he's in charge of the proceedings
- However, as the first scene progresses, he allows both Gerald and Eric to help themselves to the port . This creates an opportunity for a director to emphasise Eric's drink problem by pouring himself a large shot
- this action suggests Mr Birling's obliviousness to his sons and happiness and the problem drinking that is a cause of this
- Edna the maid, clears away the first pops from the table, showing she is a menial and that this sort of work is beneath the Birlings . Edna's work is nearly invisible to them, taking place with little comment and without any thanks. This neatly manifests the Birlings lack of appreciation and obliviousness to working people
- The prop of the ring and ring case are also important . Gerald produces the ring with a dramatic, romantic flourish. When Sheila rejects the ring, she rejects Gerald's offer of marriage. Hence , the ring and attitudes to it economically convey the changing dynamics of Sheila and Gerald's relationship
- Photographs in the play are a source of mystery, tension and suspense.
- The telephone is also used to create tension in the last moments of the play when it rings sharply this creates a sense of shock.
- Costumes in the play are also significant . At the start of the play, Priestley tells us that the Birlings and Gerald are in evening dress of the period. The females clothes unless clear. However a costume designer may well choose costumes to establish a difference between

Lighting

- At the start of act one , Priestley is quite specific about the lighting it should be pink and intimate
- this lighting suits the domestic scene and the romantic occasion being celebrated
- There is only one other lighting instruction in the entire play when the inspector enters the lighting should be **brighter and harder**. Clearly the intention is to dispel the earlier intimate atmosphere and change the dynamic. Light brightening is associated with things being revealed and bright light can be harsh, while harder light suggests an altogether tougher atmosphere appropriate for the inspectors interrogation of the suspects

Sound effects

- Though Priestley doesn't use music, off stage sound effects feature significantly in an inspector calls
- As with the references to off stage rooms, these ambient sound effects help generate a 3 dimensional representation of the Birlings house . Used sparingly, at various moments of the play, sounds from off stage also immediately create tension
- For instance Mr Birlings speech in act one is interrupted suddenly and significantly with the sharp front doorbell. The adjective sharp is important as it implies the noise is sudden and shrill comment but also that it cuts through Mr Birlings bombastic blustering. The doorbell could symbolise how the capitalist speech of Mr Birling is being interrupted by socialism.
- The door slamming is also used to create tension.
- At the end of the play , the telephone rings sharply. Once again , the sound cut through and immediately transformed the atmosphere on stage. At this point in proceedings, Mr and Mrs Birling are almost hysterical, giddy with relief , and are laughing at the appalled reaction of their children. Once again it is Mr Birling who is interrupted, just as he's accusing his children of not being able to take a joke. As there have been 2 phone calls already in the final scene, one to the police station and the other to the hospital , the audience can guess that this one will also convey some crucial information. The Birlings reaction to the sound implies that they to come to the same conclusion. Silence, like the stillness at the end of act two when the inspector holds up a hand, creates dramatic anticipation. Silence is a space waiting to be filled.

Proxemics

- Proxemics is a study of body language and personal space and their significance in human relationships. It is used to explore how characters occupy the stage and how character relationships are depicted. For example, simple power dynamics can be indicated by characters standing up or sitting down. Allegiances, by how characters either group together or separate themselves from others.
- At the start of an inspection calls, for example, Priestley is specific about who is sitting where around the table. As hosts, Mr and Mrs Birling sit at each end, with Eric on one side and Sheila and Gerald on the other. The senior Birlings or authority over the children arranged between them is thus immediately signalled.
- Another sign of Mrs Birling status, and of the importance of middle class etiquette to the Birlings, is that when she rises from the dinner table the other characters also rise. In contrast, when Edna enters with news that the inspector has arrived the men do not rise from their sitting position.
- Priestley does not specify where the inspector sits when he is invited to by Mr Birling, but directors will be tempted to place the inspector somehow pointedly apart from the others. In the Stephen Daldry production we've already mentioned, the inspector remains outside the house, at ground level, while Mr Birling descends only partly down a spiral staircase from the elevated house to address him.
- Examples of embedded stage directions that employ proxemics appear at the end of act one. At this point in the play, the inspector has just revealed that even changed her name to Daisy Renton, eliciting a startled Watt from Gerald. Then the inspector and Eric exit the room, leaving the newly engaged couple, Gerald and Sheila, alone on a stage for the first time what follows is a tense, awkward conversation especially so for Gerald. This highlights an emotional gap opening up between them as they begin to see each other in a new light. Sensing this, Gerald tries to bridge this gap. The stage direction says approaching her and his line listened darling is left dangling uselessly in mid air. She responds no that's no use. The fact that Gerald has to approach Sheila implies they are standing physically apart.
- In act 3, when the inspector reveals to Eric that Daisy had gone to his mother's charity to plead for help, Eric is driven nearly wild with grief and rage. Although Priestley doesn't use a stage direction to tell the actor to physically get up, the reactions of the other characters function as embedded stage directions for example, Sheila says Eric, don't - don't -. Mr Birling says get back or I'll -. these lines suggest he might be physically struggling to hold Eric back.
- When Mrs Birling collapses into a chair, this action manifests the Birlings exhaustion and defeat. however, when Gerald Croft re enters the house and begins to raise questions about what we have just witnessed, everyone becomes gradually more animated. Mr Birling, in particular, rediscovers some energy. There are more stage directions signalling movement at the climax of act 3. Birling goes to the telephone and then goes to the sideboard, raises his glass, points at his children. Sheila moves towards the door. Gerald holds up the ring. These physical movements help convey a growing sense of energy, excitement and an almost giddy release of tension. The final scene builds to a small crescendo before the telephones sharp ring and the following moment of complete silence brings it to a crashing stop.

Dramatic Irony

- Priestley uses heavy dramatic irony when Arthur state opinions that the audience, with the advantage of hindsight, knows to be incorrect. Dramatic irony is rarely a subtle technique, but Priestley's use of it is exceptionally blunt. This could be considered clumsy, but it underlines the fact that *An Inspector Calls* is a play with a point to make, and a character whose sole job is to make it.
- One reason Priestley set the play in 1912 was so that he could use dramatic irony to make Mr Birling seem to the audience to be an arrogant and complacent fool.
- Priestley uses heavy dramatic irony, particularly when we are first introduced to Mr Birling. Birling, it seems, gets absolutely everything wrong: he dismisses silly pessimistic talk about Labour trouble and about the possibility of a war. Whereas of course the audience know World War One will break out just two years after the play is set to. His confidence that we are in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity is, of course, horribly misplaced. If we haven't already got the message that this man is a dangerous idiot, full of hot air, then he is made to cite the Titanic as conclusive evidence that the world is progressing in an unstoppably positive direction. Not only that, he then predicts that in 20 or 30 years time (i.e. the post World War Two period coming, the period in which the play's original audience would have lived) everyone will have forgotten these capital versus Labour agitations and all these silly little war scares. Birloing also dismisses the warnings of writers: these Bernard Shaws and HG Wells (writers who in this regard at least, history proved to be right)

Entrances and Exits

- Priestley uses entrances and exits to create tension and build drama
- The most dramatic exit is the Inspector's as he leaves after his "fire and blood" speech
- The most dramatic entrance is Eric's entrance
- When Sheila becomes appalled by her parents' behaviour she moves towards the door as if literally trying to escape from a world that seems like a gilded prison

Conversational Analytics

- Mr. Birling is the first to speak and he dominates the conversation for the first few pages, speaking far more lines than any other character. He also sets the topic and controls the agenda of the conversation, firstly by proposing a toast to Gerald and Sheila and Secondly by offering his thoughts on the current state of the world. He is deferred to by the highest status character present, Gerald Croft, who responds eagerly to Birling's unsubtle prompts for approbation, chips into the conversation only when prompted and addresses Birling as Sir. Birling holds forth, sometimes at considerable length, in effect, overstepping his turn and hogging the conversation. He is also the one who asks questions. Moreover, he is able to both interrupt his wife without any reproach and also to brush aside other characters' attempts to interrupt him, such as his sons and later his wife's.
- When the Inspector arrives, Birling initially continues in this dominant role, issuing commands such as sit down, again taking the lead in the conversation and asking a series of questions. Noticeably, the Inspector and Birling address each other and neither Eric or Gerald are involved at all in the discussion, emphasising their secondary importance. Very quickly though, the power dynamic shifts. After only a few exchanges, or conversational turns, the Inspector forcefully interrupts Birling and completely ignores what he was saying. From then on, the Inspector takes full control of the conversation and soon becomes the character asking all of the others questions that they have no choice but to answer.

Character of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton



Key points (AO1)

- She is symbolic of the suffering, oppressed working class and of exploited women in society. Her death is used to indicate the consequences of selfishness and greed, particularly amongst capitalist upper classes.
- She is voiceless in the play; we hear about her but never hear her speak, symbolising the powerlessness of the working class. She is also faceless; this encourages the audience to give her the face of whoever they may have personally impacted through their own greedy and individualistic actions.
- Her name is significant. Eva is reminiscent of Eve, who in Christian tradition is the first woman and therefore symbolic of womankind and even all of mankind. In the story of Genesis, Eve was an innocent person who was corrupted by the devil. In the same way, Eva is an innocent victim of the Birlings' corruption. Smith is also significant; it is an extremely common British surname, and is again used to demonstrate how she represents all people. The name Smith also originates from the trade of a blacksmith, whose trade involves heating metal to a high temperature and changing its form. Arguably, the Birlings' interaction with Eva causes their family life and perspectives to be agitated or heated up and changed significantly, so that they can never be the same again. Eva's alternative name, Daisy Renton, is also important. A daisy is a common British flower that is white, symbolising its innocence and purity, and small, symbolising its fragility. This symbolises the innocence and vulnerability of working class women, and highlights their need for protection. Daisies are often mown down, again symbolising how the poor are easily trampled on by the rich.
- Eva commits suicide by drinking disinfectant. This could symbolise how the poor are infected by the corruption of the rich. Also, the fact that she ingests such a strong substance indicates how women's bodies were often violated by rich men.
- Throughout the play, Eva is exploited by toxic masculinity and deep misogyny that runs through upper class British male society. Mr Birling comments only on her beauty, seeing her only as a pretty face, and both Gerald and Eric exploit her physically and emotionally for their own pleasure with little remorse.
- Throughout the play, we learn that Eva was a strong, capable and spirited character who shows resilience and determination despite her suffering. This highlights the strength and credibility of the poor; unlike the rich, as seen with Sheila and Eric, they persevere and show strength of character.
- She parallels the character of Sheila; as they have similar physical descriptions and are of similar age. This allows Priestley to comment on the inequality within society and highlight the divisive nature of social class, and how it creates undeserved privilege and undeserved persecution.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Suffering, oppressed, exploited, voiceless, powerless, symbolic, faceless, womankind, mankind, corrupted, innocent, victim, pure, fragile, violated, resilient, determined, credible, persecuted, collective suffering

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Throughout the play, the audience feel deep sympathy for Eva and the treatment she faced at the hands of the Birlings. We also admire her as a character, as we learn about her resilience, gracefulness of character and determination as an individual. In turn, this intensifies our hatred of the Birlings and highlights their despicable nature.
- Witnessing the suffering of a working class character would have particularly angered an audience in 1945. The Labour party had just come to power, highlighting how society had become more socialist. The 1945 audience would have seen Eva's suffering and felt inspired to enact change.
- Priestley was a socialist, and cared deeply about the lives of the poor due to his own life experiences. Therefore, he deliberately portrayed Eva in this way to force the audience to consider their own actions, and try to live a more socially responsible lifestyle.
- Priestley was an advocate for equality between men and women; he wanted the audience to feel sickened and horrified about Eva's treatment by Gerald, Eric, Mr Birling and Alderman Meggarty. By highlighting Eva's cruel treatment, Priestley forces the audience to consider how they can contribute more effectively to a world in which women are respected as individuals, rather than sexualised objects.

Character of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton

Key evidence

she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course -
The Inspector, Act 1

. She was a lively good-looking girl - country-bred, I fancy - Mr Birling, Act 1

Ring-leader, good worker, she'd had a lot to say, she'd a bit more spirit than the others
- Mr Birling, Act 1

A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it. - The Inspector, Act 1

The girl had been causing trouble in the works. I was quite justified. - Mr Birling, Act 1

after two months, with no work, no money coming in, and living in lodgings, with no relatives to help her, few friends, lonely, half-starved, she was feeling desperate -
The Inspector, Act 1

There are a lot of young women living that sort of existence in every city and big town in this country, Miss Birling. If there weren't, the factories and warehouses wouldn't know where to look for cheap labour. Ask your father. - The Inspector, Act 1

you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down -
Sheila, Act 2

it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms. - The Inspector, Act 1

And it just suited her. She was the right type for it, just as I was the wrong type. She was very pretty too - with big dark eyes - Sheila, Act 1



You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt. - The Inspector, Act 2

she looked young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down here. And obviously she wasn't enjoying herself. Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his - Gerald, Act 2

she was desperately hard up and at that moment was actually hungry. - Gerald, Act 2

She was young and pretty and warm hearted - and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life - you understand? - Gerald, Act 2

She was - very gallant - about it. - Gerald, Act 2

well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty -
Eric, Act 3

This girl killed herself - and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her - The Inspector, Act 3

there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, - The Inspector, Act 3

Character of Inspector Goole

Key points (AO1)

- The Inspector is an omniscient, all-knowing moral force for good. His purpose is not to convict them of a crime, but to force the Birlings to recognise the immorality of their actions and change their attitudes.
- He is a personification of socialist values, urging the Birlings (and the audience) to consider their own actions and how they affect others. By speaking on behalf of Eva, who cannot speak herself, Priestley suggests that socialism can act as a protector and advocate for the poor.
- At times, he is God-like, almost acting as an angelic force who has come to expose the sins of the Birlings. He sets about forcing confessions of vices from the characters, similar to the role of a Priest, accepting confessions of sins in the Catholic Church. He uses biblical language to warn them of the consequences of their sins.
- He is opposed to, and exempt from the immorality and corruption of society. For example, he refuses to drink alcohol, symbolising his rejection of immoral values and vice.
- Unlike the Birlings, the Inspector sees Eva Smith as an individual, calling her by her name, which symbolises his socialist belief that the lower classes are just as significant as upper class people
- The Inspector's appearance is plain, simple and unimpressive, yet his values and morals are strong and striking. This juxtaposes him with the fancily attired Birlings, and may demonstrate that capitalism is superficial and materialistic, whereas socialism is more about actions than appearance, and demonstrates how the values of socialism are stronger than the values of capitalism. The Inspector's unremarkable appearance also makes him universal; he could be anyone, from any class or background. This highlights how everyone can and should adopt the values of socialism.
- Throughout the play, he uses powerful, shocking language to describe Eva's death. This emphasises his message and the brutal treatment of the working class.
- He is the antithesis or foil to Mr Birling, symbolising the opposing nature of socialism and capitalism. Upon his arrival, he undermines the authority of Mr Birling, which symbolises how capitalism is capable of being reformed by socialist values.
- He has the greatest impression on Sheila, who demonstrates the Inspector's ability to change the mindset of people, particularly the younger generation who have the power to move away from the mistakes of the past.
- He is methodical and controlled in his actions and speech, which makes him seem trustworthy and believable. This contrasts with Mr Birling's frantic and angry manner.
- At the end of the play, he is revealed to not be a real Inspector, yet his message has still had a profound impact on the audience and younger generation. By removing his persona, we focus more on his message than him as an individual person.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Omniscient, all-knowing, moral, force for good, socialist, advocate for the poor, God-like, angelic, exposing, Priest-like, biblical, sympathetic, kind, caring, plain, simple, physically unimpressive, striking, strong, juxtaposed, unmaterialistic, universal, role-model, powerful, shocking, antithesis, foil, impressive, methodical, controlled, trustworthy, believable, credible, respectable, admirable, vehicle, mouthpiece, impactful

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- The Inspector is a role model for the audience, teaching them how to treat others and how to behave.
- The audience respect and admire the Inspector. They are impressed by his power and control, which in turn makes them impressed by his moral message.
- The Inspector is used as a vehicle or mouthpiece to present Priestley's own views regarding the need for socialist change. This was particularly important in 1945, as after the war, society wanted change, which was signalled by the Labour party's landslide victory in 1945
- His advocacy for women would have also impressed the audience; women wanted change after their important role in WW2, so they would have been impressed by his message
- His strong message has a profound impact on the audience, forcing them to examine their own behaviour and consider how they contribute to the suffering of others

Character of Inspector Goole

Key evidence

The Inspector need not be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period.- Stage Directions, Act 1

Burnt her inside out, of course. - Act 1

One person and one line of inquiry at a time. Otherwise, there's a muddle - Act 1

what happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened to her afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.- Act 1

You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt. - Act 1

it's better to ask for the earth than to take it. Act 1

. In fact, I've thought that it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms. Act 1



A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it. - Act 1

I think you did something terribly wrong - and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it. - Act 2

cutting in, massively ... harshly ... sternly ... steadily ... calmly - Act 1

Gerald: After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.

Inspector: Sometimes there isn't much difference as you think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line. - Act 1

Mrs Birling: you seem to have made a great impression on this child, Inspector.

Inspector: (coolly) we often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable. - Act 2

Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges. - Act 2

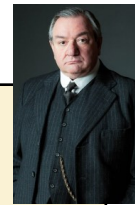
Sheila: (slowly, carefully now) you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down. And it'll be all the worse when he does.- Act 2

No, he's giving us the rope - so that we'll hang ourselves. - Sheila Act 2

This girl killed herself - and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. - Act 3

One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. - Act 3

Character of Arthur Birling



Key points (AO1)

- Birling is a personification of capitalist ideology and symbolic of the deadly sin of greed and pride. His large, materialistic appearance and views are symbolic of his attitude. He behaves pompously and values wealth above everything else, including his own family. Capitalism affects even his most intimate relationships; he married his wife for her social status and has no connection with his children, particularly Eric. This symbolises the heartless, cold nature of capitalism.
- Priestley uses dramatic irony to portray Birling as foolish and unlikable. For example, he makes thoughtless remarks that *the Germans don't want war* and that the Titanic is *unsinkable*; Priestley does this to discredit capitalism, showing how it itself is foolish, ignorant and blind to reality.
- Despite his success, he has lower class origins, as many Industrialists at the time had, and clearly feels insecure about his status, so he proudly boasts of his position, and is deeply fearful about scandals that may damage his reputation. He is looked down upon by higher class men and those from respected families, so is seen as a class imposter by many above him in societal rankings. This has been done by Priestley to critique capitalism and to reveal the cycle of oppression caused by social class division. His constant desire to prove himself leads to greater cruelty and oppression of his workers.
- He is dismissive of the Inspector's message and rejects all claims that his actions began the chain of events. He is reluctant to accept responsibility, which symbolises how the older generation and capitalist values are damaging to future progress and equality. He juxtaposes his children, Eric and Sheila, who acknowledge their moral failings.
- He is trapped in a cycle of immorality, and despite undergoing the same investigation as his children, lacks to change attitude. He is a static character. Here, Priestley conveys the underlying message that the flaws of the current society are caused by the upper class and older generation's resistance to change.
- He is a foil or the antithesis to the Inspector, symbolising the opposing natures of capitalism and socialism. While Birling attempts to dominate the Inspector, he becomes increasingly out of control, symbolising the power that socialism has to squash capitalism.
- He is condescending towards women, seeing his daughter Sheila as a pawn in his business empire, and failing to see Eva Smith as a capable individual. Significantly, the only thing that he remembers about Eva is her pretty appearance.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Capitalist, greedy, prideful, large, materialistic, pompous, wealthy, Industrialist, cold, heartless, foolish, unlikable, ignorant, blind, thoughtless, insecure, lower-class, fearful, class imposter, oppressed, cruel, oppressing, dismissive, static, older generation, juxtaposes, trapped, immoral, flawed, resistant to change, foil, antithesis, condescending, misogynistic

1945 audience response (AO3)

- From the outset of the play, the audience dislike Birling for his dominance, pride, greed and lack of humanity. We recognise his ignorance and foolishness early on through Priestley's use of heavy dramatic irony, which makes us find him abhorrent and despicable. For example, when he makes the statement *The Germans don't want war*, the 1945 audience would have been deeply upset by this throwaway comment. Many audience members would have lost relatives in the first world war, which happened just two years after Birling's comments in 1912. For him to make such a flippant remark about such a deadly conflict would have immediately angered the audience and deepened their hostility towards him.
- Priestley did this intentionally in order to expose the callousness and blindness of capitalism. As a socialist, Priestley wanted a more equal and fair society, so by exposing capitalist views as foolish, the alternative values of socialism presented by the Inspector seem more humane, kind and logical.
- Birling's static character and failure to change makes the audience deepen their dislike of him and the values that he symbolises; he is the anti-role model of the play, and we must do everything that we can to avoid behaving as he does

Character of Arthur Birling

ARTHUR BIRLING is a heavy looking, rather portentous looking man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech. His wife is about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior - Act 1

Giving us the port, Edna? That's right... you ought to like this port, Gerald, as a matter of fact, Finchley told me it's exactly the same port your father gets from him. - Act 1

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 - Act 1

And to that I say - fiddlesticks! The Germans don't want war. - Act 1

Titanic - she sails next week ... unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.. - Act 1

I gather there's a very good chance of a knighthood - so long as we behave ourselves, don't get into the police court or start a scandal - eh? - Act 1

clothes mean something quite different to a woman. Not just something to wear - and not only something to make them look prettier - but - well, a sort of sign or token of their self-respect. - Act 1



a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself - Act 1

the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense- Act 1

Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Act 1

We were having a nice family celebration tonight. And a nasty mess you've made of it now, haven't you? Act 1

Birling: (excitedly) By jingo! A fake! Act 3

Eric: Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble - that's why. Act 3

Birling: (angrily) Yes, and you don't realize yet all you've done. Most of this is bound to come out. There'll be a public scandal. Act 3

Birling: (triumphantly) There you are! Proof positive. The whole story's just a lot of moonshine. Nothing but an elaborate sell! (He produces a huge sigh of relief.) Act 3

Key evidence

Key dramatic techniques

- In act 1, Priestley includes **long dramatic monologues** spoken only by Birling, that are longer than any other character in the play. This emphasises his selfishness and dominance, and makes him appear greedy and self-absorbed.
- Priestley uses **dramatic irony** to portray him as foolish and unlikable. For example, complete confidence in "the Germans don't want war" as he goes "to that I say - fiddlesticks", is received by the contemporary audience in 1945 as ignorant, as these people have most likely lost loved ones and have strong memories of both WWI and WWII
- The use of **one setting and one room** for the play symbolises the Birling's close-minded views and self-centredness

Character of Sybil Birling



Key points (AO1)

- Mrs Birling is the personification of capitalist ideologies and is a source of greed and pride in the play. She is a symbol of the hypocrisy of the upper classes, who have positive public reputations (such as her involvement in the Brumley Women's Charity) but at heart are cruel and callous.
- Despite being female, she perpetuates misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs, and is therefore complicit in the oppression of women. She does this because she is desperate to preserve the status quo and maintain convention. She resists the idea that women should be allowed to vote, so is seen in some ways as a traitor to her own gender. She is dismissive about her daughter, calling her a child and hysterical and does not empathise with the womanly struggles that Eva Smith faced, despite being a mother herself. Through this, Priestley exposes that patriarchal values are perpetuated by women too; misogyny is not just the fault of toxic masculinity but conservative women too.
- Her family relationships are cold; she recognises that marriage is a means to secure financial security and social status rather than love, and there is significant emotional distance between her and her children. She opposes the stereotypical image of women as maternal, warm people.
- She rejects the Inspector's message of collective responsibility, maintaining that Eva's situation was her own fault. Therefore, she does not see the need for social change and remains a static character throughout the play.
- While at the start of the play, Sheila is a victim of her mother's influence, she rejects her more and more, until they become foils of one another. This is demonstrated by Sheila's change in language, at first mirroring her mother's words and later becoming more vocal in her own right.
- Mrs Birling is a foil to the Inspector and throughout, feels outraged at the Inspector's investigations and claims. She attempts to pompously use her social status to influence him, but fails, demonstrating the failure of capitalism to ultimately triumph over socialism.
- Mrs Birling maintains a repugnance for Eva Smith throughout the play, highlighting the snobbish and ignorant attitude of the rich towards the poor. She is oblivious to the lives, struggles and suffering of the poor, instead accepting convenient truths and reinforcing her pre-existing beliefs with prejudice. She cares deeply about her public image, so is appalled by Eva Smith's use of her surname. Priestley does this in order to expose the toxic nature of the class system and the hypocrisy of the rich.
- Arguably, she is the coldest character in the play, as she unlike the others makes a conscious choice to turn away the pregnant Eva, knowingly endangering her and her unborn baby's life.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Capitalist, greed, pride, hypocritical, cruel, callous, misogynistic, patriarchal, complicit, conservative, conventional, gender traitor, cold, prideful, static, foil, outraged, pompous, repugnant, snobbish, ignorant, prejudiced, materialistic, toxic, conscious, knowing, deliberate, calculated

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- From the outset of the play, the audience develop a deep dislike for the cold, pompous and old-fashioned Mrs Birling. Priestley does this in order to manipulate the audience's views about capitalism and the older generation, making us see these values as outdated, self-centred and cruel.
- A 1945 audience would have been angered by her attitude towards women. This was a time of great progress for women, so to see Mrs Birling actively turning against her own gender in order to maintain her own status would have seemed traitorous and selfish.
- Mrs Birling is perhaps the most hated character in the play by the audience. Unlike the other characters, who all unknowingly contributed to Eva's suffering (Mr Birling, for example, did not know that Eva would become homeless, and Eric and Gerald did to some extent try to empathise with her as an individual), Mrs Birling deliberately and knowingly turned her and her unborn child away onto the streets to a life of destitution and poverty. Priestley does this deliberately to expose the true cruelty and pride of the rich, and of the capitalist system.

Character of Sybil Birling

Key evidence

His wife is about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior - Act 1

When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.- Act 1

I think Sheila and I had better go into the drawing room and leave you men- Act 1

Mrs Birling: please don't contradict me like that. And in any case I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class--Act 1

Mrs Birling: that - I consider - is a trifle impertinent, Inspector.

// Sheila gives short hysterical laugh//

now, what is it, Sheila?

Sheila: I don't know. Perhaps it's because impertinent is such a silly word.
-Act 1

You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate--Act 2

Mrs Birling: I don't think we want any further details of this disgusting affair--
-Act 2



Inspector: (calmly) It's an organization to which women in distress can appeal for help in various forms. Isn't that so?

Mrs Birling: (with dignity) Yes. We've done a great deal of useful work in helping deserving cases.
-Act 2

Mrs Birling: first, she called herself Mrs Birling--

Birling: (astounded) Mrs Birling!

Mrs Birling: Yes, I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence - quite deliberate - and naturally that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case. -Act 2

Mrs Birling: I'm very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame. -Act 2

Mrs Birling: But I didn't know it was you - I never dreamt. Besides, you're not the type - you don't get drunk-. -Act 3

Sheila: So nothing really happened. So there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn. We can all go on behaving just as we did.

Mrs Birling: Well, why shouldn't we?
-Act 3

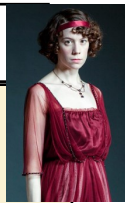
Eric: you killed her - and the child she'd have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you-. -Act 3

You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.-
Inspector, Act 3

Key dramatic techniques

- The single setting of one room emphasises the Birling's close minded and self-centred lifestyle
- Mrs Birling is hardly absent from the stage, symbolising the pervasive nature of capitalism and her dominant position in the family
- The lighting is "pink and intimate" at the start, as if the Birlings are looking through 'rose-tinted glasses'. But it becomes "brighter and harder" when the Inspector arrives, as if a spotlight is turned on their cosy lifestyle.

Character of Sheila Birling



Key points (AO1)

- At the start of the play, Sheila fits the familiar literary type of the ingenue - a young, innocent, virtuous, virginal and naive woman who is protected from the harshness of the world. She is subordinate to the men in her life, her father and fiancée, and because of this she embodies the way that many women were trapped and controlled by the patriarchal values of Edwardian Britain. However, from the start of the play, we also realise that Sheila is not entirely a weak character. She fight with her brother and uses shocking language, which foreshadows her journey throughout the play as she emerges as a strong, individual and independent-minded character.
- By showing how Sheila breaks free from Edwardian patriarchy, Priestley demonstrates how younger generations of women were reshaping society, with women growing in power and independence.
- At the start of the play, Sheila takes on the capitalist, materialist values of her parents, and behaves in a childish, spoilt and immature manner. She reflects the sin of envy and pride, having Eva callously sacked from Milwards due to her own insecurities. This highlights the cruel and cold nature of the rich and how they use the poor for their own benefit.
- Sheila juxtaposes her father when she learns of Eva's death, reacting with horror and sympathy. To some extent, her shock about the treatment of a young woman similar in age to her reveals her ignorance about the struggles of the poor, but also emphasises how different she is to her parents, highlighting Priestley's hope in the future generation to turn away from the cruelty of the past.
- When Sheila learns of Gerald's relationship with Eva, she maturely and calmly returns his ring. This symbolises her break from patriarchy, which inspires the audience to consider their own views about gender in return.
- During the play, she aligns with the Inspector and almost becomes his assistant, questioning and challenging her family and Gerald and forcing them to confess further. This symbolises her growing acceptance of socialism and rejection of capitalism.
- When the Inspector is revealed as a fake, Sheila remains changed by the messages she has learnt, and morally condemns her parents for their heartless relief. However, while Sheila changes more than any other character in the play, we never truly get to see her put her new views into action. This suggests that the audience are the ones that need to learn Sheila's lessons, and they are the ones who have the power to truly act differently.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Ingenue, young, innocent, protected, subordinate, trapped, controlled, powerful, forthright, strong, individual, open-minded, empathetic, breaks free, childish, spoilt, immature, envious, prideful, cruel, snobbish, cold, exploitative, juxtaposes, horrified, shocked, ignorant, younger generation, hope, mature, calm, assistant, changed, transformed

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Many of Priestley's audience members in 1945 would have been Sheila's age in 1912. Therefore, the audience immediately have common ground with Sheila and identify with her as a character. Like the audience, Sheila is a representative of a new generation wanting to make society fairer, kinder and less prejudiced.
- Sheila is the audience's role model and the person that Priestley wants us to behave most like; many of us have selfishly or spitefully spoken out in a fit of anger, and Sheila's mistakes are common mistakes that many would make. Priestley wants us to examine our own behaviour, as Sheila does, and like her, change to become kinder, more humane people.
- Sheila's break away from the patriarchy would have strongly resonated with the 1945 audience. Many women had grown in social status and society was becoming more equal due to women receiving the vote in 1928, and becoming valuable employees during WW2. Sheila's journey to independence symbolises the new journey that women were taking to become more equal citizens.

Character of Sheila Birling

SHEILA is a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited - Act 1

Mummy.. Daddy ... darling- Act 1

Mrs Birling: Now, Sheila, don't tease him. When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

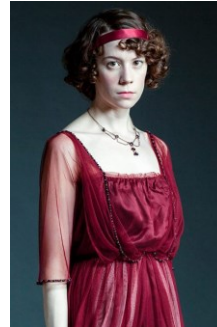
Sheila: I don't believe I will. (half playful, half serious, to Gerald.) So you be careful.
Act 1

Key evidence (Act 1 and 2)

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. Mr Birling - Act 1

Sheila: (taking out the ring)
Oh - it's wonderful! Look - mummy - isn't it a beauty?
Oh - darling - (she kisses Gerald hastily.) Act 1

Sheila: (rather distressed)
Sorry! It's just that I can't help thinking about this girl - destroying herself so horribly - and I've been so happy tonight. Oh I wish you hadn't told me. What was she like? Quite young? Act 1



Sheila: But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people. Act 1

He produces the photograph. She looks at it closely, recognizes it with a little cry, gives a half-stifled sob, and then runs out Act 1

I was absolutely furious. I was very rude to both of them, and then I went to the manager and told him that this girl had been very impertinent - and - and -
Act 1

Sheila: (eagerly) Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame - and I'm desperately sorry Act 2

Sheila: (slowly, carefully now) you mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down. Act 2

Sheila: but just in case you forget - or decide not to come back, Gerald, I think you'd better take this with you. (she hands him the ring.)... You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here
Act 2

impertinent is such a silly word.. Act 2

Sheila: (rather wildly, with laugh)
No, he's giving us the rope - so that we'll hang ourselves.
Act 2

Key dramatic techniques

- After Sheila learns of Eva's death, she runs off stage. When she returns, she tells of her involvement with Eva and begins to change. This exit and re-entrance is a visual symbol of her transformation. After this point, she refuses to leave, highlighting her strength of character and willingness to face up to her mistakes.
- At the start, simple and childish language is used by Priestley to depict Sheila's habit to be childish and naive: "I'm sorry, Daddy" being one example when she's admiring her ring rather than listening to her father's speech.
- But by the end she is confident and assertive. Priestley uses simple, plain and direct language here - almost the same as the Inspector: "we drove that girl to commit suicide."
- She also directly disagrees with her parents. She tells them that they're wrong to think that the Inspector was a "joke" and points out that they "began to learn something" before they decided it was a hoax.

Character of Sheila Birling

Sheila: (with feeling)
Mother, I think it was
cruel and vile.- Act 2

. The point is, you don't
seem to have learnt
anything.- Act 3

Sheila: (bitterly) I
suppose we're all nice
people now. - Act 3

And don't let's start
dodging and pretending
now. Between us we drove
that girl to commit
suicide.- Act 3

// Sheila moves towards door.//

Going to bed, young woman?

Sheila: (tensely) I want to get out of this.
It frightens me the way you talk.

Act 3



Key evidence (Act 2 and 3)

Key dramatic techniques

Character of Eric Birling



Key points (AO1)

- At the start of the play, Eric is introduced as an outsider to the rest of his family; he has a drinking problem and has a strained relationship with his family, which highlight his discontentment and difference from the start. This symbolises the discontentment of the younger generation and their desire to break away from the cage of their parents' values.
- Eric's involvement with Eva Smith is made out to be the most shocking of all. It is left until last for dramatic effect, and his parents react with great upset towards his behaviour. This is because Eric does what none of the other Birlings have - by having a relationship and child with a working class woman, Eric's behaviour exposes how the upper and working classes are in reality the same, which the older Birlings find utterly unbearable, as it breaks down the artificial barriers that they use to justify their own position in society.
- Eric's treatment of Eva Smith, where he drunkenly forced himself upon her and sexually objectified a disempowered working class woman, highlights the toxic masculinity and misogyny that pervaded the Edwardian upper classes. His behaviour reveals the dark heart of rich masculine identity that he, any many rich men in society, have grown up accepting. As he realises the consequences of his own actions, it is as though he undergoes a transformation where he realises the true nature of his despicable actions. When we learn that he stole fifty pounds from Mr Birling's office, we get further insight into the damaging masculine world that he is part of; men at this time were expected to hide their emotions and prove their masculinity. Priestley suggests that this toxic behaviour is damaging to both men and women.
- Despite this, Eric is innately moral, and similarly to Sheila, he develops socialist views as he empathises with the working classes and challenges the hypocrisy of his parents' behaviour and beliefs. Unlike his father, he shows strong emotions which would have been seen as feminine. However, Priestley suggests that emotion is human and necessary for society to improve. This highlights how the younger generation have the potential to break free from their toxic past.
- However, unlike Sheila, he only partially accepts responsibility for his behaviour. When he speaks about his involvement with Eva, he uses euphemisms and does not fully confess. His attempt to divert some of the blame causes him to be perceived as similar to the older generation to an extent. Priestley wants us to learn not to avoid responsibility and behave more like Sheila, than like the example set by her brother.

Key vocabulary (AO1)

Alcoholic, strained, outsider, discontented, trapped, shocking, cruel, masculine, toxic, objectifying, misogynistic, drunken, damaged, moral, socialist, empathetic, emotional, evasive, younger

1945 audience response (AO3)

- The audience develop sympathy for Eric from the start of the play; he is clearly an outsider and is mocked and scorned by his parents. He clearly struggles emotionally and lacks family love. Priestley does this to build a connection with Eric from the start; this makes us still side with him despite the alter revelations about his violent and cruel behaviour.
- We see that Eric is a victim of the toxic masculinity and poor parenting that he has grown up in and cannot escape. To an extent, it is not Eric's fault that he behaves the way that he does. By doing this, Priestley suggests that the problem is the society in which Eric has grown up in, rather than him as an individual. This is because Priestley wants us to see the negative effects of capitalism and toxic masculinity so that we learn socialist messages from the play.
- Eric's emotion and remorse when he hears about the poor treatment of Eva makes us see him as a morally superior character to his father and mother. This again makes us side with Eric.
- Eric symbolises the younger generation along with Sheila. Priestley wants the audience to learn and continue the lessons that these characters have taught them. If Eric can redeem himself after such cruel behaviour, then anyone can make amends for the mistakes they have made in the past. By showing that Eric does not fully redeem himself, Priestley almost challenges the audience to behave better than Eric rather than try to copy him.

Character of Eric Birling

ERIC is in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive. - Act 1

Arthur Birling: Giving us the port, Edna? That's right. (he pushes it towards Eric.) - Act 1

Eric suddenly guffaws. His parents look at him.

Sheila: You're squiffy. - Act 1

Eric: (eagerly) Yes, I remember - (but he checks himself.)

Birling: Well, what do you remember?

Eric: (confused) Nothing. - Act 1

Eric: (involuntarily) My god!. - Act 1

if they didn't like those rates, they could go and work somewhere else. It's a free country, I told them.

Eric: It isn't if you can't go and work somewhere else. - Act 1

Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices. And I don't see why she should have been sacked just because she'd a bit more spirit than the others. You said yourself she was a good worker. I'd have let her stay - Act 1



This isn't the time to pretend that Eric isn't used to drink. He's been steadily drinking too much for the last two years.

Mrs Birling: (staggered) it isn't true. - Act 1

// Eric goes for a whisky. His whole manner of handling the decanter and then the drink shows his familiarity with quick heavy drinking. The others watch him narrowly.// - Act 3

you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble - Act 3

Inspector: You went with her to her lodgings that night?

Eric: Yes, I insisted - it seems. I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that - well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - and I threatened to make a row.

Inspector: so she let you in?

Eric: Yes. And that's when it happened. And I didn't even remember - that's the hellish thing. Oh - my God! - how stupid it all is! - Act 3

you killed her - and the child she'd have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you-- Act 3

We did her in all right - Act 3

Eric: Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport-- Act 3

Key evidence

Key dramatic techniques

- The use of one room and a single setting emphasises the claustrophobic nature of the values that Eric has grown up with
- Eric's re-entry at the end of Act 2 is the climax of the story, signalling the dramatic revelation that he is the father of Eva's baby. This makes Eric's story seem the most shocking and dramatic.
- Eric is absent for much of the play, and has many less lines than Sheila. This emphasises how he has been oppressed and caged by the toxic masculinity that he has grown up in.
- Eric uses euphemisms when describing his relationship with Eva. This highlights how he evades the truth and struggles to face up to his actions fully

Character of Gerald Croft

Key points (AO1)

- Gerald is a metonym for the Edwardian aristocratic class, the class of people higher than the industrialist Birlings. As a result of this, he is polished, self-assured and ingratiating, symbolising the pride of the aristocracy. He is part of an exclusive elite in society who are far removed from the lives of the working class. Even his name symbolises this - a croft is an enclosed piece of land. This highlights how the aristocracy live in a bubble removed from others and lack awareness of the suffering of the poor.
- He is a womanising cad who uses his wealth and power to exploit Eva and expose the Inspector's true identity. Despite being young like Sheila and Eric, he does not care about his actions once he realises that the Inspector is a fake. This highlights the callousness and moral indifference of the aristocracy.
- Gerald's confession is the most questionable. Unlike Mr and Mrs Birling, he tells the truth and does not lie or cover up his responsibility. However, he tells the story with a distinct lack of remorse. In his version of events, he creates a role for himself as a chivalric hero who saved a poor damsel in distress. However, it is easy to see how Gerald might be lying about why he became involved with Eva that night; we know that the Palace bar is a place where prostitutes work, so it is likely that he was looking for sexual pleasure, and when he remarks that he saw Eva looking at him, his condescending tone in describing her shows his masculine superiority and belief that women are subordinate to him. He is attracted to Eva's youth and vulnerability, which seems exploitative and predatory. His treatment of Eva is manipulative and controlling; he kept her in rooms owned by him, perhaps so that he could visit her and gain sexual pleasure from her whenever he liked, and he broke her heart, knowing full well that he could not have a relationship with someone like her. Could it be possible that Gerald is evading the truth?
- Alternatively, Gerald may truly believe that he was saving Eva and doing the right thing. To the audience, this may highlight the ignorance of the upper classes; they are so unaware of the struggles of the poor that their attempts at helping them in fact damage their lives further.
- At the end of the play, he finds a loophole that the Birlings can avoid their moral responsibilities, and fails to transform permanently like Sheila and Eric. He prevents the older Birlings from changing. This symbolises how the aristocracy and their selfish values may be holding back true change for society; they are dead weight that need to be eradicated so that change can truly come.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Aristocratic, polished, self-assured, ingratiating, prideful, elite, fashionable, confident, exclusive, removed, ignorant, womanising, wealthy, powerful, exploitative, careless, callous, morally indifferent, remorseless, chivalric, predatory, condescending, masculine, superior, dangerous, manipulative, controlling, cruel, evasive, morally ambiguous, static, selfish, preventing true change, dead weight

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley immediately creates distance between Gerald and the audience; he makes obscure references that we can't understand, which highlights how removed the aristocracy are from society.
- As a young soldier, Priestley saw how removed the aristocratic soldiers in WW1 were from the working class ones. Gerald's character may therefore be a reflection of the aloofness and arrogance of the working class.
- The moral ambiguity of Gerald makes us distrust him and see how the upper classes may use tactics to manipulate people and hide their true cruelty. This makes his behaviour particularly unsettling and highlights how the aristocracy are dangerous and manipulative.
- Gerald's objectification of Eva highlights the toxic masculinity that pervaded Edwardian society; his behaviour towards her is seen as predatory and lustful. This makes the audience deeply dislike Gerald as he clearly exploited Eva. This would have been particularly pertinent in 1945, when society was becoming more aware of gender inequality and attitudes towards women were becoming more equal.

Character of Gerald Croft

Key evidence

GERALD CROFT is an attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred man about town.. - Act 1

you ought to like this port, Gerald, as a matter of fact, Finchley told me it's exactly the same port your father gets from him.

Gerald: Then it'll be all right. The governor prides himself on being a good judge of port.
.. - Act 1

Sheila: (half serious, half playful) Yes - except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.

Gerald: And I've told you - I was awfully busy at the works all that time. - Act 1

Gerald, I'm going to tell you frankly, without any pretences, that your engagement to Sheila means a tremendous lot to me. ... 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. - Act 1

Birling: Cigar?

Gerald: No, thanks. Can't really enjoy them.. - Act 1

Birling: Rubbish! If you don't come down sharply on some of these people, they'd soon be asking for the earth.

Gerald: I should say so!
-- Act 1



Gerald: So - for god's sake - don't say anything to the Inspector.

Sheila: About you and this girl?

Gerald: Yes. We can keep it from him.
- Act 1

Gerald: After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.
Act 1

Gerald: I didn't propose to stay long down there. I hate those hard-eyed dough-faced women. But then I noticed a girl who looked quite different. She was very pretty - soft brown hair and big dark eyes- -- Act 2

She was young and pretty and warm hearted - and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life - you understand?-- Act 2

Sheila: (with sharp sarcasm) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

Gerald: all right - I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done.
- Act 2

. She was - very gallant - about it..
- Act 2

Gerald: (slowly) That man wasn't a police officer.
- Act 3

I insisted on Daisy moving into those rooms and I made her take some money to keep her going there. (carefully, to the Inspector.) I want you to understand that I didn't install her there so that I could make love to her. I made her go to Morgan Terrace because I was sorry for her- Act 2

Gerald: Everything's all right now, Sheila.
- Act 3

Key dramatic techniques

- Gerald, along with the Birlings, wears expensive dinner clothes. This juxtaposes him with the inspector, and highlights his social superiority.
- Gerald's "attractive" appearance further emphasises his self-absorption and elitism
- We expect to hear Gerald's confession in Act 2, but the action diverts to Sybil. This creates tension and builds our curiosity.
- Gerald leaves in Act 2, which may signify his lack of remorse or desire to escape responsibility.
- Gerald uses derogatory language to describe women, which highlights his misogyny and toxic masculinity

Character of Edna

- **Key points (AO1)**
- Edna is the parlour maid of the Birlings whose name bears a striking resemblance to Eva. She is another representation of an oppressed working class woman and plays a marginalised and menial role
- She lacks agency and has no story or real voice of her own. She says and does little, in fact, so much that we are almost tempted to overlook her as a character and see her simply as a status symbol of a wealthy family.
- The play opens with Edna's name as Mr Birling asks her to give the family some port. This establishes the class divide between the Birlings and the working class, and also highlights how she is treated poorly; she is never thanked, only ordered in short, demanding imperative sentences.
- Her absolute silence during the Inspector's investigations highlights the vulnerability of the working classes; she has no agency to speak up, and does not out of fear and vulnerability; it is clear that she understands her lack of privilege, and fears that if she were to speak her mind she would lose her job, as happened to Eva. This drives her to keep silent.
- However, she is incredibly important in the play; she opens the door to the Inspector, and turns on the light more brightly symbolises socialism and the exposing of the Birling's wrongdoings. The stage directions here suggest that despite their oppression, the working classes have the power to usher in socialism and create change, but they cannot do it alone.
- Priestley uses nomenclature cleverly to signify the importance of Edna; the name means *rejuvenation* or *rebirth*, which signifies how the working classes are key to change in society.



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Oppressed, working class, marginalised, menial, lacks agency, voiceless, characterless, story-less, vulnerable, overlooked, status symbol, objectified, powerless, unthanked, ordered, lack of agency, fearful, vulnerable, significant, usher

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- It is tempting to overlook Edna as a character, and Priestley does this on purpose to challenge the audience's views and highlight how we ignore the poor and working class.

Character of Edna

Key evidence

Arthur Birling: Giving us the port, Edna?
That's right. - Act 1

all right, Edna. I'll ring from the drawing room when we want coffee. Probably in about half an hour.

Edna: (going) Yes, ma'am.
- Act 1

EDNA, the parlourmaid, is just clearing the table, which has no cloth, of dessert plates and champagne glasses, etc., and replacing them with decanter of port, cigar box and cigarettes. - Act 1



Edna: (opening door, and announcing) Inspector Goole.
- Act 1

// Edna enters//

Edna: Please, sir, an Inspector's called.

Birling: An Inspector? What kind of Inspector?

Edna: A police Inspector. He says his name's Inspector Goole.

Birling: Don't know him. Does he want to see me?

Edna: Yes, sir. He says it's important.

Birling: All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light.

// Edna does, then goes out.//
- Act 1

Character of Alderman Joe Meggarty

• Key points (AO1)

- As an elected official (Alderman) who people have voted into power, horrible old Joe Meggarty is an example of the ways in which seemingly reputable people can act in disreputable ways. He is a respected member of Brumley high society yet frequents the Palace bar in search of prostitutes.
- Meggarty highlights the corruption and greed amongst the rich and powerful in society; men such as Meggarty abuse their power, when in fact they should be morally upstanding members of society.
- Gerald's description of him as half drunk and goggle eyed is revolting. Gerald also recounts how Meggarty wedged Eva into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his. Gerald's diction is interesting here: carcass is, of course, the body of a dead animal, almost as if he recognises that the type of sots and rogues that Meggarty represents our waste products of society.
- Again, Priestley's name choices interesting here: Joe is an everyman name, suggesting he represents any sleazy official who uses their societal position and status to exploit others.
- Mrs Birling's shocked reaction to Gerald's revelation: surely you don't mean Alderman Joe Meggarty prompts Sheila to reveal that his womanising is something that everybody knows about.
- Everybody except Mrs Birling, naturally. Her shocked reaction exposes not only the short-sightedness of the Edwardian upper class, but also their hypocrisy.
- Whereas she dismisses the idea that either could have behaved immorally, Mrs Birling is desperately unwilling to accept that those in positions of wealth and power can behave immorally.
- This desperation is also shown by Mr Birling, who sharply cuts Sheila off when she begins to tell of the poor girl who only escaped Meggarty with a torn blouse



Key vocabulary (AO1)

Powerful, exploitative, corrupt, official, reputable, disreputable, greedy, rich, powerful, elite, abusive, revolting, sleazy, exploitative, womaniser, hypocritical, immoral

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- The audience are shocked at the behaviour of someone who is supposed to be a moral member of society, and feel disgusted at Meggarty's treatment of Eva.
- The audience are forced to examine their own treatment of women and to consider how they may be complicit or contributing to a culture of toxic masculinity.
- By showing how those in power can be corrupt, Priestley forces the audience to consider their own elected officials, and to consider whether they should use their vote differently to vote for more credible leaders. This was particularly important in 1945, when the labour party had recently been elected. Priestley thought the party were morally upstanding and wanted them to remain in power. By highlighting Meggarty's corrupt nature, Priestley urges the audience to use their vote wisely to ensure those in positions of political power are elected for the good of the people.

Character of Alderman Joe Meggarty

Key evidence

Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his--

Mrs Birling: (cutting in) there's no need to be disgusting. And surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty?

Gerald: of course I do. He's a notorious womaniser as well as being one of the worst sots and rogues in Brumley--

Inspector: Quite right.

Mrs Birling: (staggered) well, really! Alderman Meggarty! I must say, we are learning something tonight.

Sheila: (coolly) of course we are. But everybody knows about that horrible old Meggarty. A girl I know had to see him at the town hall one afternoon and she only escaped with a torn blouse--

Birling: (sharply, shocked) Sheila!

- Act 2



Theme of Class



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, Priestley highlights the inequality between classes in the Edwardian era, and we see the damaging effects of the class system on both individuals and society as a whole
- Eva Smith and Edna symbolise the working class; we see how they are both exploited and oppressed, viewed more as commodities to fulfil the needs of the rich as opposed to being individuals themselves. For example, we see the objectification and abuse of Eva Smith, and see how Edna is completely voiceless and ignored as a character in her own right. Priestley suggests that this attitude is immoral and despicable, and that society should become a more equal place
- The Birlings symbolise the middle to upper class, who have roots in industry such as factories. Their materialism and obsession with money and status reveals this class of people to be self-centred, ignorant of the poor and prejudiced towards those less fortunate. They are portrayed in a negative light, highlighting Priestley's distrust of the rich and these attitudes. Priestley criticises the rich in order to make them seem like poor role models that the audience should not imitate.
- Gerald Croft is a symbol of the aristocracy, the most upper class of all of the characters. His sexual objectification of Eva Smith and his arrogance and lack of genuine care towards her, as well as his relief at the end of the play when the Inspector is revealed as a fake, could be seen to symbolise that the aristocratic classes are dead weight in society and are holding back society from making genuine progress. By portraying the aristocracy in a negative light, Priestley wants us to distrust them and see them as despicable.
- Interestingly, the most honest and likeable characters in the play are those that are poor (Eva) or see the poor as individuals (The Inspector, Sheila). This demonstrates how the poor are not lazy, idle money-grabbers as the rich believe them to be, but genuine and hardworking individuals who are deserving of fair treatment.
- The Inspector's message (as well as Priestley's own views) is that the class system and the exploitation of the working class is immoral, and if society was to be less divided, then it would be a happier and fairer place for all.

Key quotes (AO1)

- *it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies, in their dingy little back bedrooms.* - The Inspector, Act 1
- *there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us* - The Inspector, Act 3
- *the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense-* Mr Birling, Act 1
- *You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.* - Inspector, Act 3
- *But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people.* - Sheila, Act 1
- *Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport-* Eric, Act 3
- *Arthur Birling: Giving us the port, Edna? That's right.* - Act 1

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Throughout the play, the audience develop deep sympathy for the powerless and voiceless working class, while coming to resent the hypocrisy and cruelty of the rich. This makes them despise the cruel and divisive class system, and encourages them to consider how they can work to make society a more fair and equal place for all people, regardless of their background.
- Priestley did this because he was a socialist; he believed in equality and wanted to make society fairer and more balanced.

Theme of Corruption



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, Priestley exposes to us the corrupt nature of those in power. We see how those in power stay within a private, protected world that no one else can enter. For example, we see how Arthur Birling, an influential employer and political figure in the town, is close friends with other powerful people such as Colonel Roberts, the chief of police, and Alderman Meggarty. This highlights how impossible it is for strong power structures to be broken or changed; those in power stay in power, and nothing changes.
- We see how those in power are corrupt as they use their power and influence to exploit others financially, emotionally and even sexually. For example, we see how Mr Birling exploits Eva and his other workers, paying them low wages and refusing to see them as individuals. Equally, Eric and Gerald, both powerful men, use their status and moneyed charm to sexually objectify Eva Smith, behaving immorally. We also see how Alderman Joe Meggarty, an elected official for the town of Brumley, is in fact a disgusting sexual predator who preys on the vulnerable Eva. Finally, we see how even Mrs Birling who works for a charity is corrupt; her position as the head of the charity makes her seem like a person who uses her power to do good, but in fact, we see how she uses her power to further trample Eva Smith down into deeper suffering and misery.
- This highlights Priestley's distrust of those who traditionally hold positions of power. Until the Labour party election in 1945, Priestley believed that many of the country's powerful people had been corrupt, and that there needed to be new, more trustworthy leaders who showed integrity and respect for all. Priestley believed strongly that the socialist Labour party were the party to take on the new role of governing Britain in the new post-war era, so that the country could break free from its historic cycle of corruption.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his- Gerald, Act 2
- **Gerald:** After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals. **Inspector:** Sometimes there isn't much difference as you think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line - Act 1
- Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges. - The Inspector, Act 2
- You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face.- Inspector, Act 3
- You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate-Act 2
- Eric: Yes, I insisted - it seems. I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that - well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - and I threatened to make a row.

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Throughout the play, the audience develop deep dislike for the corrupt nature of those in power. This makes them despise the cruel and divisive class system, and encourages them to consider how they can work to make society a more fair and equal place for all people, free from corruption.
- Priestley did this because he was a socialist; he believed that a key element in achieving a fairer society was a government with integrity, care for others and trustworthiness.

Theme of Social Responsibility



Key points (AO1)

- The play's central message is the importance of social responsibility. By demonstrating how each of the Birlings' small actions have had significant, deadly consequences on the life and happiness of an innocent person, Priestley exposes how every action that we take as individuals has an impact on others. Therefore, we should not see ourselves as individual people but as a collective whole, a society or *one body* of people who should all be treated equally and fairly by everyone else.
- This is, in essence, the message of socialism. The Inspector is the mouthpiece for this message; his mission is to highlight to the Birlings the terrible consequences that their actions had on the life of Eva Smith, so that they can understand the importance of responsibility and change to become more socially responsible individuals.
- The Inspector succeeds in his mission with the younger characters of Eric and Sheila. They show genuine remorse and regret for their actions and vow to become more socially responsible people. This highlights Priestley's belief that the younger generation of 1912 (the audience of 1945) are the generation in whom he has hope, believing them central to societal change in order to make society more fair and caring.
- The Inspector fails in his mission to awaken social responsibility in the older generation, Mr and Mrs Birling, and the aristocratic Gerald. Unlike Sheila and Eric, these characters evade responsibility, believing that they have not done anything wrong. When the Inspector is revealed to be a fake, they have not changed and remain static characters who will continue to lack social responsibility and, it is suggested, cause the suffering of many more Eva Smiths in the future. This failure of the older generation and aristocracy to become more socially responsible highlights Priestley's belief that these groups are impeding progress and need to be held to account for their selfish attitudes, as they lead to the suffering of many innocent individuals.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Community and all that nonsense - Mr Birling, Act 1
- But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people! - Sheila, Act 1
- Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Mr Birling - Act 1
- One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. - The Inspector, Act 3
- Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.- Sheila, Act 3
- We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3
- By jingo! A fake! - Mr Birling, Act 3

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley's hope for the audience is that, by the end of the play, they will have understood the message of socialism explored in the story, and will reflect on their actions to become more socially responsible

Theme of Women



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, we see how women are subordinate to men, due to a culture of toxic masculinity and patriarchal values that pervade in the society of Edwardian Britain. These patriarchal values exist amongst all classes in society, but are most acutely felt by the poor, where women are objectified as commodities who are there to fulfil the desires of the rich.
- Priestley purposely created Eva Smith as female in order to expose the unjust and exploitative treatment of poor women in the Edwardian period. As we discover her story, we see how she is viewed primarily for her looks and is not seen as an individual, but rather as a beautiful object or plaything to be manipulated by the rich.
- In Act 1, we see how Birling exploited Eva in order to raise his profit. Notably, the first thing that he remembers about her is her beauty, which indicates his shallow attitude towards women, which is further reinforced by his sexist remark about their clothes being a token of their self-respect. Later, we also see how Sheila and Mrs Birling, despite being women themselves, show prejudice towards Eva due to her gender. They judge her for her looks and body, rather than seeing her as a person deserving of respect and care. Finally, we see how Gerald, Eric and other respectable men such as Alderman Meggarty objectify Eva and treat her as a toy for their own sexual pleasure.
- We also see sexist attitudes amongst the Birling family. At the start of the play, Sheila fulfils the stereotypical role of the ingenue, a young and innocent woman who relies on her relationships with men (here, her father and Gerald) for security and status. We also see her repeatedly called hysterical, which is a derogatory term used to describe female behaviour. We also see how her mother, Mrs Birling, perpetuates patriarchal attitudes, by accepting her subordinate role in the family rather than fighting against it. Many people argue that Mrs Birling is a traitor to her own gender, and is used to highlight how deep-rooted and damaging patriarchal beliefs are in society.
- However, as the play continues, Sheila loses her subordinate role and instead becomes a stronger, more wilful person in her own right, breaking free from her relationships with the men in her life. She rejects Gerald's engagement and opposes her father. This could symbolise the emergence of a less patriarchal society; Sheila as a young woman is becoming more equal to men.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Community and all that nonsense - Mr Birling, Act 1
- But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people! - Sheila, Act 1
- Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Mr Birling - Act 1
- One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. - The Inspector, Act 3
- Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide. - Sheila, Act 3
- We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3
- By jingo! A fake! - Mr Birling, Act 3

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley wanted the audience to feel sickened and appalled by the treatment of women in the play, and by seeing the awful sexist treatment of Eva, consider how patriarchal values are damaging and old-fashioned.
- Instead, Priestley wanted the audience of 1945 to consider how they could treat women with more respect and view them as equals to men.
- This was particularly pertinent in 1945. WW2 had just ended, and many women had been praised for showing their capabilities during the war, working in factories and doing "men's" jobs for the war effort. For the first time, women were proving themselves as equal to men, and Priestley wanted to emphasise this realisation in the play, too.

Theme of Men



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, Priestley highlights the damaging nature of toxic masculinity that pervades the society of 1912 Edwardian Britain. Throughout the play, we see how men are expected to live up to stereotypical behaviours that ultimately result in the damage of themselves and others. Priestley presents the male world as a place where deep connection and emotions are repressed, and where men are expected to live up to masculine ideals, engaging in stereotypical activities such as smoking, drinking, womanising and money-making in order to prove themselves as people.
- Mr Birling and Gerald symbolise this stereotypical masculine culture. They prize money, deride and objectify women and act with arrogance and nonchalance with ease. They do not talk about their feelings for fear of appearing weak, and they care little for the impact that their behaviour has on others, and using their masculine power to get what they want.
- However, while this male world comes easy to Gerald and Birling, we see how entrapping and toxic it truly is when we examine Eric's relationship with masculinity. It is clear that, from a young age, Eric has been pressured into living up to the masculine stereotype that his father wants him to be. Yet Eric, as a member of the younger generation (who symbolise change and hope) cannot truly fit into this cruel world. He suffers from an identity crisis, unsure of his place in his family and in the world. This is because, unlike his father, he shows empathy and has strong feelings that he is desperate to explore and express. As a result of his confusion, and being trapped in the role that his father wants him to live up to, he turns to drinking as a way to cope and feel at ease in society. Therefore, when we realise Eric's cruel behaviour towards Eva, Priestley encourages us to see him as a product of the toxic masculinity he is trying to live up to rather than a cruel individual determined to abuse an innocent girl.
- Through Eric, Priestley critiques the culture of masculinity and instead wants us, as Eric does, to turn away from these values to become more open, emotional and responsible. Eric's transformation from a toxic man to a more empathetic person is the journey that Priestley wants us all to make. His hope is that we will turn away from sexism and become more equal.

Key quotes (AO1)

- She was a lively good-looking girl - country-bred, I fancy - Mr Birling, Act 1
- When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had. - Act 1
- And it just suited her. She was the right type for it, just as I was the wrong type. She was very pretty too - with big dark eyes - Sheila, Act 1
- she looked young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down here. And obviously she wasn't enjoying herself. Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed, had wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his- Gerald, Act 2
- She was young and pretty and warm hearted - and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life - you understand? - Gerald, Act 2
- well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty - Eric, Act 3
- Sheila: You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald. Gerald: all right - I did for a time. Nearly any man would have done - Act 2

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley wanted the audience to feel sickened by the culture of toxic masculinity that pervades the play. This was particularly pertinent in 1945. For the first time, discussions about the fair treatment of women were being raised seriously due to the changing attitudes towards women that society had seen following their important role played in WW2.

Theme of Generational Differences



Key points (AO1)

- Throughout the play, we see how the younger and older generations in the Birling family diverge in terms of their attitudes and behaviour, which symbolises how Priestley believes hope for a better society lies in the younger generation of 1912 (who are his audience of 1945) and their rejection of old, outdated ways of thinking. Priestley was writing at a time of great social change, where following the devastation of WW2 and the changing role of women in society, old fashioned patriarchy and class division were seen by him as damaging and preventing progress and a fairer society.
- The older generation, Mr and Mrs Birling, fail to accept responsibility for their actions and attempt to pridefully use their status to evade the truth, denying and lying about their involvement in the death of Eva Smith. They are snobbish and base their views on patriarchal and capitalist principles. Despite their deep involvement in the suicide of Eva Smith, they do not learn from the Inspector's interrogation, and when he is revealed to be a fake at the end of the play, notably express relief that things are *back to normal*.
- On the other hand, while at the start of the play, Sheila and Eric are a product of their parents' upbringing, sharing their views and behaving despicably, the crucial difference is that they demonstrate remorse and accept responsibility for their part in Eva's death. They vow to behave differently and consider how their future actions may have consequences for others. Once the true supernatural identity of the Inspector is revealed, Eric and Sheila remain changed by his message, unlike their parents, and criticise their parents for feeling relieved. Out of Eric and Sheila, Sheila is the true role model that Priestley wants us to follow; she has the most significant transformation, and symbolises the hope that Priestley feels about the younger generation to enact change. While Eric is also someone the audience should look up to, he does not change as fully as Sheila., which is perhaps a comment on the power of the toxic masculinity that he has lived in, and must continue to break free from.

Key quotes (AO1)

- Community and all that nonsense - Mr Birling, Act 1
- But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people! - Sheila, Act 1
- Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it? Mr Birling - Act 1
- One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. - The Inspector, Act 3
- Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.- Sheila, Act 3
- We did her in all right - Eric, Act 3
- By jingo! A fake! - Mr Birling, Act 3

1945 audience's response (AO3)

- Priestley wanted the audience to align with the younger generation. In 1912, many of his audience members (now middle aged) would have been of a similar age or younger than Sheila and Eric. Priestley does this in order to send a message to them, highlighting how the hope he has for a fairer society ultimately lies with them.
- Alternatively, Priestley wants the audience to despise the hypocrisy and callousness of the older generation; clearly, Priestley wants the audience to reject these old fashioned views and follow the lead of Sheila and Eric to carefully examine their own behaviour and become more socially responsible.

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 1

Act 1	Act 2
<p>What are the Birlings doing when the play opens?</p> <p>What are the family celebrating?</p> <p>Why is Mr Birling happy about the engagement between Sheila and Gerald?</p> <p>What does Mr Birling say in his speech?</p> <p>How does Mr Birling have capitalist values?</p> <p>Who arrives at the door?</p> <p>Why has the Inspector come to visit the Birlings?</p> <p>How did Mr Birling know Eva Smith?</p> <p>What do Eric and Sheila think about Mr Birling firing Eva Smith?</p> <p>How did Sheila know Eva Smith?</p> <p>How does Sheila feel about responsibility?</p> <p>How does Mr Birling try to intimidate the Inspector?</p> <p>How does Sheila juxtapose Mr Birling?</p> <p>What does Gerald confess to Sheila at the end of the act?</p>	<p>How does Mrs Birling speak to the Inspector? What does this reveal about her?</p> <p>What does Gerald reveal happened between him and Eva Smith?</p> <p>How does Sheila react after Gerald's confession?</p> <p>How was Mrs Birling involved in the death of Eva Smith?</p> <p>What is revealed about Eric at the end of Act 2?</p>
Act 3	Key messages of the play
<p>What does Eric reveal about how he knew Eva Smith?</p> <p>How does Eric feel about his actions, and what does this reveal about him?</p> <p>What is the Inspector's message about responsibility?</p> <p>What do the Birlings begin to realise about the Inspector?</p> <p>What is revealed at the end of the play?</p> <p>How do the older generation react to the revelation that Eva Smith and the Inspector are not real?</p> <p>How do the younger generation react?</p>	<p>What does Priestley suggest about capitalism?</p> <p>What does Priestley criticise about the class system?</p> <p>What does Priestley criticise about the treatment of women and male toxic masculinity?</p> <p>What does Priestley encourage the audience to do to those less fortunate?</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 2

Key context – Edwardian Britain	Key context – WW2 Britain and its aftermath
<p>How did Britain change during the Industrial revolution?</p> <p>What happened to cities?</p> <p>Who were industrialists and how did they treat their workers?</p> <p>What principles was society built upon?</p> <p>How was society divided by class?</p> <p>How did the upper and middle classes live in comparison to the working classes?</p> <p>In which class were there the most people?</p> <p>How did working class people try to change their situation?</p> <p>How were women viewed in comparison to men?</p> <p>What is toxic masculinity, and how did men with these values treat women?</p>	<p>When was WW2?</p> <p>What difficulties did people at home face during WW2?</p> <p>What did people want to be different at the end of the war, and why?</p> <p>How did the role of women change during WW2?</p> <p>What did women and advocates of women want to change at the end of WW2?</p> <p>In what year was there a general election?</p> <p>Which two parties stood in the election?</p> <p>What did each party stand for?</p> <p>Which party won, and why?</p> <p>What did this landslide victory reveal about how society had changed its values?</p>
Key context – J.B. Priestley	Top quotes
<p>Where was Priestley born, and what was this place like?</p> <p>What did Priestley see from a young age?</p> <p>What did Priestley experience during WW1?</p> <p>How did Priestley feel about his experience during WW1?</p> <p>What role did Priestley take during WW2?</p> <p>What were Priestley's political views?</p> <p>Which party did Priestley support, and why?</p> <p>What was Priestley's attitude towards women?</p>	<p>List 3 quotes that demonstrate the negative aspects of capitalism</p> <p>List 3 quotes that demonstrate characters not taking responsibility</p> <p>List 3 quotes that demonstrate characters taking responsibility</p> <p>List 3 quotes that highlight the Inspector's values</p> <p>List 3 quotes that summarise the importance of treating women with respect</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 3

1. Setting	1. Props
<p>What is the setting of the play?</p> <p>What is the room like, and what does this symbolise about the Birlings?</p> <p>What might the single setting of one room symbolise about the Birling and their relationship with the wider world?</p> <p>What atmosphere does the single setting create?</p> <p>What does the house lack, similar to the Birling family?</p> <p>How is the Birlings' sheltered life symbolised by the setting?</p>	<p>What do the props of champagne, port decanter and cigars symbolise about the Birlings?</p> <p>What is significant about Mr Birling and the port?</p> <p>What is the importance of the ring and ring case?</p> <p>What is the significance of photographs in the play?</p> <p>What is the significance of the telephone?</p> <p>What is the importance of the costumes in the play?</p>
Lighting	Sound effects
<p>What is the lighting like at the start of the play?</p> <p>Why is the lighting like this at the start?</p> <p>How does the lighting change when the Inspector enters?</p> <p>What is the effect of this?</p>	<p>What sound interrupts Mr Birling's speech? Why is this important?</p> <p>What is the importance of the telephone ringing?</p>
Proxemics	Proxemics continued
<p>What is meant by the term proxemics?</p> <p>Why might Mr and Mrs Birling be sitting at the end of the table? What does this signify about them?</p> <p>What do the other characters do when Mrs Birling stands up? What does this reveal about her?</p> <p>Why might Sheila and Gerald be left alone at the end of Act 2?</p>	<p>What does Eric do in Act 3 when he hears about the death of Eva at the hands of Mrs Birling? What does this reveal about him?</p> <p>Why might Mrs Birling collapse into a chair?</p> <p>Why might Sheila move towards the door at the end of the play?</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 4

Dramatic irony	Entrances and exits
<p>What is meant by dramatic irony? Give an example of when Priestley uses dramatic irony, and its effect</p>	<p>What does Priestley use entrances and exits to create? Which is the most dramatic exit? Which is the most dramatic entrance? Why might Sheila exit towards the door at the end of the play?</p>
Conversational Analytics	Eva Smith – use quotes in your answers
<p>Which is the first character to speak and what is the effect of this? How does Mr Birling's role change when the Inspector enters?</p>	<p>Who or what does Eva Smith symbolise? What is her death used to signify? Why might Eva be voiceless throughout the play? Why is her name significant? How does Eva die? What might this symbolise? How is Eva exploited by toxic masculinity? Give examples What do we learn about Eva Smith as a character? What does this highlight about the poor? Who does Eva parallel, and why does Priestley purposely do this? How do the 1945 audience feel towards Eva, and why? How would the 1945 audience react to Eva's poor treatment? Why might Priestley have portrayed Eva in this way How does Priestly want the audience to feel about Eva's treatment by men? List as many quotes as you can about Eva Smith</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 5

Inspector Goole – use quotes in your answer	Arthur Birling – use quotes in your answer
<p>How is the Inspector presented?</p> <p>What is the Inspector's role in the morality play?</p> <p>What is the Inspector a personification of?</p> <p>Why might the Inspector speak on behalf of Eva Smith?</p> <p>How is the Inspector a God-like character?</p> <p>What sort of language does the Inspector use?</p> <p>What is the Inspector's view of Eva Smith, and how does this contrast the Birlings?</p> <p>What might the Inspector's plain appearance symbolise?</p> <p>How is the Inspector juxtaposed to the Birlings?</p> <p>What sort of language does he use, and what is the effect of this?</p> <p>How is he a foil to Mr Birling?</p> <p>Who does he have the greatest impression on, and what does this symbolise?</p> <p>How does he appear trustworthy? Why might this be?</p> <p>Why might Priestley have removed his persona at the end of the play?</p> <p>How do the audience view the Inspector and why?</p> <p>Who/what is the Inspector a vehicle or mouthpiece for?</p> <p>Who in society is the Inspector an advocate for?</p> <p>How does his message impact the audience?</p> <p>List as many quotes as you can about/from the Inspector</p>	<p>Who/what is Mr Birling a personification for in society?</p> <p>How is he presented?</p> <p>What does he value?</p> <p>What is his relationship with his children like, and what does this symbolise about capitalism?</p> <p>How does Priestley use dramatic irony?</p> <p>What are his origins? What impact do these have on him as a person?</p> <p>How does he respond to the Inspector's message and why?</p> <p>Which generation does he symbolise?</p> <p>What is he trapped in, and why?</p> <p>How does he change in the play?</p> <p>How does he contrast the Inspector?</p> <p>How does he treat women?</p> <p>How do the audience feel about him as a character and why?</p> <p>How would the 1945 audience have reacted to his statement "the Germans don't want war"?</p> <p>What does Priestley want to expose through Birling as a character?</p> <p>What lessons do the 1945 audience learn from Mr Birling?</p> <p>List as many quotes as you can from/about Mr Birling</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 6

Sybil Birling – use quotes in your answer	Sheila Birling – use quotes in your answer
<p>Who/what is Mrs Birling a personification for in society? What is she a symbol of? What beliefs does she perpetuate? What does this reveal about her? How would you describe her family relationships? What does this symbolise about the rich? How does she react to the Inspector's message? How does she change throughout the play? How does Sheila become a foil of Mrs Birling? How is she a foil to the Inspector? What does her lack of ability to control the Inspector reveal about capitalism? How does she feel about Eva Smith? What does this highlight about the rich? What does she care deeply about and why? How do the 1945 audience feel about her and why? Why might she be the most hated character? List as many quotes as you can about Mrs Birling</p>	<p>How is Sheila an ingenue at the start of the play? What is foreshadowed about Sheila at the start of the play, and how? How does Sheila break free from Edwardian patriarchy? How does she behave at the start of the play? What sin does she symbolise? How does she juxtapose her parents? How does she feel about the death of Eva Smith? How does she react to Gerald's confession about his relationship with Eva Smith? What does this reveal about her? Who does she side with in the play, and what does this symbolise about her? How does she change as a character? How does she react even when the Inspector is revealed to be a fake? How do the 1945 audience have common ground with Sheila? Who does Sheila represent in society? How do the audience feel about her and why? What does Priestley want us to learn through the character of Sheila? What does her journey to independence symbolise? List as many quotes as you can about Mr Birling</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 7

Eric Birling – use quotes in your answer	Gerald Croft– use quotes in your answer
<p>How is Eric presented at the start of the play?</p> <p>What does Eric's poor relationship with his family symbolise about the younger generation?</p> <p>Why is Eric's story left until last?</p> <p>What does Eric's behaviour towards Eva reveal about upper class society?</p> <p>How is Eric a product of toxic masculinity?</p> <p>How does Eric change throughout the play?</p> <p>What does Priestley show about emotion, through the character of Eric?</p> <p>How does Eric accept responsibility at the end of the play?</p> <p>Why might Eric use euphemisms when he confesses? Why might he do this?</p> <p>How do the 1945 audience feel about Eric and why?</p> <p>How do the audience build a connection with Eric., and why might Priestley do this?</p> <p>How is Eric a victim of the society in which he lives?</p> <p>How do we view Eric in comparison to his mother and father?</p> <p>Who in society does Eric symbolise?</p> <p>What lesson does Eric teach the audience?</p> <p>What does Priestley challenge the audience to do, through the character of Eric?</p> <p>List as many quotes as you can about the character of Eric</p>	<p>Who or what is Gerald a metonym for in society?</p> <p>How is Gerald presented at the start of the play?</p> <p>How is Gerald part of an exclusive elite?</p> <p>What does Gerald symbolise about the aristocracy?</p> <p>Why is Gerald's name significant?</p> <p>How does Gerald treat women? What does this behaviour highlight about aristocratic men?</p> <p>How does Gerald feel about his involvement with Eva Smith?</p> <p>How might Gerald not be telling the truth when he confesses?</p> <p>How might Gerald's behaviour highlight the ignorance of the upper classes?</p> <p>What loophole does he discover at the end of the play?</p> <p>Why is it important that Gerald discovers that the Inspector is a fake?</p> <p>How does Priestley create distance between the 1945 audience and Gerald?</p> <p>What might Gerald reflect, linked to Priestley's youth?</p> <p>How do the audience feel about Gerald and why?</p> <p>What does Gerald's behaviour towards Eva highlight about toxic masculinity?</p> <p>Why would a 1945 audience have particularly disliked Gerald's behaviour towards Eva?</p> <p>List as many quotes as you can about the character of Gerald</p>

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 8

Edna - use quotes in your answer	Alderman Joe Meggarty – use quotes in your answer
<p>Who is Edna? Who does she symbolise? Why might Priestley have chosen the name Edna? What role does she play in the play, and why might this be? How are we tempted to overlook her as a character? Why might Priestley have made Edna almost voiceless? Why is she important in the play? What does this symbolise? What does Edna's name mean? What might this signify? How does Priestley use Edna to challenge the audience's views? List as many quotes as you can linked to the character of Edna?</p>	<p>What role does Meggarty have in society? Who or what does he symbolise in society? How does he treat Eva Smith? What does his treatment of Eva reveal about the rich? How do the audience react to the description of Joe harassing Eva? Why might Priestley have selected the name Joe? How do Mr and Mrs Birling react to the news about Joe Meggarty? What does this reveal about the rich in society? How do the audience react to Joe's behaviour and why? What does Joe's behaviour force the audience to do, and why?</p>
The theme of class	Theme of class continued
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What effects does class divide have on society? 2. Who symbolise the working class? How are they treated? 3. Who symbolise the middle to upper classes? How are they presented? 4. Who is Gerald Croft a symbol of? How is he presented? 5. Which characters are the most likeable, and why might Priestley do this? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the Inspector's message about class? 2. Who do the audience develop sympathy for in the play, and why might Priestley do this? 3. What does Priestley teach the audience about class? 4. Why did Priestley do this?

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 9

Theme of corruption	Theme of Social Responsibility
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who in the play is presented as corrupt? 2. Give examples of characters who appear corrupt in the play 3. What is suggested about power structures through the presentation of characters as corrupt? 4. How do those in power exploit others? Give examples 5. Who does Alderman Meggarty represent? 6. What did Priestley believe about those in power? 7. How do the audience feel about those in power who are corrupt? 8. Why did Priestley present those in power in this way? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the play's central message? 2. What does Priestley show about small actions and their effects? 3. What is Priestley's message about the way that we should live our lives? 4. What values lie behind this message? 5. What is the Inspector's mission? 6. Who does the Inspector succeed in making more socially responsible? Why might Priestley make these characters change? 7. Which characters does the Inspector fail in his mission to make them more socially responsible? Why might Priestley make these characters remain static? 8. What was Priestley's belief about the older generation and aristocracy?
Theme of women	Theme of women continued
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the power dynamic between men and women presented throughout the play? 2. What types of behaviour towards women do we see pervading in the play? 3. Why might Priestley have made the main victim of the play a woman? 4. How is Eva Smith objectified? 5. Give examples of toxic masculinity that we see in the play 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does Mrs Birling perpetuate patriarchal and misogynist values? 2. How does Sheila's role change in the play? What could this symbolise, thinking about gender? 3. What lessons did Priestley want the 1945 audience to learn about the treatment of women? 4. Why was this particularly pertinent in 1945?

Self-Quizzing Questions – Page 10

Theme of Men	Theme of Generational Differences
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does Priestley highlight about men throughout the play? 2. What values do the men in the play have to live up to? 3. How do Mr Birling and Gerald symbolise stereotypical masculine culture? 4. How does Eric's behaviour show the damaging effects of toxic masculinity on a person? 5. How does Eric oppose toxic masculine behaviour? 6. Give examples of where we see toxic masculinity in the play 7. What does Priestley want the 1945 audience to learn about masculine culture? 8. How did Priestley want the 1945 audience to feel about the culture of toxic masculinity that pervades the play? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the younger and older generations diverge in the play? 2. Why might Priestley have shown the younger generation as the ones who change? What might this symbolise? 3. How do the older generation respond to responsibility? 4. What is Priestley's message about the younger generation? 5. Why would the 1945 audience feel a connection to the younger characters, Eric and Sheila? 6. How did Priestley want the 1945 audience to feel about the older generation and why?