



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
PASS YOUR  
ENGLISH EXAM**

**AN INSPECTOR CALLS  
REVISION GUIDE**

## **An Inspector Calls: How does Priestley present the character of the Inspector to the audience?**

In an Inspector Calls, the Inspector is presented as an enigmatic character. He gains and uses his power wisely as he leads the Birlings to reflect upon their responsibility within society through his socialist views.

The Inspector is presented as an ambiguous and mysterious character whose true identity we never learn. He is called Inspector "Goole", which sounds like 'Ghoul'; therefore it could suggest that his intention is to disturb and upset their lives. Perhaps the Inspector is getting justice for Eva's death in order to teach the Birlings a lesson. This reinforces that he is not a real Inspector which we find out towards the end of the play. As well as this, "Goole" is also a fishing village which links to Jesus who was known as the 'fisher of men'. This implies that the Inspector is trying to change people's morality and attract them onto the right path. The Inspector is also seen as a time traveller as he predicted the death of a "young woman" who swallowed "disinfectant" which the phone call at the end of the play confirms. He talks about all people suffering through "Fire and blood and anguish" towards the end of the play, indicating war which shows that the Inspector knows the future events to come. Furthermore, he withholds information from the family as he gives answers such as "There might be" rather than straightforward answers. We get the impression that the Birlings are suspicious as Sheila comments on the Inspector even whilst he is there as she states that they were all "so pleased" with themselves until "he began asking" them "questions", reinforcing the enigmatic aspect to him. Despite the suspicions, we don't learn until the end of the play that the Inspector "wasn't a real police inspector", implying his visit was not to persecute anyone, but to teach socialist morals.

The Inspector asserts his power over the Birlings and Gerald despite their social position, and maintains his control throughout due to his manner, knowledge and function in society. Often, the Inspector is "Cutting through, massively", which is unusual and unexpected for someone of his class as people would usually respect the classes above them. By 'cutting through', the Inspector also asserts his power as he is showing his authority, prioritising what he has to say over the Birlings. Along with his speech, the Inspector "creates an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness", which also asserts authority. In addition, he looks "coolly" and "hard" at Gerald which shows his appearance to be calm and confident and creates a sense of threat as he has nothing to hide, unlike the rest of the Birling family; whilst they are "frightened" and "distressed" towards the end of Act 2, the Inspector is utterly controlled. He frequently asks direct questions towards each of the Birlings such as "Do you remember her, Mr Birling?". This shows him taking control over the conversation as he prevents the family to escape the interrogation. He persists with his questions even when they refuse to answer, which is seen particularly with Mrs Birling; "I don't think we need to discuss it" in which the Inspector says "you have no hope of not discussing it". At first we get the impression he is polite as he spoke with "thank you"s and "please"s. However, as the interviews proceed, he gains more power and raises his voice as his tone becomes threatening; "I warn you". The Inspector's knowledge is a form of power as well. Eva had "left a letter and a sort of diary" which the Inspector had read, therefore he knows the events leading to her death. He later explains to Mr Birling "she was employed in your works at one time", which shows he appears to know the events leading to Eva's death before he asks, causing us to wonder why he asks in the first place. He uses this knowledge as a form of bait to lure Mr Birling into confessing; he knows too much already which is intimidating and uses this against the rest of the Birling family into confessing as well. The Inspector does not abuse his power but rather uses it in a way to help society.

The Inspector is presented as a socialist and used by Priestley as a mouthpiece for his own socialist views. The Inspector uses explicit and vivid imagery to explain that a "young woman [had] died" in the infirmary after being "burnt inside out" to emphasise the horror and evoke sympathy from the Birling family which is one of the key aims of socialism: to care for one another. This is reinforced by Mr Birling's response "Oh- that's it, is it?" after realising he had employed Eva as it contrasts with the socialist aim against the capitalist ethos that "a man... has to look after himself". As well as his desire to encourage the Birlings to sympathise as a socialist the Inspector as he reminds the family throughout the play that everybody is responsible for everyone since everyone's lives are "all entwined in our lives", which is another key socialist idea. Furthermore, with responsibility, the Inspector drives forward the idea that our actions have consequences, particularly in his final speech in which he warns everyone that "if men will not learn...they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish", again using vivid imagery. The dramatic irony of the Inspector's statement is that the audience know the First World War broke out a few years after the play was set, thus, the Inspector's statement becomes true without doubt. In effect, the Inspector enforces the idea of responsibility for other people and spreads Priestley's socialist beliefs.

We know close to nothing about the Inspector, except that he is not a part of the police force, which somewhat reduces his character to a dramatic device. As a dramatic device the Inspector controls the direction of the play and the order in which the Birling family's story is revealed by using the direct questions. As well as direct questions, the Inspector uses closed questions, such as "was it or was it not your influence?", which disables the Family from digressing from the truth, and suggests that the Inspector's presence has a particular purpose which he is moving towards. Without the Inspector, the play would not even function as he provides the catalytic information that "a young woman died" which reveals the truth of each character and how they have treated the working class members of society. Additionally, like a chorus in Greek dramas, the Inspector gives the moral guidance of the play which influences the characters to reflect on how they have "used" their "power" and "refused" to help Eva, as well as how we should "share our guilt. The Inspector's function as a chorus is also evident in the last act where he gives his verdict like a judge, determining that "each" member of the Birling family "helped to kill" Eva. The Inspector is presented in An Inspector Calls as a dramatic device whose sole purpose in the play is to drive the direction and advises the audience on who is in the wrong.

In conclusion, The Inspector is presented as a mysterious character whose identity remains unclear. He is also an example of a socialist who uses their position and power to teach and guide others morally and leads the direction of the play more as a dramatic device rather than a developed character.

### How does Priestley present the character of Eva?

Eva is an enigmatic character who is used to represent the working-class population, who are victimised by the social attitudes of the time. She never makes a physical appearance, yet the play revolves around her life and we learn of her through the Inspector and her association with others. Despite being inferior in class, she is portrayed as being morally superior to the others.

Eva is used to illustrate how society treated working class girls, being a working-class girl herself. The name 'Eva Smith' was a common surname in the period that the play was written and so Priestley could have possibly used the character of Eva to represent the whole working class population. This is reinforced by the Inspector's phrase "millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths". We later discover from Gerald that she changed her name to Daisy Renton, another common working class name that was frequently given to servants by employers and suggests that, due to her class, she was not given an identity and was looked down on by the upper class. The inferiority of the working-class people was further portrayed through Mrs Birling's attitude towards Eva as Mrs Birling denied her any help from the charity simply because she believed that a working-class woman was not capable of having morals: "scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position". It is evident that Mrs Birling was prejudiced against her because Eva called herself Mrs Birling which is unacceptable in the eyes of Mrs Birling for a working-class woman to use her name. Priestley portrays Eva as having more moral integrity than Eric, who stole money, as she declined financial help from Gerald despite her struggles which is indicated when Gerald says "I made her take some money". Her moral compass is further emphasised when we realise that even though "She hadn't a penny", Eva did not resort to prostitution as Gerald described her as "out of place" in the Palace Bar. From Gerald, we learn that Eva "came originally from somewhere outside Brumley" which suggests that, like many people in that period, Eva possibly wanted to create a better life in the city, get a job, but due to her association with the Birlings and Gerald, that was not possible. Not much of Eva's past or personality is revealed in the play which illustrates how the upper class considered the working class to be irrelevant. It also reinforces the idea that she represents the whole working class as she does not have a specific personality.

The name 'Eva Smith' is similar to 'Eve', the first woman created by God in the bible therefore suggesting that Eva Smith could be representing every woman of her class. Eva is shown to be different than other women as "she was deliberately vague about what happened" and did not complain to Gerald about her conditions, despite the typical stereotypes of woman being hysterical. This is once again reinforced when Gerald states that Eva didn't mean to "let slip" that she was desperate for help suggesting that she did not like relying on others and that she was a strong woman. Mr Birling sees Eva as just one of "several hundred young women" who worked at his factory. This shows that in his eyes, all his workers are of no real value to him. By saying "they keep changing" he shows us that although work is a necessity for working class women, he was always in control of their fates and did not even care if he callously dismissed Eva as she was just cheap labour to him. Therefore, by the victim of the play being a working-class female, Priestley highlights the vulnerability of women in those times and causes the audience to realise that it should have been socially unacceptable. We see that Eva is recognised by her physical appearance before her personality during the play. When Sheila asks if Eva was "pretty?" we can see that she is identified by her appearance, clearly indicating that even as a woman, appearance is the most significant part. Furthermore, her beauty is commented on by all the characters. "She was pretty and a good sport" her beauty is what attracts both Gerald and Eric with Eric leading to sexually exploiting her. Gerald describes the other women at the palace bar as "hard-eyed, dough-faced women" and does not consider as to why these women have been forced by the society they live in to become like that, he only cares about how they look which is the main reason why he felt sympathy for the 'pretty' Eva and disgust towards the others. The idea that a women's appearance is considered more important in society is reinforced when Sheila comments despairingly that Eva looked prettier when she wore a certain dress than when Sheila wore it herself, and seems threatened by her beauty, confessing that if Eva had been plain she would have been unlikely to have had her fired.

Eva Smith is used to demonstrate social responsibility throughout the play. Eva is described as a "pretty, lively sort of girl who never did anybody any harm", and the audience are frequently made to feel sorry for her both by the unjust series of unfortunate events that happens to her and by the Inspector's repetition of her brutal death. She is the victim of the play and it is due to the other's abuse of their power and social statuses that causes her to be so, thus showing the class divide at the time of the play and Priestley's anger at this divide. This anger is also shown through the Inspector's (who acts as Priestley's mouth piece in the play) harsh and blunt "manner". In this play the middle and upper classes are shown to have the power to do good and therefore have a bigger social responsibility than the working class, for example Mr Birling could have raised his employees' wages and Mrs Birling works in a charity organisation, but instead they abuse this power to benefit themselves. Whereas the lower and working classes (e.g. Eva Smith) are shown to not have much power, since they are barely able to look after themselves. Despite this, some do try to help others. For example, Eva Smith leads the strike to raise all her colleagues' wages. In this she represents the perfect citizen. Eva "had a lot to say - far too much - she had to go" is Mr Birling's and in turn, the middle class' view point on Eva and the working class; Eva represents the need for change in the middle class' viewpoint on the working class.

Priestley uses Eva's shocking tragedy to jolt us into thinking about our own social responsibilities to the people we can help. This shock factor is created by the brutal language surrounding her death such as, "she lies with a burnt out inside on a slab" and "she died in misery and agony - hating life". Eva's fate not only shocks the characters (Sheila and Eric), but the audience also into realising the dangers of living selfishly.

In conclusion, Eva, although she had a smaller social responsibility compared to the Birlings, fully understands it and fulfils it, she shows how those with power can abuse it and shocks the audience into wanting to help those in need.

To conclude, Eva Smith is used to illustrate how the middle and upper classes treated the working class and how wrong this is as well as how women were regarded at that time and the injustice of this gross stereotype. Finally, she and her fate are used to make the audience want to accept their own social responsibilities and help the "millions of millions of Eva Smiths still left with us".

### How does Priestley present the character of the Inspector to the audience?

In *An Inspector Calls*, the Inspector is presented as an enigmatic character. He gains and uses his power wisely as he leads the Birlings to reflect upon their responsibility within society through his socialist views.

#### Paragraph one- Identity of Inspector

**The Inspector is presented as an ambiguous and mysterious character whose true identity we never learn.**

#### **"Goole"** Play on words-

- Sounds like Ghoul- suggests has the intention to disturb and upset their lives. Perhaps Inspector getting justice for Eva's death- to teach Birlings a lesson. This reinforces that he's not a real inspector- Phantom.
- Fishing Village> Jesus said make "fishers of men" – St Paul = fisher of men- idea that Inspector is trying to change people's morality and attract them to right path.

#### **Time traveller**

- Predicted death of a "young woman" who swallowed "disinfectant" which the phone call at the end of the play confirms.
- Talks about all people suffering through "Fire and blood and Anguish" towards end of play. This implies war which indicates the Inspector knows the future events to come.

#### **The Inspector withholds information from the family.**

- The inspector gives answer such as "There might be" rather than straight forward answers. We get the impression that The Birlings are suspicious as Sheila comments on the Inspector even whilst he is there as she states they were all "so pleased" with themselves until he "began asking" them "questions", reinforces enigmatic.

**Despite the suspicions we don't learn till the end of the play that the Inspector "wasn't a real police inspector" implying his visit was not to persecute anyone, but to teach socialist morals.**

#### Paragraph two- Inspector's power and control

**The Inspector asserts his power over the Birlings and Gerald despite their social position, and maintains his control throughout due to his manner, knowledge and function in society.**

#### **Cutting through/physical presence**

- Often the Inspector is "Cutting through, massively" which is unusual and unexpected from someone of the his class, as usually people would respect the classes above them.
- By "cutting through" the Inspector also asserts his power as he is showing his authority, prioritising what he has to say over the Birlings.
- Along with his speech the Inspector "creates an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness"- also asserts authority.
- Looks at Gerald "coolly" and "hard"- shows appearance to be calm and confident-creates sense of threat as he has nothing to hide, unlike the rest of the Birling family. Whilst they are 'frightened' and 'distressed' towards the end of Act 2, the Inspector is utterly controlled.

#### **Leading the conversation**

- "Do you remember her, Mr Birling?" The Inspector uses direct questions which shows taking control over conversation-puts them on spot- preventing the Family to escape the interrogation. He persists with his questions even when they refuse to answer, which is particularly seen with Mrs B; 'I don't think we need to discuss it', 'you have no hope of not discussing it'.
- Figure of authority/speaks with authority-deals with each family member firmly- "massively taking charge as disputes erupt between them"
- At first, he is polite; talks with "thank you's" and "please"s. However, as the interviews proceed, he gains more power and raises his voice as his tone becomes threatening, "I warn you"

#### **Knowledge- inspector's knowledge is a form of power.**

- He read Eva's diary and therefore knows the events leading to her death, "she'd left a letter there and a sort of diary"
- Later explains "she was employed in your works at one time", appears to know before he asks, causing us to wonder why he asks in the first place.
- Uses knowledge as form of 'bait' to lure Mr Birling into confessing. He knows too much already which is intimidating + uses this against the rest of B family into confessing.
- The Inspector responds to the family with ambiguous answers, "There might be" which intimidates the family because they are unclear of what the Inspector can accuse them of, leaves them suspicious and curious.

**The inspector does not abuse his power but rather uses it in a way to help society.**

### Paragraph 3: Inspector's reflection of Priestley's socialist beliefs

**Priestley uses the Inspector as a mouthpiece for his socialist views.**

#### **Responsibility**

- Inspector uses vivid explicit imagery to horrify the Birlings in order to get a reaction from the Birlings, "Burnt her inside out of course". Trying to evoke sympathy by emphasising horror of her death- shows he cares for everyone in society which contrasts to Birling's capitalist views, lacks sympathy for others, "Oh, that's it is it?"
- Inspector is tactical-holds back that Eva 'was going to have a child', knows when to reveal information at the right timings.
- Believes people's actions have consequences for each other, "all entwined in our lives"
- Reinforces idea of responsibility- "public men...have responsibilities as well as privileges", those with power and status should take care of those without- everyone in society is linked and therefore has responsibility for each other.

#### **Consequence**

- Inspector believes "there isn't much difference" between "respectable citizens and criminals"; contradicts Birling's capitalist views.
- Makes the consequences of their actions clear as he warns they will be "taught it in blood and fire and anguish" in the afterlife if they don't learn from it. Audience knows Inspector is correct as they have suffered war- enforces socialist views.

**The Inspector enforces the idea of responsibility for other people and spreads Priestley's socialist beliefs**

### Paragraph 4: Inspector as a dramatic device

**We know close to nothing about the Inspector except that he is not a part of the police force which somewhat reduces his character to a dramatic device.**

#### **Storyteller**

- The inspector controls the direction of the interrogation with direct questions "Do you remember, Mr Birling", "was it or was it not your influence?", which gives an impression that time is short and enforces that his presence at the Birling home is purposeful. He also decides which order each family member's story is revealed. "it's the way I like to work. One Person and one line of inquiry at a time"
- Ultimately he is the catalyst of the entire play as without the Inspector, the play wouldn't have a storyline as he introduces the death of Eva Smith to the Birling Family.

#### **Chorus**

- Inspector provides moral guidance to the audience "we'll have to share our guilt", and making the characters reflect on their actions "so you used the power you had...just because he made you feel bad?" "she came to you for help, at a time when no woman could have need it more.And you not only refused it.."
- The inspector passes a final verdict as if he was a judge, determining which role each family member is to assume in the Eva Smith case. "Each of you helped kill her" "remember what you did"

**The Inspector is presented in An Inspector Calls as a dramatic device whose sole purpose in the play is to drive the direction and advises the audience on who is in the wrong.**

In conclusion, The Inspector is presented as a mysterious character whose identity remains unclear. He is used as a mouthpiece for Priestley's socialist views as he uses his position and power to teach and guide others morally and leads the direction of the play more as a dramatic device rather than a developed character.

### Mr Birling character essay

Priestly characterises Birling as an overly optimistic, self-interested fool whose opinion cannot be trusted. Birling is a factory owning industrialist who has accumulated enough wealth to consider himself to be upper middle class. He is a stereotypical capitalist business man of the pre-war period who despises socialist views “a man has to make his own way- has to look after himself” and represents the greed, self-importance and stupidity of capitalism. Birling disregards the wider community and this is shown by his work as a mayor and magistrate which are supposedly intended to benefit society, yet are actually intended to benefit himself. This is significant, as the Inspector later makes abundantly clear that the more power a person has, the more responsibility he has for others too.

At the start of the play, Birling is presented as a dominating and powerful figure which is emphasised by the fact that his speech makes up almost half of the conversation prior to the Inspector’s arrival. He speaks in statements of actuality as if others are inexperienced and often begins by telling them they don’t know the knowledge then states “remember”- implying they have forgotten- which adds to the impression of his sense of certainty. Each time Birling says something patronising, what follows, the audience know to be utterly wrong. For example, he states that the Titanic is “unsinkable” and thus Priestly portrays Birling as a fool and the voice of a past generation that was arrogantly and blindly wrong. Birling is patronising towards Eric “you’ve got to remember, my boy” and treats him like a child who is naïve and inexperienced. They disagree often and have opposing viewpoints resulting in a tense relationship “just let me finish Eric”. It is clear Birling is not willing to listen to opinions that counteract his own. In contrast, Birling tries hard to impress Gerald and is quick to mention his own impending knighthood, showing he is determined to climb the social ladder as far up as he can. He refers to himself as a “hard headed practical man of business” who is determined and dedicated and not swayed by his emotions. He views the celebration of Sheila’s engagement as a financial step of combining companies as he looks “forward to the time where Crofts and Birling are no longer competing but working together” rather than his only daughter getting married. It is evident Birling places more value on money than he does on people “working together – for lower costs and higher prices” and this is also ironic as he fired Eva for working together with others for higher wages.

Birling refuses to take responsibility for any part in Eva Smith’s death and cannot understand Sheila’s and Eric’s insistence that there is something to be learnt. Birling is relieved at the story being a hoax and states that the “whole story’s just a lot of moonshine”. By sacking her, Birling started off the chain of events that ultimately led to her death, therefore he is responsible. He claims that it was his “duty” to dismiss Eva to keep profits high and this emphasizes that he is self-centred and heartless with no proper sense of social responsibility. Mr Birling is hypocritical here as he sacked Eva for trying to earn more yet wants to keep profits high for himself. Birling is unaware of his double standard crushing and calls the workers “these people”- therefore not including himself. He knew the fate he was condemning her to is, “on the streets” but he couldn’t care less as his blasé questions imply. Furthermore, it is implied that Birling spread the word about her “trouble” to ensure Eva couldn’t get a job elsewhere (blacklisted) but later contradicts himself by stating we live in a “free country.”

Birling accepts the class prejudice of Lady Croft and believes it is “only natural” that she feels Gerald “might have done better”. Mr Birling “accepts no responsibility” for Eva’s death and isn’t prepared to take any of the blame for how he affected her life. The Inspector contradicts this by making it clear that Birling was the start of a chain of events that ultimately led to Eva’s death. Mr Birling shows no sense of empathy towards Eva and is only worried about the “public scandal” that could be caused if the details of what each of them did became public knowledge. He is rude when talking about her “been causing trouble in the works. I was quite justified” and states he has no part in this “horrid business”. Birling is disrespectful towards Eva’s death as when the Inspector describes the details of Eva’s death, his reply is “rather impatient”.

The way in which Birling interacts with the Inspector shows he is purposefully uncooperative and defensive. When the inspector first arrives, Birling offers Goole a “glass of port”, suggesting that not only is his first reaction trying to win him over and impress him, but it also indicating that he is used to bribing people for his own benefit. When questioned by the inspector, it is clear Birling feels intimidated and uncomfortable so he uses his connections with the police force to threaten Goole and remind him of his authority, “perhaps I ought to warn you that he’s an old friend of mine.” The inspector is not impressed by Birling’s blustering attempts at intimidation. The inspector is particularly harsh on Birling during the interrogation and often interrupts him by “cutting through, massively”. This implies that Priestly has a poor opinion of Mr Birling and people similar to him. In Act 3, Birling seems to quieten down and is no longer pugnacious – almost as if he has no more material to attack the inspector with. This is further suggested by Birling’s placatory language as he attempts to avoid making the situation any worse. He knows Eric’s theft might end in court and a public scandal – his moral high ground is cut from under him.

Birling is portrayed throughout the play as a fierce capitalist, who cares only for the prosperity of his own company—even at the sacrifice of his labourer’s well-being—and for the prospect of ever greater success. He has not changed by the end of the play and refuses to learn from the inspector’s lesson. Birling is relieved at the end of the play as the affair is “all over now” and the idea of the inspector being a “fraud” pleases him. Birling does everything he can to convince the others that their lives can revert to normal, “We’ve been had, that’s all.” It’s clear that he has learned absolutely nothing from the inspector. After the inspector leaves, he still refuses to take responsibility and decides that Eric is “the one I blame”. Birling is ultimately only concerned about his reputation and lectures the others as they “don’t realise...there’ll be a public scandal.”

Bethan, Humairaa

## Write about the character of Eric and how he is presented in An Inspector Calls:

### Introduction:

Eric Birling plays a major role in *The Inspector Calls*, as he undergoes changes in social views and personality.

- "early twenties", "not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive" - He appears to have something to hide.
- He plays part in the "chain of events" that leads to the death of Eva Smith.

### Background/ Personality:

At first Eric is presented as a troubled young man.

- Eric is an alcoholic- "squiffy" - His drinking could be because of his unhappy relationship with his parents which has given him a low self-esteem.
- He is a thief- "you stole the money" -
- He is uncontrolled- "(bursting out)" - which hints that he is violent and unstable.
- He is sympathetic- "(involuntarily) My God" - His natural response, shows that unlike his family he does not put on an act.
  - When Eric's father says that "it's a free country", and Eva Smith could have gone and worked "somewhere else", Eric retorts "it isn't if you can't go and work somewhere else" - He has an opposing view from his father and does not fit in with the rest of his parents.
- He comes from a privileged background- "public-school-and-varsity life" - However he is controlled by his father (he works for the family business and has no wages) and has no independence.

### Relationship with Family:

Throughout the play, Priestley shows the difference in relationships that Eric has with each of his family members.

#### Mr Birling:

- Mr. Birling interrupts Eric and says he has - "a lot to learn". - shows he doesn't value Eric's input and treats him like a child.
- Eric is bullied by his father - "that's enough of that port, Eric". - Mr. Birling imposes his authority on Eric to assert his power.
- Eric says his father isn't someone he can "go to when he's in trouble". - this shows that he feels like he can't confide in his father, perhaps showing his separation from the family. Furthermore, it shows that Eric stole the money from his father because he felt like he wasn't able to ask him for help.

#### Mrs Birling:

- Mrs Birling is "staggered" to find out about Eric's heavy drinking - she is oblivious to her children's lives.
- Treats Eric like a child like Mr Birling - "over-excited"
- After finding out that his mother turned Eva away, Eric begins to blame his mother for her death - he repeats "you killed her", "damn you" - evident that he's clearly disrespectful to his mother, possibly due to the way that she treats him.

#### Sheila:

- Eric and Sheila seem to have a good relationship. Despite them both calling each other names - Sheila calls Eric an "ass", and he says she has a "nasty temper" - Eric says "Good old Sheila!" - showing his fondness for his sister.
- They seem to have the same moral compass - when talking about Eva's encounter with Mr. Birling, Eric says he "can't blame her" and Sheila agrees, telling Mr. Birling that it was a "mean thing to do".
- Both say that it "frightens" them that their parents haven't learnt their lesson - shows their mutual understanding of what has happened and the separation between the parents and children.

### Involvement with Eva Smith:

It is arguable that Eric is the most responsible for the death of Eva Smith.

- He has some redeeming qualities- "stood her a few drinks", "I liked her" - shows that Eric can be kind and reinforces the idea that he is sympathetic.
- He uses his social power and gender power to force her to have sex with him- "threatened to make a row" - he blackmailed her which shows that he can be intimidating.
- Eric is capable of violence- "in that state when a chap turns nasty" - (LINKS TO WHEN HE SPEAKS TO HIS MOTHER: Eric then begins "(almost threatening her)" - showing that his anger fuels him. This instinctive behaviour is shown when he rapes Eva, as he was "in that state when a chap turns nasty". This shows how Eric seems to have little control over himself.)

- CONTEXT- He was attracted to her physical appearance- *"couldn't remember her name", "she was pretty"*- which shows that women were sexual prey for men at the time.
- CONTEXT- He describes that sexual act as *"it"*- which shows that it was not socially acceptable to speak of sex at the time – also could show that he's trying to distance himself from what he has done.
- He suggests that she should marry him- *"ought to marry her"*- which is another redeeming quality of his because he tried to take responsibility.
- Eric is genuinely upset about what happened to Eva – he responds *"(miserably)"* to the inspector when asked about Eva finding out about the stolen money, showing that he wished that she hadn't found out. Eric evidently wanted to help her – this is Priestley showing Eric's redeeming qualities. He also says *"that was the worst of all"* revealing that he believes the worst thing was that he wasn't able to help her – shows genuine care for Eva.
- He asks many rhetorical questions to his mother and repeats phrases – *"She told you?", "What happened?"*, and *"Tell me", "Tell me"*. - The repetition suggests he's pleading, showing his concern for Eva's wellbeing.
- Eric is *"(nearly at breaking point)"* once he finds out about Mrs B turning Eva away. He is extremely emotionally distressed about what he's being told – shows he deeply cared for Eva.

### **Influence of the Inspector:**

**Although Eric Birling is most responsible for the death of Eva Smith, he is also one of the characters who learns from his mistakes and chooses to accept responsibility.**

- Accepts the lessons that he is taught by the inspector- *"money's not the important thing", "what happened to the girl...that matters"*- which shows that he is understanding,
- He no longer is controlled by his father, who at the start of the play kept *"(cutting in)"*, because he retaliates- *"I don't give a damn now whether I stay here or not"* when Mr Birling threatens to kick him out.
- When his father tells him that there will be a public scandal, he says- *"I don't care now"*- which shows that he thinks that what happened to Eva Smith was worse than a public scandal. It also shows that he is not afraid if he and his family's reputation is bought down, but is more afraid of a similar event happening in the future.
- He believes that social status does not mean anything- *"What does it matter now whether they give you a knighthood or not"*.
- When he finds out that his Mother did not help Eva Smith he tries to shift the responsibility onto his mother- *"Then you killed her"*, but he later says to his parents- *"I don't blame you"* because he believes that the responsibility should be shared.
- Ultimately he will learn from his actions and will not do anything of the sort in the future- *"I'm not likely to forget"*
- He accepts that he is responsible in the acts that played part in the death of Eva Smith- *"we all helped to kill her"*- he seems to be inspired by the Inspector's socialist viewpoint. He is not stubborn, like his father and in fact has a different view from him.

### **Conclusion:**

**Priestley presents Eric as a troubled man, but is shown to have redeeming qualities.**

- We feel sorry for him because he is treated as a minor by his Father.
- Appears monstrous because of the way he treats Eva Smith.
- He makes the audience feel hopeful towards the end because he learns from his mistakes.



## Write about Mrs Birling and how her character is presented in *An Inspector Calls*.

### Introduction

- “Rather cold women” - Portrays a emotionless facade which suggests she is an unsympathetic character
- her husband’s social superior” - Higher class than her husband which links to her haughtiness shown throughout the play

She sees Sheila and Eric still as “children” and speaks patronisingly to them.

Capitalist  
attitude

- Fits the stereotypical higher class woman of the period:
- Her “large suburban house”
- Her “evening dress of the period”
- Her ideas
- Her Social manners – class conscious

### What she did to Eva

- “Naturally... Prejudiced me against her case” – admits she was prejudice, offended by the use of her name by someone of a lower class. Also believes it is okay to do this
- Turned Eva away although her job is to “help women in trouble”
- Eva was pregnant, homeless and jobless, however was still refused – no sympathy for Eva and lower class
- “nothing I am ashamed of” - still thinks she isn’t in the wrong and doesn’t regret her decision
- “did my duty” - believes she carried out her duty as part of her role in the organisation
- Only advice she gave Eva was to “go and look for the father” - once again Mrs Birling is diverting responsibility from her role in the charity to the father
- “used my influence to have it refused” - Turned everyone against her so she had no chance of getting help
- “the girl” - doesn’t name Eva as she was lower class, lower classes were undeserving of names
- “agitated” - she knows what she has done is wrong although she wants to keep face and won’t admit it
- also believes working class shouldn’t have “elaborate feelings”
- “deserving cases” – Believes there’s a deserving poor and undeserving poor – judges the poor

### Reaction to the Inspector:

- Mrs B tries to cut the Inspector off from when he first arrives - “I don’t think we can help you much” – she believes she (and her family) couldn’t possibly play a part in Eva’s death – naïve – class divide – cannot conceive of an overlap in lives
- At first she is unintimidated – she tries to intimidate him with her position – “my husband was Lord Mayor” – but “agitated” (when the Inspector challenges her and presents to her the idea that Eva’s story about the boy stealing money could be true) suggests this confident front is crumbling
- “I don’t understand you Inspector” – arrogance of class – immediately looks down on him as he is working class
- She is outraged when the Inspector disagrees with her – “I beg your pardon!” – then insults him saying he is “impertinent” (rude) just because he has challenged her
- Repeats “impertinent” many times throughout the play – ironic as she is mostly disrespectful to others – her only defence is to accuse people of being rude which shows manners are all she values and judges people on
- She is shocked/surprised as the Inspector cuts her off (Inspector: ‘cutting in’) many times when she’s talking
- She lies to the Inspector – shows her trying to keep control and hold her position – stay distanced from situation with Eva – when asked if she recognises the photograph she says “No. Why should I?” – hypocrisy as lying is what she accuses Eva of doing and is something that prejudices her against her case
- Only answers to the Inspectors questions and admits when she knows there is no way out – until that point she still tries to lie – “(after a pause) Yes, quite true.”
- “then you really would be doing you duty” – takes control of the situation
- “it wasn’t I who had her turned out of her employment – which probably began it all” – constantly pushing away responsibility to divert blame/the Inspector’s questions away from herself – even blames her husband and Sheila as she can’t accept she may be in the wrong

### Is she changed by the Inspectors visit?

- Takes no responsibility – “I accept no blame for it at all”

- When the Inspector leaves she regains her self-confident, superior manner – begins putting blame on other people again – telling them they were wrong to do what they did – “Didn’t I tell you” and “I’d have asked him a few questions before I allowed him to ask us any”
- After the Inspector leaves she is still focused on his manners and not the shocking revelations of the night – “his manner was quite extraordinary ... so rude – and assertive” – all she cares about is appearances / how people come across / (first) impressions
- Still believes she hasn’t done anything wrong – “didn’t make me confess – as you call it” – it isn’t a ‘confession’ because she believes she has justified her decision – “I had done no more than my duty”
- She shows no remorse to her grandchild – shows no signs of upset – shown by the speed at which she recovers from finding out about the death
- Overall – she is not changed by Inspector’s visit – shown clearly through the fact that at the end of the play she is not concerned with Eva’s death – her biggest concern is making sure her family is not gossiped about – appearances

Priestly presents Mrs Birling as a stereotypical higher class woman of the period, as she wore “evening dress of the period” In her “large suburban house; She is typical of her time in her prejudiced and class conscious manner. Priestly describes Mrs Birling as a “rather cold woman” which suggests she portrays an emotionless façade and is an unsympathetic character. Mrs Birling is seen to have some public influence, sitting on the board for charity organisations and having been married two years ago to the Lord Mayor, Arthur Birling; however, is also seen to be “her husband’s social superior” which suggests she is a higher class than her husband, this also links to her haughtiness shown throughout the play. Her relationship with Sheila and Eric is seen to be very patronising as she still sees and treats them like “children”.

#### What she did to Eva

Mrs Birling works on the board of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation; however, her arrogance of class is still able to be perceived as she only feels the need to help “deserving cases”. This suggests she believes there’s a deserving and underserving poor, which emphasises her lack of consideration and respect towards people of lower classes. Although Mrs Birling’s job is to “help women in trouble” she turned Eva away even though she knew she was pregnant, homeless and jobless, emphasising how she has no sympathy for those of a lower class; although Mrs Birling mostly refused her as she was “naturally prejudice against her case”. Mrs Birling admits she was prejudice as she was offended by the use of her name by someone of a lower class and believes for this reason she was in the right for turning away Eva. However, it wasn’t enough to refuse Eva herself, she “used her influence to have it refused” therefore turning everyone else on the board against her so she had no chance. Even though she knows Eva has committed suicide she believes she “did her duty” and has done “nothing she is ashamed of”, which shows she still believes her actions were just and shows no sign of regret. Eva was referred to as “the girl” by Mrs Birling suggesting how she still believes Eva was undeserving of a name. The only advice Mrs Birling did give Eva was to “go look for the father”, once again demonstrating how she diverted the responsibility from her role in the charity onto the father. Although Mrs Birling believes her actions were just she begins to appear “agitated” when the inspector questions her regarding Eva, which implies she knows what she has done is wrong, but she wants to keep face and won’t admit it.

#### Reaction to the Insp:

When the Inspector first arrives, Mrs Birling tries to intimidate him with her position, telling him “my husband was Lord Mayor” to make herself seem superior. She also tries to cut him off from when he first arrives when she says “I don’t think we can help you much” before she has even heard what the Inspector has to say. This also shows that, because of her family’s position in society, she believes that she and her family couldn’t possibly get mixed up in the life of a working class girl and consequently couldn’t play a part in Eva Smith’s death. Mrs Birling is clearly outraged when the Inspector disagrees with her as she says “I beg your pardon!” and then insults him, calling him “impertinent” just because he dared to challenge her opinion. Mrs Birling repeats the word “impertinent” many times throughout the play which is ironic as she is mostly disrespectful when addressing others. It also shows that, because her only defence is to accuse people of being rude, manners are all she values and judges people on. The fact that she feels the need to insult him could suggest she is beginning to feel threatened by the Inspector at this point. When asked if she recognises the photograph of Eva, Mrs Birling lies and says “No. Why should I?” which shows her trying to keep control and hold her position. This also shows her hypocrisy as lying is what she accused Eva of doing and is something that prejudiced her against Eva’s case. She is also, yet again, distancing herself from the situation with Eva. She is seen diverting the blame again when she says “it wasn’t I who had her turned out of her employment – which probably began it all”. This shows her to be constantly pushing away responsibility to divert the blame and the Inspector’s questions from herself; here she is even blaming her

husband and Sheila because she cannot accept that she may be in the wrong. Mrs Birling only finally answers to the Inspector's questions and admits to having a connection with Eva Smith when she knows there is no way out; she says "(after a pause) Yes, quite true". Although she is unintimidated by the Inspector at first, Mrs Birling is described as "agitated" in this extract which suggests that this confident front is crumbling as the Inspector continues to ask her and her family more questions.

#### Is she changed?

Mrs Birling takes no responsibility for what she has done and believes that her actions have no connection with Eva Smith committing suicide. This is shown when, in this extract, she states "I accept no blame for it at all". As soon as the Inspector leaves, Mrs Birling regains her self-confident, superior manner when, after it is confirmed that the Inspector wasn't a real police inspector, she says "didn't I tell you?" which shows she has not been changed as she is acting the same way as she did before his visit. She also begins putting blame on other people again and telling them that what they did was wrong when she claims she "would have asked him a few questions before I allowed him to ask us any". When the Inspector has left, she is more concerned about his manner and how he treated them than the shocking revelations of the night; she says "his manner was quite extraordinary ... so rude – and assertive". This shows that all she cares about is appearances. Even after revealing her connection with Eva Smith and being told how she may have contributed to her death, Mrs Birling still believes she has done nothing wrong and believes that her decision was justified, shown when she states "I had done no more than my duty". The speed at which Mrs Birling recovers after hearing about the death of her grandchild, and the fact that she shows no signs of upset, implies that she is unaffected by the Inspector's visit. Mrs Birling is clearly not changed by the Inspector and what he tells them, shown clearly through the fact that at the end of the play she is not concerned with Eva's death but instead is worrying about appearances again and her biggest concern is making sure her family is not gossiped about.

## Write about Sheila Birling and how her character is presented in An Inspector Calls

Yellow highlighted = points to include in essay

Sheila before the Inspector's arrival (extract):

**Topic sentence – Before the Inspector's arrival, Sheila is presented as a somewhat childlike, immature character.**

**Extract:**

- 'Half serious, half playful' (stage direction before Sheila accuses Gerald of avoiding her) - shows she is suspicious of Gerald, so although she can seem childlike she also has the capacity to recognise when things may not be as they seem
- 'And I've told you' – (Gerald says to Sheila after she mentions how he avoided her in the summer) – Gerald's frustration here implies that they have talked about this issue before and Sheila is still refusing to let it go – implies she is stubborn – Gerald again tells her that he was 'busy at the works'.
- 'I don't believe I will' – although childlike, Sheila still contradicts her mother after being told that she must get used to Gerald spending all his 'time and energy' on his business. The fact that she contradicts her mother shows her to be quite self-willed.
- 'You're squiffy' – Sheila directs this colloquialism at Eric after he laughs at Gerald. Again emphasises her childlike manner (she also calls him an 'ass')
- 'If you think that's the best she can do' – (spoken by Eric to Mrs. Birling. He also says she has a 'nasty temper') implies Sheila has a hidden temper that her parents perhaps don't know about – perhaps parents don't really understand their own daughter very well.

**Not extract:**

- Sheila appears to be someone shallow and superficial – 'You've got it – is it the one you wanted me to have?' (her reaction to the engagement ring from Gerald). Sheila appears materialistic when she shows off her ring – 'oh – it's wonderful! Look – mummy – isn't it a beauty?' - Sheila talks about her ring.

Her part in Eva's death and her feelings towards it:

**Topic sentence – Sheila is evidently very distressed by her spiteful actions, and is very apologetic – a redeeming quality in her character.**

- 'Was it an accident?' – reaction to disinfectant – shows naivety because a person clearly wouldn't drink strong disinfectant by accident – she reacts by saying 'how horrible', akin to Mr. Birling – but then goes on to ask more about it.
- 'Recognises' the photograph with a 'little cry' and then 'runs out' – very emotional person – she acknowledges that what she did was wrong – so she does appear to have a moral compass.
- She blackmailed the people at Milwards by using her financial power to get what she wants – 'If they didn't get rid of that girl... I'd persuade mother to close our account with them'. This shows her to be a vindictive person who lets her temper get the better of her. It also makes her seem like someone shallow and superficial
- She doesn't realise how severe her actions could be – she says 'it didn't seem to be anything very terrible at the time' - doesn't think things through – yet later on we see this change. One redeeming quality is that after she did this is that she felt 'rotten' about it.
- 'I'd been in a bad temper anyhow' - This temper was previously referred to by Eric – however she doesn't use this as an excuse and admits that it was her fault – 'It was my own fault'.
- Sheila does appear to have jealousy issues – she was jealous of Eva who was someone her age who she perhaps felt threatened by – 'And it just suited her', 'she was very pretty too' (Sheila describes when Eva held the dress up as if she was wearing it at Milwards).

How she is portrayed during the Inspector's visit

**Topic sentence – As well as being shocked and upset about her own actions, Sheila recognises that what her family did was wrong, and appears to understand and agree with the Inspector's point of view (socialist views).**

- 'These girls aren't cheap labour - they're people' (Sheila says to Mr. Birling) – Socialist views – Sheila is the voice of the audience, and appears to have similar views to the Inspector even before he arrives. She clearly recognises that what her father did was wrong – although what she did was equally wrong.
- 'I think it was a mean thing to do' – Sheila openly confronts her father about his actions, implying she is someone who is not afraid to voice her opinion – also shows that she has the ability to understand that Eva's dismissal, although seen by Mr. Birling (and Gerald) as something necessary, actually could have had quite a profound effect on Eva's life. However the phrasing she uses is quite childlike, showing her immaturity.
- Sheila's intelligence is immediately clear – she appears to be the first one to realise that there is no point hiding anything from the Inspector – in response to Gerald's suggestion that keep Gerald's involvement with Eva from the Inspector, Sheila says 'why – you fool – he knows. Of course he knows'.
- Sheila doesn't appear to be as naïve and clueless as she seemed before the Inspector's arrival – she knows about Alderman Meggarty's behaviour whereas her parents don't – 'everybody knows about that horrible old Meggarty'. She then implies that she knows about what a 'notorious womaniser' he is when she recalls a story about a girl she knew who had to see him and 'only escaped with a torn blouse'. She clearly knows more about the people within her parents' social circle than

they do – yet never tells them until now – this portrays Sheila as someone who doesn't feel she can confide in her parents (similar to Eric).

- However her naivety is reinforced as she asks how Eva could have 'wanted to kill herself' after being shocked at the fact that Eva was pregnant – shows she doesn't realise how difficult it would have been for Eva to have the baby as she couldn't financially support it or herself.
- Sheila's intelligence and ability to read between the lines is apparent as she realises her mother is blaming Eric by saying that the father of the child should 'be made an example of'. She says with 'sudden alarm' – 'mother – stop – stop!'. Her mother merely tells her that she's behaving like a 'hysterical child' – shows how much she is patronised by parents and also how they do not feel they ought to listen to her.
- She didn't tell her parents about Eric's drinking – emphasises her distance from her parents. She also didn't 'want to get poor Eric into trouble' – shows loyalty to her brother – she is someone loyal. She explains that she 'could have told' Mrs. Birling 'months ago' but she didn't – she only told everyone as she knew they would find out anyway – 'it was simply bound to come out tonight'. Her acceptance that lies cannot be hidden from the Inspector shows her maturity – she understands that lying would just make things worse.

How Sheila has changed due to the Inspector's visit:

**Topic sentence – Sheila, alongside Eric, appears to have become more mature after the Inspector's visit – she has accepted responsibility for her part in Eva's death and realises that in the future she needs to think about how her actions may affect others.**

- Sheila ironically returns the ring she said she would never take off. However she makes it clear she is not rejecting him – 'I don't dislike you as I did half an hour ago, Gerald'. She says she actually 'respects' him more, due to the fact that he's been 'honest'. This shows that she is someone who values honesty – which perhaps indicates that her marriage to Gerald would have been unhappy as Gerald is a compulsive liar. This shows her to be someone forgiving and understanding – she knew that Gerald was just trying to help Eva 'out of pity'.
- She also tells Eric that Eva told Mrs. Birling about her situation (pregnancy). She is presented as someone who starkly contrasts her parents - who try to keep things quiet – whereas Sheila says that Eric 'had to know' about what Mrs. Birling did.
- Sheila, as the voice of the audience, questions whether or not the Inspector was really a police officer – 'was he really a police officer?'. However she prefaces it by saying that it 'doesn't matter' even if he wasn't, as they still have done all the things they did to Eva.
- She has also matured throughout the play, despite the fact that her parents still say she is 'childish' after she contradicts them (see previous point) – she realises that even if he wasn't a police inspector, it's what they did that is 'important' and what they learned from it, regardless of who made them confess. Sheila remarks that her parents 'don't seem to have learnt anything', whereas Sheila feels she has learnt something.
- 'I suppose we're all nice people now' – Sheila's bitter tone here shows she is angry at her parents who still don't seem to have learnt anything. Her words also suggest that she sees herself and her family as being unkind people due to the things they did. The fact that she includes herself in this shows her maturity and ability to accept responsibility – a very mature thing to do. This contrasts her parents who are trying to find ways out of the blame.
- Sheila's relationship with Eric also seems to have improved after the Inspector's visit – she agrees with him when he says that their parents and Gerald are 'beginning to pretend that nothing's really happened' and he 'can't see it like that'. In response, Sheila says 'that's just what I feel Eric'. It appears as though both Eric and Sheila are willing to take responsibility for their actions and ensure they don't make the same mistakes in the future – something their parents and Gerald 'don't seem to understand' according to Sheila.
- 'Well he inspected us alright' – Sheila recognises that whether the Inspector was a police inspector or not, he made them confess, show that they have all broken moral code and driven Eva to her death – 'we drove that girl to commit suicide'.

Conclusion

**Topic sentence – overall, Sheila has changed drastically over the course of the play – at the end of the play she has matured and become wiser, akin to the Inspector, who seems, despite the situation, to have brought out the best in her.**

- 'I remember what he said, how he looked, and what he made me feel' – the Inspector evidently made a great impression on Sheila, causing her to take on his way of thinking and understanding – people must look out for one another.
- She is also used to highlight the immature, selfish views of her family (but not Eric) who don't learn anything or accept responsibility for their actions. She regrets how she acted – in contrast to her family who don't seem to feel any guilt.
- It seems as though the Inspector has brought out the best in Sheila – her intelligence and maturity becomes increasingly apparent throughout the play.

## **Write about who you think is most responsible for Eva Smith's death – Essay plan**

The responsibility of Eva Smith's death cannot be placed solely on one character, as it is shared between each member of the Birling family and Gerald Croft. Some characters are more to blame than others, but each member played a significant part in Eva's death.

### **Mr Birling:**

- Exploited workers for his own gain to "keep labour costs down" (pg 11, Act 1)
- He told Eva to "clear out" (pg 11, Act 1) – started the chain of events that lead to her suicide – [Inspector, rather savagely] "you started it" (pg 41, Act 3)
- Only sees his workers in terms of labour, doesn't view them as humans – he is selfish and uncaring, little value for other people, especially people of a lower class – "these people" (pg 11, Act 1) and "the girl" (pg 12, Act 1), Mr Birling had a responsibility to look after and help his workers – he had financial power
- Eva had only asked for "decent wages" (pg 30, Act 2) as a typical employee would
- Wasn't remorseful or ashamed of his actions, he was rather hard and cold, cannot see that he has done something wrong, thinks his actions are justifiable because it was something "any employer would have done" (pg 27, Act 1), regret does not stem from his guilt, which is indicated by his quick change of heart once he is convinced that the Inspector's story was an "elaborate sell" (pg 51, Act 3)
- Very worried about his honour and appearance to other people of his class – "the press might easily take up" their actions (pg 34, Act 2) – fear of losing status and respect
- Expected Eva to end up on the streets after losing her job – knowingly placed her in a situation in which her only choices were destitution or prostitution, he is vindictive and callous – "get into trouble? Go on the streets?" (pg 12, Act 1) – could be because he blacklisted her after she was fired [Mr B] "could go and work somewhere else, it's a free country", [Eric] "it isn't if you can't go and work somewhere else" – Eric might have known about his dad blacklisting his workers (pg 11, Act 1)
- No regard for his workers, as he had a "couple of hundred" workers who "kept changing" (pg 8, Act 1)
- Regards the Inspector's Socialist views, which stress the importance of community and society, as "nonsense" (pg 6, Act 1)
- Wasn't a good father – Eric felt he could not tell his dad about Eva as he wasn't the kind of father "a chap could go to" (pg 40, Act 3). If he had been a better dad, Eric would have confessed to him, and Eva would not have died
- Does not change at the end of the play, thinks that the Inspector's visit is a joke which he can have a "good laugh over" (pg 52, Act 3), only the younger generation learn from their mistakes

### **Sheila:**

- Abuses her power as the daughter of a "good customer" (pg 18 Act 1) and "a man well-known in town" (pg 18 Act 1)
- Got Eva fired out of selfishness as she was jealous because Eva was "very pretty" (pg 17 Act 1) – her pride was offended – knew what she did was wrong at the time but did nothing to rectify her mistake
- Eva liked working there as she "enjoyed being among pretty clothes" (pg 15 Act 1) and she felt she was making "a good fresh start" (pg 15 Act 1) so getting her fired made "much difference to her" as it was her "last steady job" (pg 17 Act 1)
- Regrets what she did in the end and is "distressed" (pg 21, Act 2) – vows she'll "never do it again" (pg 18, Act 1)
- Tries to explain to her family the consequences of their actions - "doesn't much matter who it was who made us confess" (pg 43, Act 3)
- When Sheila realises that the Inspector was a fake, she recognises that the family was "lucky" that the situation "didn't end tragically" (pg 52, Act 3)
- Sheila is the voice of the audience and promotes the Inspector's viewpoint that they should accept responsibility and change – "you began to learn something. And now you've stopped" (pg 52, Act 3)

### **Eric:**

- Took advantage of Eva in his drunken state by forcing his way into her lodgings – "I insisted" (pg 38, Act 3), "she didn't want me to go in" (pg 38, Act 3)
- Used his male power and higher class to force her to let him in and rape her – "I threatened to make a row" (pg 38, Act 3)
- Eric and Eva's child was conceived out of wedlock, which made Eva's situation worse – she was poor, from a low class, had no family, and now had a child illegitimately – all factors which would have made her look worse from society's point of view.
- He gave Eva some money to try and right what he did – tried to support her, but he did not do enough.
- The money he tried to give Eva was stolen – he got it "from the office" (pg 40, Act 3)

### **Gerald:**

- Believes Mr Birling was right to fire Eva – “you couldn’t have done anything else” (pg 11, Act 1)
- Uses his class and money for his own pleasure, knew Eva depended on him, yet used his power over her
- Kept Eva as his “mistress” (pg 27, Act 2) until she was no longer needed, used her for his own gain, got rid of her when convenient for him, he had to “go away on business” and “broke it off” before he left (pg 28, Act 2)
- Left her homeless and heartbroken – “I didn’t feel about her as she felt about me” (pg 28, Act 2)
- Tried to wash away all responsibility with his money by giving Eva a “parting gift” of some money to “see her through” (pg 28, Act 2) – degrading
- Fails to realise the consequences of his actions – “everything’s alright now” (pg 53, Act 2)

#### **Mrs Birling:**

- As the last person in contact with Eva, by turning her away, Eva’s last chance at a fresh start was ruined
- Effectively, Mrs Birling controlled what happened to Eva. If she had helped, Eva would have lived, but because the support Eva needed was not provided, she died
- Denied knowing Eva – “why should I” [recognise her?] (pg 30, Act 2). Lied to the inspector - this is hypocritical, as the only reason Mrs Birling denied Eva help was because she lied to her multiple times.
- Deliberately uncooperative, Sheila has to answer the inspector’s questions for her - “yes, she is” (pg 31, Act 2), suggests she has something to hide.
- Admits to being “prejudiced against her case”
- Abused her power and authority, manipulated others to also not help Eva – “saw that others refused it too” (pg 34, Act 2)
- Her job was to “help women in distress” (pg 31, Act 2), but she did not carry out her duties, instead believed that the job of looking after the baby was the father’s.
- Shifts the blame onto the others, labels Eric as the “chief culprit” (pg 35, Act 2)
- Unsympathetic, cold, shows no remorse or guilt towards Eva – “I did nothing I’m ashamed of” (pg 33, Act 2), “I’ve done nothing wrong” (pg 33, Act 2), “I accept no blame” (pg 35, Act 2)
- When she realises that the Inspector was a hoax, she no longer feels guilt – “why shouldn’t we [behave as before]” (pg 52, Act 3)

In conclusion, all of the characters in this play are partly to blame for the death of Eva Smith, but some more than others. The older generation and Gerald seem more to blame than Eric and Sheila due to the fact that they are unable to feel any remorse or regret for their actions, and maintain their innocence once the Inspector leaves. These three characters are all firm believers in Capitalism. Although the younger generation’s morals and attitudes stem from their parents (Sheila uses the word “impertinent” when complaining to the manager of Milwards about Eva (pg 17, Act 1)), they have different views to their elders - Eric and Sheila seem remorseful, and try to convince their parents and Gerald that they have still made mistakes, but to no avail. The overall message of the play and the answer to ‘who is the most to blame’ lies with the Inspector – the Socialist view of the play. The Inspector says that each of the characters “helped to kill her [Eva]” (pg 41, Act 3) and that their lives are “intertwined” with the lives of others, implying that we are all equal and responsible for each other.

### Write about how drama and tension are created in An Inspector Calls

From the very beginning of his play, Priestley creates an atmosphere of tension through the staging and design of the set. The whole play takes place in a single room, which creates an atmosphere that is claustrophobic and intense, particularly after the arrival of the inspector. Also, the fact that the Birling family are in one single room, separated from the rest of the world, may represent the way in which the upper and middle classes as a whole have distanced themselves from the working class through their capitalist ideals. This isolation creates a feeling of tension, as, by the end of the play, we realise that the Birlings are unable to escape the Inspector, nor their responsibility for Eva's death. The fact that the furniture is 'not cosy and homelike' creates a slight feeling of unease, despite how relaxed and jovial the characters (at least initially) appear to be. Similarly, the fact that the characters are in 'evening dress of the period' adds to the sense of disquiet, as evening dress at the time was very restrictive, and the unnecessary level of formality at a family dinner perhaps makes the character seem slightly on-edge, something which is transferred to the audience. It also serves to make their social position clear, (as the working-class would not have been able to afford such clothes) and so further separate them from the working class. On the arrival of the inspector, the lighting, which previously was 'pink and intimate', becomes 'brighter harder', creating drama as it perhaps represents the way in which the Birlings' cosy, sheltered life is destroyed by the Inspector and, ultimately, how they have behaved towards the working class. Also, the harsh lighting creates an uncomfortable atmosphere of interrogation and is a subtle indication of what is to come.

Priestley also creates tension by unravelling the mystery and plot at a slow pace, which, perhaps inevitably, eventually leads to Birling family's exposure. This sense that the Birlings will eventually suffer for their capitalist greed is created by the way in which Priestley subtly foreshadows later events, creating a feeling of tension and disquiet. Before the arrival of the inspector, Sheila 'half playfully' reprimands Gerald for 'not coming near' her 'all last summer'. This creates a slight sense of mystery as we wonder what Gerald had really been doing, and it begins to disrupt the otherwise relaxed atmosphere. Similarly, Eric's erratic, drunken behaviour when he 'suddenly guffaws', and the way in which he is so guarded about what he 'remembers' just prior to the inspector's arrival heightens the sense of mystery, preparing us for what we discover later in the play. The way in which Eric comments on Sheila's 'nasty temper' is yet another indication of what will happen, and adds to the slightly unsettling atmosphere. On the Inspector's arrival, it also becomes clear that the Birlings are all involved with Eva Smith's suicide, when, for example, he advises Eric not to 'turn in', as he may 'have to turn out again soon'. The grim play on words here also creates the impression that the other characters are completely at the mercy of the inspector, adding to the tension. The conflict which Priestley creates between Sheila and Gerald also creates tension within the family, something which the audience too feels. This reaches its climax when Sheila hands her ring back to Gerald, yet another dramatic indication of how the Birlings' lives begin to fall apart once they are forced to confront their selfish behaviour.

In the extract, the drama is yet further intensified by Sheila's intense display of emotion, as she is 'distressed', and speaks in 'sudden alarm'. This is emphasised by the sharp contrast with the inspector, who remains calm throughout. The pace of this part of the play is also tightly controlled by the Inspector who says 'I'm waiting... to do my duty' and 'looks at his watch'. The tension steadily increases as we too are made to wait for Eric's return. Similarly, when Mr and Mrs Birling finally realise Eric's involvement, the pause created by Mrs Birling when she 'stops and exchanges a frightened glance with her husband' allows yet more time for the tension to grow. Also, the rapid, disjointed exchange of dialogue between Mr and Mrs Birling and Sheila, particularly when Mr Birling says 'my God! But - look here', indicates how overwhelmed the Birlings are by their realisation, and in turn creates a moment of tension in the audience. Similarly, Mrs Birling's refusal to accept Eric's role in Eva's death, indicated by her use of the modal verb 'won't', allows us finally to see Mrs Birling without her composed exterior, as she is thrown into panic, creating a sense of drama.

Throughout Act three, Priestley continues to create drama and tension through the development of the plot. At the beginning of act three, the characters (except Gerald, who is absent) argue about their role in Eva's death, creating tension within the family. This is also a sharp contrast with the polite, strained formality at the beginning of the play, something which intensifies the drama yet further. When Gerald returns from his walk, there is a pause when the characters 'all look enquiringly at Gerald'. The way in which we are, yet again, made to wait for more information allows time for the tension to increase. Likewise, when Mr Birling tries to confirm Gerald's suspicions about the inspector by telephone, the drama is again heightened as we can only hear one side of the conversation, adding to the sense of suspense. The same technique is used again to confirm that Eva is not dead. The conflict between the older and younger generations regarding the importance of their immoral behaviour is another device that Priestley uses to heighten the tension. The fact that Eric and Sheila (who are the voices of the audience) are largely over-ruled by their parents and Gerald perhaps intensifies the drama for the audience, as we, like Eric and Sheila, are outraged at the older generation's refusal to accept moral responsibility for what they have done. The raised voices of the actors as they 'shout' and 'threaten' also helps to bring the play to a dramatic climax. In addition, the way in which Gerald slowly introduces the idea that Eva is not a single person, questioning whether it is a 'fact', creates tension, as we gradually grasp what he is suggesting along with the other characters. The confusion of the other characters and the way in which the assumptions we have made up until this point seem to almost entirely unravel adds to the sense of drama, as we are forced to drastically change our perception of what has happened. The atmosphere also begins almost to revert to how it was at the beginning of the play, except for Sheila and Eric who are 'frightened' (as, perhaps, are the audience) by how little the morality of what they have done concerns the other Birlings, creating a sense of drama.

The way in which the characters enter and exit the stage and the points at which the acts end also creates drama and tension. The Inspector arrives immediately after Birling has told Gerald about his knighthood, and his speech about capitalism is dramatically interrupted by the 'sharp' ringing of the doorbell, something which we only later realise the significance of when we see that the



Inspector represents socialism. Later in Act 1, when it becomes clear that Gerald is involved in Eva's death, 'the Inspector looks from Sheila to Gerald' before leaving the two alone. The slow exit creates tension and builds the audience's anticipation; we want the inspector to leave so that we can hear Sheila and Gerald's conversation and find out exactly how he was involved. When Act 1 ends with the reappearance of the Inspector and his question, 'well?', it leaves the audience on a cliff hanger, as we are left wondering whether Gerald will try to hide what he has done from the inspector. Similarly, Act 2 ends with the reappearance of Eric immediately after Mrs Birling has unknowingly condemned his behaviour. The abruptness of the ending, created by the 'sudden' drop of the curtain at such a dramatic moment, leaves the audience in suspense and impatient for the final act.

Prior to the Inspector's arrival, Priestly frequently uses dramatic irony to create tension that disrupts the otherwise generally relaxed atmosphere. The way in which Birling confidently claims 'there isn't a chance of war' is not only intended to mock capitalism (which Birling represents), as the post-war audience know all too well of the two world wars which would follow, but perhaps also make the audience question how else Birling is wrong, creating a sense of tension. In the same way, Birling claims that the Titanic is 'absolutely unsinkable', despite the fact that the audience know it sank later that same year. Perhaps what makes this even more dramatic is the way in which the Titanic could be seen as a metaphor for capitalism and the ruling upper-classes. Not only will they soon (according to Priestly) 'sink' in the class system, but they are completely oblivious to what is about to happen. Again, Birling's overconfidence when telling Gerald of his imminent knighthood, 'so long as' he says, jokingly, 'we behave ourselves', coupled with our knowledge of Birling's inaccuracies in his previous speech, creates drama as it becomes clear to the audience that a 'scandal' will indeed ensue.

Priestly uses dramatic irony again in Act 2 to create tension through Mrs Birling. When the audience realises, along with Sheila, that it was Eric who got Eva pregnant, the drama is intensified when Mrs Birling advises the Inspector to 'make sure that he's compelled to confess in public his responsibility'. Not only does this highlight Mrs Birling's hypocrisy (as she surely would not condemn her son in the same way if she knew what she was saying), but also it creates a sense of tension, as we, like Sheila, are desperate for Mrs Birling to stop, so that Eric might not be treated so harshly. The way in which Sheila (who, in this part of the play, is the voice of the audience) warns her mother, yet is dismissed, only adds to the drama, and makes us as the audience feel frustrated, as we are desperate for Mrs Birling to understand. This is compounded when the Inspector reassures Mrs Birling that he 'shall' do his 'duty'. The use of the modal verb 'shall' creates a sense of certainty, and we know that Eric's fate is now inescapable. This is emphasised by Mrs Birling's triumphant 'glad to hear it'. The fact that she is still entirely oblivious adds to the drama, as it is in such sharp contrast with Sheila (and the audience).

Inspector Goole is also used as a dramatic device and is extremely important to the development of the story and the creation of drama and tension. On his entrance, he is described as creating 'an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness.' This initial impression that the characters and the audience get of the inspector creates a sense of unease, as it is immediately clear that he is a force to be reckoned with. He also largely controls the pace of the play by dealing with 'one line of enquiry at a time', and so is therefore key to the development of tension. The Inspector also is present on stage for the vast majority of the play, and, when present, he dominates the conversation, and easily takes authority over the other characters, such as when he contradicts Mr Birling in Act 1, saying 'no, wait a minute, Miss Birling'. This creates the sense that he is a brooding, inescapable presence, which in turn creates tension. Throughout the play, the Inspector constantly reminds us of how Eva 'burnt her insides out', and 'lies dead'. This adds to the drama as we cannot forget the fact that the Birlings' actions have led to an innocent woman's death. He also frequently makes statements which, although directed at the Birlings, are also relevant to the audience, such as when he claims that there is not 'much difference' between 'respectable citizens' and 'criminals', which heightens the drama, as we, as the audience, feel as though we too are being judged. Similarly, just before his exit, the Inspector says 'each of you helped kill her. Remember that'. Although, again, this is addressed to the characters on stage, the use of the pronoun 'you' gives the audience the uncomfortable impression that they too are responsible for Eva Smith's (or rather the working class as a whole's) suffering. This is made even more dramatic when the Inspector threatens that we will learn our lesson in 'fire and blood and anguish'. Whilst this is almost certainly a reference to hell, it may also refer to the two world wars, the horrors of which the post-war audience would be all too aware, but which the Birlings are yet to experience. This may perhaps shock the audience, as Priestly here may be insinuating that the two world wars were caused by us, through our abuse of the class system and capitalistic ideology. The drama is heightened yet further when the Inspector abruptly bids the Birlings 'goodnight' and leaves, 'leaving them subdued and wondering'. Not only does the sudden silence after such a dramatic speech create a somewhat uncomfortable atmosphere (both for the audience and the Birlings), but it also provides a moment of reflection which perhaps helps to give the Inspector's speech more impact. Perhaps the way in which the Inspector creates the most tension, however, is through the fact that his true identity remains a mystery. We never discover whether he is a time traveller, an angelical being sent by God, or even a ghost, as his name suggests, creating a lasting sense of mystery and tension, even after the play has ended.

Throughout the play, the tension and drama steadily increases, until it is discovered that the Inspector was not real and that no girl had died in the infirmary. This releases some of the tension, but the final telephone call, announcing that a second inspector is on his way to ask questions about the suicide of a young girl, suddenly restores the tension very dramatically in an unexpected final twist. Perhaps it is this sense that the Birlings will be trapped forever in an endless cycle of Inspectors until they admit their guilt, combined with the continual references to the past and future, that reminds us that we are responsible for how we behave and the consequences of our actions, and that ultimately makes this play so dramatic, and gives it its long lasting impact.

### How men and women are portrayed in an Inspector calls – Essay

Through the Birling family, their relationships and how they react to Eva's death, Priestly presents the roles of men and women in 1912. He foreshadows the change of these roles in society through Eric and Sheila's change of behaviour in the play.

Men are presented as being solely concerned with money, work and sex. They typically spent all their "time and energy on their business" so were preoccupied with work and making money. At a family occasion the topic of conversation is mainly work orientated. Mrs Birling says to Birling that he should not "talk business on an occasion like this" showing Birling's priority is work. Men are shown as sexual predators. We see that Eric uses obscure language when he "insisted" on coming into Eva's house which indicates that he raped her. Eric takes advantage of her which was seen as acceptable for men to do in this period which is evident when his parents don't acknowledge that he raped Eva and only focus on the fact that her stole money. This is shown when Birling says men like to have a "bit of fun sometimes" when they're young. Men only see women as objects and when Eric described why he liked Eva he called "pretty and a good sport" rather than talking about her personality. Gerald talks about Eva being "young and pretty" which shows that they both liked Eva because she was 'pretty'. Sheila also asks the inspector if Eva was "pretty" which suggests that women of the period also had the same views as men.

In this period there were regular use of prostitutes, this is shown through the character Alderman Meggarty who was known as "a notorious womaniser". Eric and Gerald talk about "bars" and "hotels" as being "haunts of women of the town". The men of the period had double standards. We see this in the play when Mr Birling's "respectable friends" are seen with "fat old tarts" - which implies they use prostitutes -whilst still having wives and being socially respected. When Eric uses derogatory language to describe the women as "fat old tarts" it indicates the lack of respect he has for them. For men it was normal to live a double life and it was acceptable to sleep around. Whereas when Eva went to Mrs Birling's charity for help she was denied because she was pregnant whilst being unmarried which was "absurd in a girl in her position". Men use their power in the wrong ways which is shown through the way they treat women and how they prioritise work and money over everything.

Middle class women were presented as only caring about materialistic items and were seen as needing to be protected from disturbing topics. Men assumed that they only care about clothes. This is seen in the play when Mr Birling discusses with Eric and Gerald that "clothes mean something" to women. Young women are treated as if they were children, which Sheila and Eric are repeatedly referred as, and an example of this is when Mrs Birling tells Sheila to "run along" when they are discussing about Eva's death. This also shows they are trying to protect her from a horrific topic. However Mrs Birling is unaware that Sheila knows about prostitution which is made illustrated when Sheila talks about how her friend went to see Alderman Meggarty and managed to escape "with a torn blouse". This suggests that because she was "escaping" she didn't give consent to Meggarty. Mrs Birling should be the one to tell her about these horrific topics as she works in a charity that deals with women in these situations, but she doesn't which shows ignorance. The Birlings try to control Sheila's display of emotion as Mrs Birling compares her to "a hysterical child" this shows that strong emotions are disapproved. Mrs Birling doesn't have a full time job as she works for "Brumley Women's Charity Organisation". This shows that men of the period were the ones responsible for earning money and the women were either expected to stay at home or they only participated in voluntary work. Middle class were seen as incapable of dealing with the uncomfortable truths of reality and the male are presented as needing to protect them from it.

In contrast to middle class women, working class women were seen as the lowest group in the social hierarchy of the period. They were only treated like workers and not like humans. We see this when Mr Birling's only remarks about Eva were that she was a "good worker" within "several hundred young women". Mr Birling does not know the exact number of his employees which emphasises his lack of respect towards them. This is proven even further when Mr Birling shows his lack of sympathy towards the working class women of his factory, saying that it is his duty to "keep labour costs down" and not to care about their welfare. When working class women became unemployed there wasn't many other options as if they didn't work in a factory it was assumed they would "go on the streets" to become prostitutes. Higher classes assumed that working class women had no moral compass, shown as they assume all will turn to prostitution which is seen as an immoral job and reinforced when Mrs Birling questions the fact that Eva would refuse Eric's stolen money, saying "as if girls of that sort would ever refuse money". Eric says that Eva "didn't want to marry" him because he didn't 'love her'. This shows that, even though if she got married she would receive the support she needed, she refuses the offer as she believes marriage should be about love. This shows signs of change. Upper classes show themselves as having no empathy towards the working class women as they treat them unfairly.

Even though the roles of men and women were presented in this way, the younger generation in the play show indications of change. Eva leads the strike against Mr Birling's company, she was shown as being a "ringleader" and was said to have "a lot to say-far too much" by Mr Birling. This shows she is beginning to stand up for her rights and reflects the suffragette movement that would soon happen in terms of when the play was set. Sheila accepts responsibility for her actions and even goes so far as to challenge Mr Birling. She calls him out, saying "you don't seem to have learnt anything", telling him that he cannot pretend nothing has happened. She has different views to her parents and isn't following their beliefs but thinking for herself. She also has the most developed voice and is the most complex character in the play. Eric also accepts responsibility when he says that the most important thing is "what we all did to her". This shows that as well as Sheila, he also rejects his parents' beliefs and has opinions of his own. These signs of change show that people in the middle class are becoming more empathetic towards others around them. Through each character Priestly represents how roles of men and women were unequal in 1912 and he uses Eva as a catalyst to portray the importance of class and gender in that society. He also conveys that the younger generation are more open to change which is demonstrated through Sheila and Eric.

## The Theme of Class in An Inspector Calls

### Attitudes to the Lower Class

- **Disdain**- "Elaborate fine feelings," Mrs B assumes that someone who is working class cannot claim these feelings. She finds it "absurd." // "A girl of that sort"- Mrs B labels Eva, she has been tainted with her class//Upper class have no compassion or empathy.
- **Lack of responsibility**- "I can't accept any responsibility" – Mr B// "It wasn't I who had her turned out of employment." - Mrs B
- **Lack of understanding and how it differs between generation** – "You don't understand anything" – Eric to Mr B- younger generation can sympathise and are mindful of her circumstances // "The girl had begun by telling us a pack of lies," "I didn't believe a word of it," "Not deserving" – Mrs B – prejudiced, automatically views her as inferior.
- **Disrespect**- Sheila was in a "furious temper"- used her status to have Eva fired. It was also out of envy, suggesting that she feels someone of a lower class doesn't deserve to look prettier than her.

### Contrast Between the Treatment of Upper and Lower Class Women

- 1) Sheila is protected by her father – he calls her a "child." Upper class women should also be protected from unsettling matters – "It would be much better if Sheila didn't listen to this story." // In contrast, Eva's inferiority is exploited (no protection) e.g. by Gerald "I didn't feel about her as she felt about me", and Eric "she didn't want me to go in"
- 2) Focus on women is generally their appearance – Sheila asks whether Eva was "pretty" - Upper class women treat it as competition // Sheila in the shop, was jealous of Eva in the shop.
- 3) Upper class women are expected to be well mannered/behave/follow male orders "Sheila I think you ought to go to bed now" // Contrasts with (lower class) Eva's "gross impertinence" - rude.

### Capitalism and Socialism

- **Priestley's and Birling's contrasting views**
  - 1) Birling believes in a class distinction and that people should work their way up the system – "man has to make his own way." Birling believes that poverty is due to laziness. He calls socialists "cranks" - He feels they are robbing him of his well earned lifestyle whereas the Inspector feels that capitalists are selfish- "It is better to ask for the world than to take it."
  - 2) The Inspector is the voice of Priestley. He has socialist views – "we are members of one body." Mr Birling's views contrast- "community and all that nonsense."
  - 3) Inspector believes that "fire and blood and anguish" are consequences of capitalism. He foreshadows war whereas Birling doesn't believe that war could ever happen – "silly little war scares", "Some people say that war is inevitable. To that I say fiddlesticks."
  - 4) Throughout the play the Inspector contradicts and dominates Mr Birling – shows superiority. The audience will question their political beliefs.

## CLASS - Essay

In *An Inspector Calls*, class is a key theme that runs throughout the play. It holds great relevance and is successfully used to compare and contrast the views of socialists and capitalists. Class manifests itself into the play; each character is divided into a class and consequently, must perform appropriately within their social status.

There is a general negative attitude towards the lower class from the characters of the play. Mrs Birling clearly displays disdain when turning away Eva from her help as chairwoman in the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation. She finds it "absurd" that a girl of working class should claim "elaborate fine feelings," and is prejudiced against her case as she called herself "Mrs Birling." She shows no compassion and will not accept responsibility as she throws the responsibility on her husband by saying "It wasn't I who had her turned out of employment" and also blames the "young man who was the father of the child." The younger generation, however, can sympathise and are mindful of Eva's circumstances. This is shown when Sheila tells her father that his workers "aren't cheap labour- they're people," suggesting that Sheila is able to respect those living in poverty. On the other hand, it was Sheila who used her status to have Eva fired from her work and, that due to her "furious temper", her actions were justified. This suggests that she views the lower class as dispensable and finds it acceptable to take her anger out on them. Lady Croft's view on Gerald's engagement is another example of the sense of superiority over someone of a lower class: as a woman from an "old country family," she felt that Gerald could have done "better for himself socially". Birling attempts to defy this by proving his family worthy of the marriage when he lists his roles of significance – he was "lord mayor two years ago" and is expecting a "knighthood." The upper class characters show no respect or understanding towards the lower class with the exception of Sheila and Eric who later show compassion and can accept the blame.

Within the play, there are clear distinctions between the treatment of upper and lower class women of the period. These differ greatly given the strong class divide and sense of superiority in the higher classes of society. The protection of upper class women is portrayed through Mr Birling and Sheila; he states that she "ought to go to bed" as the unravelling story may be too unsettling for her. Birling repeatedly calls Sheila a "child" implying that he has not yet allowed her to fully grow up and accept responsibilities for her own; she is still very much under her father's ownership and guidance. This is in great contrast to the exploitation and vulnerability of Eva Smith's character in the play. Her vulnerability is taken advantage of, firstly, by Gerald. He exploited her emotionally during their 'fling' as he states that he "didn't feel about her as she felt about me". This suggests that Gerald consciously used Eva for entertainment purposes only, with no emotional attachments. Eric also took advantage of Eva and makes it clear that Eva did not give consent as he stated "she did not want me to go in". This implies another conscious decision to exploit Eva due to her vulnerability and lack of protection.

In the period of the play, one of the main expectations of women was to appear attractive. Typically, upper class women had the money to make themselves look nice whereas lower class women did not. This is displayed by one of the initial questions Sheila asks the Inspector: "was she pretty?" It shows the level of importance that the aesthetic of women was. The jealousy that Sheila held over Eva's beauty in the shop suggests that she felt someone of a lower class didn't deserve to look prettier than her. Sheila used her status and respectable reputation to have Eva turned out of her work at Milward's. Typically, upper class women were expected to be well mannered, polite and well behaved. Moreover, they are required to follow and fulfil male orders. This mentality is demonstrated by Birling when he tells Sheila that she "ought to go to bed". This is contrasted by Mrs Birling's opinion of Eva when she seeks for help from her organisation; Mrs Birling wrongly accuses her of being "incompetent". This reinforces the idea that the upper class are not as sensitive to the lower class and discriminate against them for being inferior.

Mr Birling holds capitalist views which oppose the socialist views of Priestly that are expressed through the Inspector. Birling's views are shown to be wrong and throughout the play, the Inspector dominates and frequently contradicts him which shows the Inspector's moral superiority. He believes that "fire and blood and anguish" are consequences of capitalism and these words could foreshadow war whereas Birling doesn't believe that war will ever happen, revealing perhaps his ignorance and lack of intelligence. This is made evident when he says "fiddlesticks" to those who think that war is "inevitable." Birling believes in a class distinction and that poverty is due to laziness as people should work their way up the system which is made clear when he says "a man has to make his own way." He is presented as arrogant and is proud that he has worked his way up the class system as he boasts that he is a self-made man who did not need "the public school and varsity life" that his son had. He disagrees with the Inspector's views as he calls socialists "cranks" and feels that they are robbing him of his well-earned lifestyle whereas the Inspector finds that capitalists are selfish and defends Eva by saying "it is better to ask for the earth than to take it." Birling's short-sighted views reflect his attitude towards the lower class as he believes that they are to blame for their poverty and he shows no sympathy towards Eva. The audience will question their beliefs about the class system and find that Birling's capitalist views are immoral and unjust.

We see a defined class system in the play which is shown to be unfair by the Inspector. It is clear that the general upper class lack empathy and respect towards the lower class citizens and they are treated very differently with more favour.

## How male and female roles are presented in An Inspector Calls

Through the Birling family, their relationships and how they react to Eva's death, Priestly presents the roles of men and women in 1912. He foreshadows the change of these roles in society through Eric and Sheila's change of behaviour in the play.

### How men are presented

Men are presented as being solely concerned about money, work and sex.

- They spend all their **"time and energy on their business"**- preoccupied with work and making money and at a family occasion the topic of conversation is mainly work orientated. Mrs Birling says to Birling that he should not **"talk business on an occasion like this"**.
- Men are shown as sexual predators as Eric rapes Eva when he uses obscure language when he **"insisted"** on coming into the house. He takes advantage of her which was seen as acceptable for men to do – no one acknowledges what he did to her as they are focused on his theft rather than the fact that he raped her- Birling says men like to have a **"bit of fun sometimes"** when they're young. **Men only see women as objects and when describing why he liked Eva, Eric called "pretty and a good sport"** and Gerald also talking about Eva being **"young and pretty"**. - Sheila also asks the inspector if Eva was **"pretty"** which suggests that women of the period also had the same views as men.
- Regular use of prostitutes- shown through the character Alderman Meggarty who was known as **"a notorious womaniser"**. Eric and Gerald talk about **"bars"** and **"hotels"** as being **"haunts of women of the town"**.
- **Double standards-** Mr Birling's **"respectable friends"** are seen with **"fat old tarts"** whilst still having wives and are seen as being socially respected- Eric uses derogatory language to describe the women ("fat old tarts") which shows his lack of respect for them. It was normal to live a double life and acceptable to sleep around whereas when Eva went to Mrs Birling's charity for help she was denied because she was pregnant whilst being married which is **"absurd in a girl in her position"**.

Men use their power in the wrong ways which is shown through the way they treat women and how they prioritise work and money over everything.

### How middle class women are presented

Middle class women were presented as only caring about materialistic items and were seen as needing to be protected from disturbing topics.

- They only care about clothes- Mr Birling discusses with Eric that **"clothes mean something"** to women. Women were characterised to only care about materialistic items.
- Young women are treated as if they were children- Mr Birling tells Sheila to **"run along"** when they are discussing about Eva's death which also shows they are trying to protect her from a horrific topic. However Mrs Birling isn't aware that Sheila knows about prostitution which is illustrated with an anecdote (she discusses the story of her friend seeing **"horrible old Meggarty"** and only **"escaping with a torn blouse"** – **"escape"** shows that the girl had to force her way out from Meggarty implying that he was holding her there without her consent). Mrs Birling should be the one to tell her about these topics as she is chair of a charity which deals with these common situations but she doesn't which shows her ignorance.
- Strong emotions are disapproved- her parents try to control Sheila's display of emotion as Mrs Birling compares her to **"a hysterical child"**.
- Mrs Birling doesn't have a full time job as she works for **"Brumley Women's Charity Organisation"**- shows of that period men were the ones responsible for earning money and the women were either expected to stay at home and they only participate in voluntary work.

Middle class were seen as incapable of dealing with the uncomfortable truths of reality and the male are presented as needing to protect them from it.

### How working class women are presented

In contrast to middle class women, working class women were seen as the lowest group in the social hierarchy of the period.

- Only treated like workers and not like humans as they were not respected- she was a **"good worker"** within **"several hundred young women"** – Mr Birling does not know the exact number of his employees which emphasises his lack of respect. Mr Birling's duty is to **"keep labour costs down"** and doesn't care about their welfare.
- When working class women became unemployed it was hard for them to find another job and people assumed they would **"go on the streets"** to become prostitutes.

- Higher classes assumed that working class women have no moral compass (shown as they turn to prostitution which is seen as an immoral job)- reinforces that they are dehumanised by the upper classes- **“as if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money”**- Mrs Birling assumes that even though the money was stolen Eva would take it.
- Eric says that Eva **“didn’t want to marry”** him because he didn’t ‘love her’- this shows that even though if she got married she would receive the support she needed, she refuses the offer as she believes marriage should be about love. This shows signs of change.

Upper classes show themselves as having no empathy towards the working class women as they treat them unfairly.

### Signs of change

Even though the roles of men and women were presented in this way, the younger generation in the play show indications of change.

- Eva leads the strike against Mr Birling’s company- she was a **“ringleader”** and had **“a lot to say- far too much”**- shows she is beginning to stand up for her rights and reflects the suffragette movement and shows women are starting to gain control of their rights.
- Sheila accepts responsibility and challenged Mr Birling- **“you don’t seem to have learnt anything”** tells him that he cannot pretend nothing has happened. Shows she has different views to her parents and isn’t following their beliefs but thinking for herself.
- Eric accepts responsibility when he says that the most important thing is **“what we all did to her”**- shows that as well as Sheila, he also rejects his parents’ beliefs and has opinions of his own.

These signs of change show that people in the middle class are becoming more empathetic towards others around them.

Through each character Priestly represents how roles of men and women were unequal in 1912 and he uses Eva as a catalyst to portray the importance of class and gender in that society. He also conveys that the younger generation are more open to change which is demonstrated through Sheila and Eric.

## **Power/Powerlessness and how presented in “An Inspector Calls”**

### **Introduction**

There are 3 types of power presented in the play: social status, economic power, and gender inequality. Most of the play’s dramatic function is to highlight the imbalance of power that there was in the era of JB Priestley. It is a major theme of the play because of his socialist views.

### **Social Status**

- Mr and Mrs Birling are socially powerful – Mrs B is a prominent member of the “Brumley Womens Charity Organisation”, and Mr B was “Lord Mayor”.
- Mr B uses social power to intimidate the Inspector saying “I am still on the bench”.
- Mrs B’s frequent use of “impertinent” suggests that she looks down on those she describes, and so she has a high social status. Sheila echoes her mother when she also describes Eva as being “very impertinent”, showing that Sheila also has a high status because of her mother.
- The characters all have secrets which they are fearful of being revealed – Gerald asks Sheila to lie about his affair saying “for god’s sake – don’t say anything to the Inspector”. The Inspector has power because he knows their secrets, which leaves the characters more vulnerable on account of their social status.
- The Inspector’s power of knowledge overrules the Birlings’ social power. The Inspector has the power to thwart Mr B’s ambitions for a knighthood, and could in fact leave the family in a “public scandal”.

### **Economic Power**

- Mr B “Well Inspector, I don’t see how it’s any concern of yours how I choose to run my business”. Mr B has power within business and he does have the right to run it his way.
- Gerald agrees with economic power saying “you couldn’t have done anything else”, showing that he supports Mr B’s decision about Eva being fired.
- Mr B used his economic power to get rid of Eva saying “she has to go” for being the “ringleader”.
- Sheila also “used the power she had” as she was a good customer of the Milwards store and so Sheila managed to ensure that Eva was fired from her job once again.
- Mr B is supportive of Sheila and Gerald’s marriage saying “these are the happiest nights of my life” and he looks “forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together” at the announcement of their engagement. This shows that he values Gerald’s possible contribution to the economic success of his business above other qualities that a suitor may offer.

### **Gender Inequality**

- Mr B says “the girl been causing trouble in the works” – girl is made powerless as she is nameless, and so generic ie not worth remembering. Similarly “trouble” and “girl” are childish, belittling women.
- Mr B says “women are potty” about clothes indicating that women have different priorities to men and are misguided/stupid in this case.
- Alderman Meggarty, one of Mr B’s acquaintances, was a philanderer believing he is entitled to sexually abuse women as Sheila said “a girl I know had to see him at the Town Hall one afternoon and she only escaped with a torn blouse—”
- Gerald has a similar view to women as Mr B, saying “...she left Mr B’s work” absolving Mr B of responsibility – implying that Eva chose to leave rather than was fired by Mr B. Also note Eva is nameless “she”.
- Both Gerald and Eric speak with contempt of the women who are at The Palace Bar. Gerald says “I hate those hard eyed doe faced women”. I hate is strong and shows a lack of empathy towards the women generally. Hard eyed suggests that they have suffered tough experiences. Doe faced suggests that they have bad health. This statement also shows that they value only physical features. When Eric describes Eva he says “she wasn’t the usual sort”, suggesting that she was surprisingly attractive.
- Similarly Eric used power with Eva when he “threatened to make a row” if she did not let him into her lodgings. This shows him taking advantage of her vulnerability both physically and socially, as if there were a skirmish, the authorities would probably take his side.
- Eric ultimately uses (abuses) his power to rape her when he talked about “that’s when it happened”.
- Sheila doesn’t feel inferior to Gerald when she tells him not to “be stupid”. She is able to overcome gender inequality on account of her higher social status than Eva.
- Prior to the extract, Sheila asks the Inspector whether Eva is “pretty”, suggesting that appearance matter and that good appearances convey power.

### **Conclusion**

**To conclude, the Inspector’s final words to the family echo JB Priestley’s socialist viewpoints and perhaps act as a warning. JB Priestley wrote the play shortly after the Russian Revolution, where the oppressed started an uprising and many people died. JB Priestley reminds the family and the audience that there are “millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths” expressing that there is power in numbers and making others powerless will only lead to “fire and blood and anguish”.**

