

Plot:

AO1



ACT 1

- The family are celebrating Sheila and Gerald's engagement.
- Birling gives a political and social speech.
- Inspector Goole arrives to investigate the death of Eva Smith.
- Mr Birling sacked Eva in 1910 due to her protests for a pay-rise.
- Sheila had Eva sacked from Millwards later that year due to jealousy.
- Gerald reacts when he learns Eva changed her name to Daisy Renton.

ACT 2

- Gerald reveals he met Daisy in 1911 at a bar. She became his mistress.
- Sheila gives the engagement ring back to Gerald.
- Sybil admits she refused to help Eva after she appealed for help from the Brumley Women's Charity, because she used the name 'Mrs Birling'.
- It is revealed that Eva Smith was pregnant, but not with Gerald's child.
- The family realise Eric was the father of Eva's child.

ACT 3

- Eric confesses. Arthur argues about Eric stealing money to help support Eva.
- Eric learns that Sybil refused Eva and accuses her of killing Eva and his child.
- The Inspector leaves with a warning that there must be change.
- Sheila and Eric show remorse whilst Arthur and Sybil worry about their reputation.
- Gerald, Arthur, and Sybil believe it has all been a hoax. They ring police office and the infirmary and learn that Inspector Goole wasn't real and there is no dead girl. They celebrate, thinking everything is back to normal.
- The phone rings: a girl has died after drinking disinfectant and an Inspector is on his way.

Characters:

Arthur Birling – The head of the family and boss of the family business. He is ambitious and business-minded, reflecting capitalist ideologies. He dismissed social responsibility and is purely focused on status and power.

Sybil Birling – Sybil is Mr Birling's social superior. She is proud of her reputation and social status and makes sure to follow the rule of social etiquette. Ironically, she supports a charity but refuses Eva Smith when she is desperate for help.

Sheila – The Birlings' daughter who is engaged to Gerald. At the start of the play, she is childish, vain, and petty. At the end, she is mature, moral, and strong-minded. She takes full responsibility for her part in Eva's Smith's tragedy.

Eric – The Birlings' son who is isolated from the rest of the family. He has taken up drinking and often behaves irresponsibly, which led him to get Eva Smith pregnant and steal from his father.

Gerald – The Birlings' social superior who is engaged to Sheila. He is very traditional and respectable, until it is learnt that Eva Smith was his mistress. At the end of the play, he hasn't changed or learnt from his actions.

Inspector Goole – Investigates the death of Eva Smith. He is authoritative and imposing. He represents socialism and acts as a mouthpiece for Priestley.

Eva Smith – An absent character who the play revolves around. She has been wronged in some way by every member of the Birlings and Gerald.

Edna – The maid of the house.

AO1



Key Quotations:

AO1



'Look – Mummy – isn't it a beauty' – **Sheila**

'a hard-headed business man' – **Arthur Birling**

'The Germans don't want war' – **Arthur Birling**

'unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable' – **Arthur Birling**

'like bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense' – **Arthur Birling**

'(...) it's better to ask for the earth than to take it' – **Inspector**

'Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?' – **Eric**

'Girls of that class' – **Sybil Birling**

'I think she had only herself to blame' – **Sybil Birling**

'Don't stammer and yammer at me again, man' – **Inspector**

'[with sudden alarm]: Mother - stop – stop!' – **Sheila**

'I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty' – **Eric**

'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.' – **Inspector**

'they will be taught in fire and blood and anguish' – **Inspector**

'There'll be a public scandal' – **Arthur Birling**

'[flaring up]: (...) its you two who are being childish' – **Sheila**

Themes and Ideas:

Young v Old: Priestley challenges traditionalist views held by the older generations through Sheila and Eric. The younger generation are seen as a chance for an equal and fairer society.

Class: The Birlings' attitudes and behaviour reflect the privilege of the upper/middle classes. They were dismissive and ignorant to many problems faced by lower classes who were exploited. Priestley suggests that class clouds judgement and shouldn't be used to discriminate.

Social Responsibility: Priestley uses the play to show the importance of social responsibility and helping the less privileged. The Inspector criticises the family for their lack of care towards those in need, highlighting Priestley's socialist viewpoint.

Family Relationships: Patriarchy and tradition influence and control the relationships within the Birling family. The dynamics within the family reflect a typical upper/middle-class family of the time. Women were expected to behave in particular ways depending on their status.



AO3

Writer's Methods:

Unity of Time, Place and Action: heightens tension by making the atmosphere claustrophobic and intense.

Dramatic Irony: undermines and challenges Arthur Birling's viewpoints, making him an unlikeable character.

Imagery: used by the Inspector to graphically convey Eva's brutal death. His final speech also uses imagery to highlight the consequences of their actions.

Euphemism: used by the family to show avoidance and detract from their involvement.



AO2

Context:

J.B. Priestley: Born into a middle-class family. His time in WW1 saw him fight with men from all backgrounds. He voiced his socialist views through his written work and through his radio show, which was took off air.

Women's Rights: When it was set, the suffragettes were campaigning for gender equality and the right to vote. This became successful in 1918 where women over 30 could vote.

Patriarchy: Men held power in society and were seen as the head of the household. Their aim is to maintain family reputation and status. The behaviour of Birling, Gerald and Eric throughout the play reflect the powers men had during this time.

Welfare State: Created by the Labour government after WWII. They introduced the NHS and improved housing where different classes lived side by side.

Class and Politics: Society divided into upper, middle, and working class. These are represented through the Crofts, Birlings and Eva Smith. Capitalism and Socialism are shown through these classes and their attitudes towards others. Trade unions and national strikes aimed to secure better working conditions and a minimum wage for workers.

AO3



An Inspector Calls

Key Terminology:

AO2

Allegory – story with a moral or political parallel.

Capitalism – private individuals or businesses own capital goods.

Cyclical – begins and ends in a similar way.

Didactic - intention to teach or give a moral lesson.

Dramatic Irony – the audience know something that characters don't.

Euphemism – avoiding saying something unpleasant by using a vaguer expression.

Imagery – a description that creates a strong picture.

Morality – differentiations between right and wrong, good and bad.

Omniscient – all-knowing.

Patriarchy – a social system where men hold primary power.

Socialism – the belief that all people are equal and should share equally.

Stage Direction - an instruction in the text of a play indicating movement, position, or tone of an actor, or the sound effects and lighting.

