An Inspector Calls

Teacher Notes
Steve Eddy

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   • Test your knowledge (3 tests)

16  Characters

21  Themes

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   • Activity sheet 2: Birling’s character
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40  Exam practice
Starter activity
Lead a brief discussion on what students know about Britain in 1912. How was society different from now?

Consider:
• the class system
• the conditions and pay for workers
• opportunities for women

What major event was only two years away?
Act One

Starter activity
In groups of four, students should take on the roles of a husband and wife, their grown-up daughter and their daughter’s fiancé. They should devise a short scene in which the fiancé is invited round for a meal. Their conversation should reflect the parents’ desire for the occasion to go well, the young man’s desire to please the parents, and the young woman’s hopes that she can trust her fiancé.

Answers to activities on Act One

Activity 1

CHARACTER ANALYSIS
(a) Birling should sound relaxed. After all, he is in his own house, he has just enjoyed a good dinner and all is going well. He should also sound as if he wants to include Gerald as ‘one of the family’. At the same time, he is trying in impress Gerald with the port.

Gerald is from a slightly ‘better’ family than Birling and should sound confident and well-groomed. At the same time, he wants to get on with his future father-in-law. He is a little informal, yet polite.

Sheila should sound ‘very pleased with life and rather excited’ (p. 2). Her opening speech is to her fiancé. She speaks ‘gaily, possessively’, teasing him a little and expressing mock distaste for ‘purple-faced old men’ (p. 2).

Mrs Birling should sound higher-class than her husband. She should sound good-humoured in accepting a little port. There could be a distinct contrast between this line and what she says to the servant, Edna. Here she could sound colder and casually commanding.

Eric may sound slightly drunk (‘squiffy’). His sudden laugh may sound odd, as if he is releasing tension. Perhaps he is responding to Gerald’s promise to be careful, which may put him in mind of his own drunken indiscretions with women.

(b) Birling seems self-confident yet quite keen to show that he is equal to Gerald’s family.

Gerald is keen to get on with his future wife’s family. His use of the word ‘governor’ suggests a jocular respect for his father (p. 2).
Sheila is, in part at least, a light-hearted young woman who likes to joke. At the same time, her teasing of Gerald has a possessive edge, hinting that she feels she has a right to her views on how he should behave.

Mrs Birling shows that she is well-mannered. With Edna, she shows that she is decisive, organised and used to giving orders.

Eric shows by his sudden laughter and inability to explain it that he is unpredictable, perhaps lacking in self-control and possibly highly strung or even unstable.

Activity 2
LOOKING AT LANGUAGE
(a) Subtext: Do not show us up in front of Gerald. It is beneath our class to comment on our own dinner.
(b) Subtext: I have done enough courting. Now I want to get you down the aisle before you find out anything to put you off me!
(c) Subtext: I feel out of place here. My family are absurd. Gerald says he will be careful – well, I know from experience that that is easier said than done.
(d) Subtext: I have had to put up with my irritating little brother for too long.

Activity 3
DRAMATIC IMPACT
Although the mood is upbeat, it would be a dull play if the characters all just lived happily ever after.
(a) Lines that make the mood seem relaxed and happy:
   SHEILA (gaily, possessively) I should jolly well think not… (p. 2)
   BIRLING Well, well – this is very nice. Very nice. (p. 2)
(b) Lines that hint that things could go wrong:
   • Sheila refers to ‘last summer, when you never came near me’ (p. 3). This makes us wonder why. Gerald insists, ‘And I’ve told you – I was awfully busy at the works all that time,’ but this could be an excuse. The ‘And I’ve told you’ shows that the subject has come up before and Sheila will not let it go. Even if he is telling the truth, his overworking could cause problems in the relationship.
   • There is also the hint that Eric is a drinker (p. 9).
   • Birling’s attempt to deny that a war is likely makes us aware that things could go wrong, since from the perspective of 1945 (when the play was first performed) and later, we know that there was a war. His reference to the ‘unsinkable’ Titanic has a similar effect (p. 7).

Activity 4
CHARACTER ANALYSIS
Possible lines
(1) BIRLING …I’ve always been regarded as a sound useful party man. (p. 8)
   He could be thinking, ‘I’m respected and successful, and Gerald’s family had better realise that I’m going from strength to strength.’
(2) **GERALD**  *(laughs)* You seem to be a nice well-behaved family— *(p. 8)*

He could be thinking, ‘I’m well in with the family here. He’s letting me into his confidence. I can risk a joke.’

**Activity 5**

**DRAMATIC IMPACT**

(a) Eric helps himself to port, suggesting his familiarity with drink *(p. 9)*. When the three men are discussing women’s liking for clothes, Eric knows enough to say, ‘Women are potty about ’em.’ He is about to reveal the source of his knowledge, but manages not to incriminate himself: ‘Yes, I remember – *(but he checks himself.)*’ *(p. 9)*. When Gerald joins Birling in teasing Eric, he reacts guiltily: ‘Here, what do you mean?’ *(p. 10)*. His manner is so suspicious that his father stares at him and asks, sharply, ‘What’s the matter with you?’ *(p. 11)*.

(b) Eric questions his father’s wisdom: ‘What about war?… Yes, I know – but still—’ *(p. 6)*. Later he says, ‘Yes, you’ve piled it on a bit tonight, Father’ *(p. 10)*. He is unimpressed by his father’s advice and thinks there has been too much of it.

**Activity 6**

**DRAMATIC IMPACT**

It may be easiest to pick out the points during the course of actually reading this section of the play aloud with the class, or at least immediately afterwards. You could prime students to mark possible points as you read through.

- The Inspector irritates Birling by not stating his business immediately. This keeps Birling guessing and leaves the Inspector in a position of power *(p. 11)*.
- He annoys Gerald by not allowing him (or Eric) to see the photograph he shows Birling. This seems unnecessary and rude to Gerald *(p. 12)*.
- He annoys Birling again by asking why he refused Eva Smith a pay rise *(p. 14)*.
- He annoys Birling by telling Sheila to stay after Birling has told her to ‘Run along’ *(p. 17)*.

**Activity 7**

**CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

Sheila:

- does not like to hear about suffering. Hearing about the suicide, she says, ‘Oh I wish you hadn’t told me’ *(p. 17)*;
- has a bad temper. She admits to having been in a ‘furious temper’ with Eva Smith and demanded that she be fired *(p. 23)*. Eric says she has a ‘nasty temper sometimes’ *(p. 5)*;
- can be jealous. She admits that she was more angry with Eva Smith because she was pretty *(p. 24)*;
- is intelligent. She suspects Gerald of lying to her;
- is prepared to admit her mistakes. She admits to being at fault over Eva Smith and says, ‘I’ll never, never do it again to anybody’ *(p. 24)*.

**Extension activity 1**

**Opening stage directions**

Draw the scene at the start of the play, including the ‘good solid furniture’, the evening dress, the port, cigars, etc. Alternatively, create a collage to suggest the scene using magazine pictures.
Extension activity 2

Birling’s ‘state of the nation’ speech
Birling is optimistic about the future.
(1) Sum up his speech. Include his views on:
• employers and workers, and ‘the interests of Capital’;
• the Germans and people in the Balkans;
• industrial progress;
• Russia.

(2) The play is set in 1912. What things in Birling’s speech had turned out to be (a) right and (b) wrong by the time the play was published in 1945? For example, what do you know about the *Titanic*?

Extension activity 2

Answers
(1) Summary of Birling’s speech:
• Employers are coming together to protect the interests of the business class, and of capitalism, and the workers will not be able to cause any real trouble. The future looks rosy.
• The Germans may make noises about war, but they do not want it really. No one with any sense does – just a few people in the Balkans who do not count. There will be peace and prosperity.
• Britain and Europe are making fantastic industrial progress.
• Russia will always be behind everyone else.

(2) Things in Birling’s speech that turned out to be:
(a) Right: You could say he is right to say that there is nothing to gain by war, and perhaps that Russia ‘will always be behindhand’ in terms of industrial progress. Russia was in many ways economically behind Europe for years, though of course it became a military superpower in the 1960s.
(b) Wrong: World War One broke out in 1914 and lasted for four years. The subsequent period of economic and political instability contributed to the outbreak of World War Two. In Russia there was the Communist Revolution. Conflict between employers and workers in Britain continued, even up to the Miners’ Strike of 1984–85. The Depression of the 1930s affected economies worldwide. The *Titanic* sank on its maiden voyage! In short, Birling got most things wrong.

Extension activity 3

A family celebration
Explore characters’ views of each other, as far as they can be ascertained at the point just before the Inspector’s arrival. In groups, each student should take on the role of one character and prepare a speech summing up his or her attitude towards one other character; for example, Sheila’s attitude towards Eric.

This could be adapted to a Speaking and Listening task, with each student delivering his or her speech without reading from notes. They may find it more effective to know roughly what they want to say rather than to learn a speech word-for-word. Another option is for two students...
to tell each other, in role, what they think of each other. This could of course be extended if necessary, with one student commenting on more than one other character.

Extension activity 4

Father and future son-in-law
Read from the opening up to Eric’s entry on page 9. Look especially at Birling’s speech on page 4: ‘No, we won’t…’. Write a statement for Birling on ‘Why I want Gerald as a son-in-law’ and for Gerald on ‘The benefits of marrying into the Birling family’.

Act Two

Answers to activities on Act Two

Activity 1
CHARACTER ANALYSIS
This could be adapted for use as a Speaking and Listening assignment, with students working in groups of five, with each having an opportunity to act as interviewer and at least one character.

Activity 2
LOOKING AT LANGUAGE
You will need to have some discussion with the class on the question of irony. The kind of irony used by Sheila is essentially ridiculing someone by saying something that implies the opposite of what is actually said. It may be difficult to get students to understand the difference between irony and sarcasm. For example, when Sheila says, ‘I wouldn’t miss it for worlds’ she speaks as if she is looking forward innocently to enjoying a really good story, when in fact she knows she is about to hear something painful and threatening (p. 34). If she were merely being sarcastic, she might say, ‘I’m sure you’ll have a perfectly good explanation.’

(a) Sheila’s ironic comments:
- ‘Well, we didn’t think you meant Buckingham Palace.’ (p. 34)
  (She is trying to ridicule Gerald’s explanation and is also hinting that the Palace bar is the very opposite of Buckingham Palace: it is a place where common people go, including prostitutes.)
- ‘I’m supposed to be engaged to the hero of it.’ (p. 34)
  (She is pretending to think of Gerald’s story as an entertaining fiction, with him as the hero. In reality, she is bitter that the story is true and that Gerald’s behaviour has been ignominious rather than heroic.)
- ‘You were the wonderful Fairy Prince.’ (p. 38)
  (She is suggesting that Gerald must have seen himself in a good light, whereas she does not. Again, she pretends that it is a fiction.)

(b) Sheila speaks to Gerald ironically because she is bitter about his infidelity and lies.
Activity 4

DRAMATIC IMPACT

Possible turning points

1. INSPECTOR …Mrs Birling spoke to and saw her only two weeks ago. (p. 43)

   This assertion, followed by Mrs Birling’s admission, establishes Mrs Birling’s connection to Eva Smith.

2. INSPECTOR …this girl was going to have a child. (p. 45)

   The Inspector’s announcement reveals to the family, and the audience, perhaps the biggest factor leading to Eva Smith’s suicide.

3. MRS B. …If the girl’s death is due to anybody, then it’s due to him. (p. 48)

   Mrs Birling places blame firmly on the shoulders of the ‘drunken young idler’ who has got Eva pregnant.

4. SHEILA (with sudden alarm) Mother – stop – stop! (p. 48)

   Sheila realises that the father is Eric.

5. MRS B. (understanding now) But surely… I mean… it’s ridiculous… (p. 49)

   Mrs Birling realises that she has been condemning her own son.

Act Three

Answers to activities on Act Three

Activity 1

DRAMATIC IMPACT

This activity is a good opportunity to review students’ use of the ‘dash’ in their own writing. Make sure they understand that it can also be used parenthetically – like this – as well as in the dramatic ways outlined in the text.

Look back at all the uses of ‘dramatic dashes’ in this part of the play.

(a) Example 1:

   BIRLING Neither do I. If you’d had any sense of loyalty—
   INSPECTOR (cutting in, smoothly) Just a minute, Mr Birling… (p. 50)

   The Inspector assumes a position of authority and interrupts Birling. This implies that he thinks his own line of inquiry is more important than anything Birling is likely to say. He is not respectful towards Birling.
Example 2:

ERIC  (miserably) I got it – from the office—
BIRLING  My office? (p. 53)

Eric is reluctant to admit his theft and therefore hesitates before finding the courage to do so. His father interrupts, indicating his anger and sense of authority in relation to Eric. He does not listen respectfully or patiently.

(b) The Inspector and Birling most often interrupt. The Inspector does so because he assumes command and is determined to pursue his inquiry; Birling does so because he feels that, as head of the family, he should be in charge. He is also impatient. Eric and Sheila are often interrupted, indicating their lower status. Birling interrupts Eric four times, showing his quite aggressive and dismissive attitude towards his son. On two of these occasions, the Inspector immediately interrupts Birling, showing his own sense of command but also his disapproval of Birling’s treatment of Eric.

(c) Sheila, Mrs Birling and Eric all have dashes in their speeches that indicate their emotional confusion and distress, but Eric has the most, when he accuses his mother of murder (p. 55). The Inspector has fewest, because he is calm and self-controlled.

Activity 2
LOOKING AT LANGUAGE
This focuses on rhetorical language and on some of the techniques that could well come up in non-fiction passages in the English exam. This speech and its techniques could usefully be compared with political speeches, such as Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech (www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUPISA030c) and Barrack Obama’s victory speech (www.youtube.com/watch?v=otA7fjimFX4).

Activity 3
DRAMATIC IMPACT
Students could discuss in groups and then map out their own plan for the rest of the play. If they have already read to the end, they will have to put themselves in the position of someone who has not.

Activity 4
CHARACTER ANALYSIS
This involves students in looking for evidence and in making inferences from the Inspector’s lines and manner. Point out that the hints they find of the Inspector not being a real inspector act on a theatre audience as foreshadowing, subtly preparing them for the eventual outcome.

(a) Evidence that Goole is not a real Inspector:
   He has seemed unusually involved with Eva Smith, pointing out that she ‘died in agony’ and asserting that she ‘enjoyed being among pretty clothes’ in Milwards (p. 20). He has also made strong moral judgements, for example (to Eric): ‘Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening’ (p. 56). His final speech goes way beyond what one might expect of a real police officer. In addition, Mr and Mrs Birling are suspicious about his failure to treat them with the polite respect they usually receive from police officers.

(b) She thinks they should leave Mr Birling to decide what to do. She believes that men should be in charge.
Activity 5

DRAMATIC IMPACT

If you have watched, or plan to watch, the DVD of the film with your class, you could tie in this activity with a comparison between the film version and the play itself. See also ‘Activity sheet 3: Gerald and Sheila’, which explores the differences – especially the fact that the film shows Eva Smith, thus ruling out the possibility of there being more than one young woman involved.

Evidence for there being one girl

The girl Gerald meets mentions that she comes from ‘somewhere outside Brumley’: Birling says she was ‘country-bred’. She also tells him that she had had to leave ‘a job in one of the works here and had had to leave after a strike. She said something about the shop too…’ (p.36). This fits with the stories told by Birling and Sheila.

She met both Gerald and Eric in the Palace bar.

When she went for help, she called herself ‘Mrs Birling’.

The timing fits with it being the same girl.

Evidence against there being one girl

She was Eva Smith at Birling’s factory. Sheila did not know the name of the girl at Milwards. Gerald knew her as Daisy Renton. She did not use either of these names when she sought charitable help. Eric never mentions any name.

The Inspector shows a photograph to Birling, Sheila and Mrs Birling, but not necessarily the same photograph to each. Gerald and Eric are not shown a photograph.

Activity 6

DRAMATIC IMPACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turning points</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Lines</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The discovery that there is no Goole on the local force.</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Birling excited; Sheila and Eric still guilty, and increasingly outraged at parents’ attitude.</td>
<td><strong>GERALD:</strong> That man wasn’t a police officer. (p.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt over the identity of the girl.</td>
<td>Birling eager; Mrs Birling regrets having said so much. Sheila and Eric unimpressed.</td>
<td><strong>GERALD:</strong> But how do we know it’s the same girl? (p.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt about the photograph.</td>
<td>Birling triumphant. Eric angry.</td>
<td><strong>BIRLING:</strong> Gerald’s dead right. He could have used a different photograph each time… (p.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The discovery that there has been no suicide.</td>
<td>Gerald relieved, Mr and Mrs Birling jovial. Sheila and Eric alarmed at their failure to learn.</td>
<td><strong>GERALD:</strong> Nobody’s been brought in after drinking disinfectant. (p.70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACT ONE

Test your knowledge

1. Who is ‘rather provincial in his speech’? What does this mean and how is it significant?

2. Who protests that he is ‘not a purple-faced old man’ and to whom does he say this? What mood is he in at the time?

3. What views does Mrs Birling express on ‘men with important work to do’?

4. Who calls whom a ‘chump’? What does this choice of word suggest about their relationship?

5. In Birling’s opinion, how do some people mistakenly interpret ‘a few German officers’ having too much to drink?

6. What is ironic about Birling’s mention of the Titanic?

7. How does Birling attempt to reassure Gerald?

8. How do Birling and Gerald combine to tease Eric?

9. How does the Inspector immediately make Birling impatient?

10. How has the young woman killed herself?

11. How does the Inspector justify not showing the photograph to everyone at the same time?

12. When did Eva Smith leave Birling’s factory?

13. What was Birling’s involvement with Eva Smith?

14. What was Eva’s ‘wonderful stroke of luck’?

15. Why did Sheila want Eva to be fired?

16. How does Gerald react to the name Daisy Renton, and why?
ACT ONE

Answers

1. Birling: he has a regional accent, indicating his relatively humble origins.

2. Birling says this to Sheila, showing that he is in a good mood. This is jovial banter. He is saying he is not an elderly, accustomed drinker. (Alcohol brings the veins of the face to the surface.)

3. She thinks their wives should put up with not seeing much of them. Their careers come first.

4. Sheila calls Eric a ‘chump’. This is friendly brother–sister teasing, though she probably does think him a little foolish. She is the ‘big sister’.

5. He thinks that some people make the mistake of thinking that the Germans want war.

6. It sank a year later, on its maiden voyage.

7. He tells him that he will probably be getting a knighthood.

8. They suggest that he has been ‘up to something’ – behaving badly in secret. (Ironically this is true!)

9. He does not say why he has come.

10. By swallowing disinfectant.

11. He says he likes to focus on ‘One person and one line of inquiry at a time. Otherwise, there’s a muddle’ (p. 12).


13. He had her fired from his factory for being a ringleader of a strike for higher wages.

14. She was taken on at Milwards.

15. Sheila had tried on a dress that did not suit her. She had seen Eva smiling and thought she had been ‘impertinently’ laughing at her.

16. Gerald is startled, says ‘What?’, and then asks for a drink (p. 25).
ACT TWO
Test your knowledge

1. What does Sheila say when the Inspector asks if she is getting hysterical?

2. What does Gerald think is Sheila's motive for wanting to stay while he is questioned?

3. Fill in the blank:
   INSPECTOR  ...If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our __________.

4. What does Mrs Birling think is Sheila's motive for staying?

5. What shocking information does Mrs Birling hear about Eric?

6. How does Gerald explain his impulse to help Daisy?

7. Daisy was about to be evicted. How did Gerald help?

8. What did Daisy do after the end of the affair?

9. Why does Sheila 'rather respect' Gerald now?

10. What is Mrs Birling's first response to the photograph?

11. What is the name of Mrs Birling's charity organisation?

12. Why does Mrs Birling accuse Eva Smith of 'gross impertinence'?

13. What advice did Mrs Birling give Eva?

14. What made Mrs Birling 'finally lose all patience' with Eva?

15. Who does Mrs Birling first blame most for the girl's suicide?

16. How does Mrs Birling say the father should be dealt with?

17. How has Mrs Birling fallen into a trap at the end of Act Two?
ACT TWO

Answers

1. She says, ‘Probably’ (p. 26).

2. He thinks that because she has ‘been through it’ (suffered) she now wants to see him ‘put through it’ (p. 28).

3. INSPECTOR …If there’s nothing else, we’ll have to share our guilt. (p. 29)

4. ‘Nothing but morbid curiosity.’ (p. 30)

5. Eric is a heavy drinker.

6. She had been cornered by Joe Meggarty and gave Gerald ‘a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help’ (p. 35).

7. He let her live in a friend’s flat.

8. She went to the seaside for two months to reflect on her time with Gerald.

9. He has finally been honest about the affair.

10. Mrs Birling pretends not to recognise the photograph.

11. The Brumley Women’s Charity Organization.

12. She gave her name as ‘Mrs Birling’.

13. ‘Go and look for the father of the child. It’s his responsibility.’ (p. 45)

14. She said that the father was ‘silly and wild’ and that it would be wrong for them to marry, and that she did not want to take money from him that might be stolen (p. 46).

15. She blames ‘the girl herself’ (p. 47).

16. She says he should be ‘dealt with very severely’ (p. 48).

17. She has condemned the father, but then finds out that this is Eric.
ACT THREE
Test your knowledge

1. To what is Eric referring when he says, ‘You know, don’t you?’

2. Why does Eric call Sheila a ‘little sneak’?

3. What did Eric’s meeting with the girl have in common with Gerald’s?

4. Why did Eva let Eric into her lodgings?

5. How does Eric say Eva treated him?

6. How much money did Eric give Eva?

7. What does Eric accuse his mother of, in addition to killing Eva and the child?

8. What does the Inspector warn will happen if people do not learn the lesson of social responsibility?

9. Who first voices the possibility that the Inspector was not ‘really a police inspector’?

10. What is Gerald’s news on his return?

11. Why does Sheila say, ‘I suppose we’re all nice people now’?

12. What does Mrs Birling claim she would have done if she had been present when the Inspector first arrived?

13. Who says, ‘The girl’s still dead, isn’t she?’

14. What is the second important question Gerald raises, after establishing that Inspector Goole is not a real inspector?

15. How might the Inspector have tricked them into believing they had all been involved with the same girl?

16. What is the next doubt shed over the Inspector’s accusations?

17. What is the key difference between the attitudes of the characters to the events of the evening?
ACT THREE

Answers

1. The fact that he is the father of Eva’s unborn child.

2. She has revealed that he is a heavy drinker.

3. They both met her in the Palace bar.

4. He ‘threatened to make a row’ (p. 52).

5. Eric says Eva treated him like a child.

6. He gave her £50.

7. He accuses her of not understanding anything, and never even trying to.

8. They ‘will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish’ (p. 56). He probably means revolution.


10. He says, ‘That man wasn’t a police officer’ (p. 62). He knows this from speaking to a police sergeant he knows.

11. She is being ironic. She means that they are still guilty, whether or not Goole was a hoaxter.

12. She says she would have ‘asked him a few questions’ before allowing him to ask any (p. 63).


14. He asks whether they have all been involved with ‘the same girl’.

15. The Inspector never let them see the photograph at the same time. Gerald and Eric did not see a photograph at all.

16. There might not have been a suicide.

17. Eric and Sheila still feel a sense of guilt, and feel that the others have behaved badly too. Mr and Mrs Birling, and Gerald, feel that they can now carry on almost as before. For them, the most important thing is that there will be no scandal.
Starter activity
Assuming students have read the play, they could write a brief first-person statement for each character explaining how they feel (a) at the start of the play and (b) at the end. To add further challenge, this could be broken down into three parts: (a) the start; (b) on finding out there has been no suicide; (c) on hearing that a ‘real’ inspector is about to arrive.

Answers to activities

Activity 1
CHARACTER ANALYSIS
List quotes that show the following character traits in Birling:

(a) His pride in his humble background:
• They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of cash. (p. 9)

(b) His sense of self-importance:
• I was Lord Mayor here two years ago when Royalty visited us. (p. 8)

• …there’s a fair chance that I might find my way into the next Honours list. (p. 8)

• I’ve always been regarded as a sound useful party man. (p. 8)

• I was an alderman for years – and Lord Mayor two years ago— (p. 11)

• We play golf together sometimes up at the West Brumley. (p. 16)

(c) His pride in being a ‘hardheaded’ businessman:
• We can’t let these Bernard Shaws and H. G. Wellses do all the talking. And we don’t guess – we’ve had experience – and we know. (p. 7)

• If you don’t come down sharply on some of these people, they’d soon be asking for the earth. (p. 15)

(d) His inability to understand or relate to his children:
• [to Eric] It’s about time you learnt to face a few responsibilities. That’s something this public-school-and-Varsity life you’ve had doesn’t seem to teach you. (p. 16)

• [referring to Sheila] What’s the matter with that child? (p. 33)
• [to Sheila] If you’ve nothing more sensible than that to say, Sheila, you’d better keep quiet. (p.63)

• [to Eric] Some fathers I know would have kicked you out of the house anyhow by this time. (p.65)

(e) His inability to learn from the Inspector’s visit:

• This makes a difference, y’know. In fact, it makes all the difference. (p.63)

• Well here’s to us. Come on, Sheila, don’t look like that. All over now. (p.70)

Activity 2

LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

(a) This shows that she accepts that men’s work is more important than women’s, and more important than their relationships. She accepts a status quo in which women play a supporting role.

(b) She thinks that one can generalise about young working-class women, and that they are generally untrustworthy and money-grabbing.

(c) She thinks that the Inspector, as a mere public servant, should show respect for her family and even that their class places them above the law, as if they can do no wrong.

(d) She thinks that the social status and wealth of her family entitles them to special treatment, and that the Inspector should show them respect, or else risk losing his job.

(e) She finds it almost impossible to believe that someone in her family, especially her son, could do anything so disgraceful as to get a girl pregnant. For her, it probably makes it worse that the girl was working class. This shows that Eric has been mixing in ‘low’ circles, in morally dubious establishments like the Palace.

Activity 3

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• He feels he is rescuing Eva.</td>
<td>• He allows her to become dependent on him when the relationship cannot last.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He listens sympathetically and makes sure she gets some food.</td>
<td>• He has an affair with Eva when he is meant to be in a relationship with Sheila.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He gives her a roof over her head for a while.</td>
<td>• He lies to Sheila about being busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When he ends the relationship, she says he made her happy.</td>
<td>• He eventually ends the relationship when it suits him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He gives her money.</td>
<td>• He has been asked to look after his friend’s flat, not use it for an affair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He does not try to keep her as a mistress, knowing that he is going to marry Sheila.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 4

LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

(a) She is playful, teasing Eric in the manner of an older sister, but also showing him up in front of the family. She likes to use slang.

(b) She is fond of her father and respects him.
(c) She has a conscience, quickly regretting getting the girl fired from Milwards, and regretting it even more when she learns of the suicide.
(d) She accepts the inevitability of emotional change.
(e) She is appalled at the moral indifference and inability to learn from past deeds shown by her parents and Gerald.

**Activity 5**  
**CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

(a) Quotes suggesting that Eric feels overlooked:

(1) **ERIC**

Yes, I know – but still— (p. 6)

Eric tries rather ineffectually to question his father’s views, but is cut off and ignored.

(2) **BIRLING** *(sharply, staring at him)* What’s the matter with you?

**ERIC** *(defiantly)* Nothing. (p. 11)

His father does not know why Eric is behaving suspiciously, and Eric cannot confide in him.

(3) **ERIC**

Because you’re not the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble – that’s why. (p. 54)

His father is too remote and unsympathetic to confide in.

(4) **ERIC** *(to Mrs B) (almost threatening her)* You don’t understand anything. You never did. You never even tried— (p. 55)

He feels his mother has never understood him or even tried to do so.

(b) Eric seems to have a poor relationship with his parents, unable to confide in his father, misunderstood by his mother. The fact that they do not suspect his heavy drinking, or his worries over Eva, suggests that they do not really notice him.

(c) In Eric’s defence, he at least felt very worried about Eva being pregnant and found a way to give her money to live on for a while, which he claims he meant to pay back. He is shocked to hear of her death and appalled that his mother failed to help her.

**Activity 6**  
**CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

Inspector Goole’s main message is that we should all take responsibility for each other in society and not just look after ourselves. He shows that all the family, including Gerald, are guilty in different ways of behaving badly towards either Eva Smith or someone like her.

(1) **INSPECTOR** *(stemly to them both)* You see, we have to share something. If there’s nothing else we’ll have to share our guilt. (p. 29)

We must share social responsibility and admit our failings.

(2) **INSPECTOR**

...We don’t live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. (p. 56)

He feels that we are all connected and must acknowledge this.
Extension activity 1

Arthur Birling
Write a speech for Arthur Birling to deliver to a group of local employers about:
• how they should pull together;
• how this will benefit the nation;
• how they should deal with workers’ pay demands.
He could refer to how he dealt with the Eva Smith strike. Make sure the speech reflects his views and language.

Extension activity 1

Suggested answer (speech)

We stand at an exciting and significant point in history. Britain is at the forefront of industrial progress. Factories are producing better goods at lower costs, and British factories are exporting worldwide. Our factories are getting bigger and more efficient, taking advantage of the economies of scale. What’s more, travel in all forms is leaping ahead. The motor car is making rapid advances (quite literally), unsinkable ships like the Titanic are crossing the seas, and a wonderful new aeroplane has just succeeded in crossing America. (Mind you, you wouldn’t get me up in one of those things!) But seriously, industry has never been doing better.

Of course there have been hiccups in relations between employers and workers, but we’re beginning to put an end to these. When all is said and done, cream rises to the top of the cup, gentlemen. It’s a case of survival of the fittest. Sooner or later, the workers will have to accept that a successful country depends on people like us running the show. We’re hard-headed businessmen, realists, and we know what works. You can’t run a country on namby-pamby ‘share and share alike’ principles. We give the orders, and they can take it or leave it.

And that’s where we – the employers – can help ourselves, by not giving in to strikes and ridiculous pay demands, but by paying the going rate. Only recently there was a strike in one of my factories. A pathetic group of girls led by a few troublemakers decided to ask for an inflated wage. I held out, told them what was what – and sacked the ringleaders when they all came crawling back. You’ve got to be tough. They’ll respect us for it in the end – and so will the nation!

Extension activity 2

Sybil Birling
Write the script of Sybil Birling’s interview with Eva Smith.

Extension activity 3

Gerald Croft
Write a scene showing Gerald’s relationship developing with Daisy. This could be anywhere from when they first meet to the start of their affair. Use your imagination, but make sure Daisy and Gerald remain ‘in character’ and that you remain true to the details of the play.
Extension activity 4

Sheila Birling
(1) Write an account of the incident in Milwards from the viewpoint of Miss Francis, the sales assistant serving Sheila. Include her attitude towards Eva Smith and Sheila.
(2) Write an account of the incident in Milwards as it might have appeared in Eva’s journal. Get the facts right (though you can add details), and give a sense of Eva’s feelings.

Extension activity 5

Eric Birling
It could be argued that Eric is the most guilty of all the characters. Had he not got Eva pregnant, she could in theory have got another job and saved herself. What can you say in his defence?

Extension activity 6

Inspector Goole
Inspector Goole’s name sounds like ‘Ghoul’, meaning a ghost. Perhaps we are meant to see him as one. Other theories are that he is a time traveller, an all-knowing alien, the voice of Priestley himself, the family’s conscience, or even a vengeful relative of the dead girl. Explain how you see him, and why.
Starter activity
Remind students that a theme is a ‘big idea’ or focus point for ideas explored by a writer in a text. Ask them to suggest possible themes for An Inspector Calls. Write these on the board as a list, spidergram or mind map.

Activity 1
FOCUS ON THEMES
Answers will vary.

Give extra support by referring students to the two pages before the Inspector exits, where he sums up the guilt of each character (pp. 55–56). This activity could be developed into a Speaking and Listening assessment, although students should in that case be able to give a speech without reading it from the page.

Activity 2
FOCUS ON THEMES
(a) ‘They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of cash.’ (p. 9)
(b) ‘…there’s a fair chance that I might find my way into the next Honours List.’ (p. 8)
(c) ‘…I went to the manager and told him that this girl had been very impertinent…’ (p. 24)
(d) ‘It isn’t [a free country] if you can’t go and work somewhere else.’ (p. 15)
(e) ‘If there weren’t, the factories and warehouses wouldn’t know where to look for cheap labour. Ask your father.’ (p. 19)

Activity 3
FOCUS ON THEMES
This could lead to a discussion about how far modern attitudes to gender have moved on from 1912 or even 1945.

Activity 4
FOCUS ON THEMES
(a) The older Birlings think that the important thing is to avoid a scandal that will damage the family reputation and Birling’s business, and endanger his knighthood. The younger Birlings think they are all guilty in relation to Eva Smith, or someone liker her, whoever the Inspector is.
(b) Gerald is slightly older than Sheila and more established in his family’s business than Eric is in his father’s. Gerald identifies closely with his father and with the upper class. He also wants to humour Birling, partly because he wants to marry Sheila and perhaps partly because of a respect for age. Gerald will probably inherit the Croft family business. (Eric would be in line to inherit Birling’s business, but his father’s lack of respect for him, coupled with his wild behaviour, mean that this cannot be guaranteed.)
Extension activity
Write an essay answering the following question: ‘How does Priestley explore themes through characters in An Inspector Calls?’
Structure

Starter activity
Check that students understand what ‘structure’ is. Ask them to try to map out from memory the main events and accounts (of Eva/Daisy) in each Act of the play. Alternatively, ask them to try to work out a rough timescale for Eva’s downfall, from asking for a pay rise to her suicide.

Activity 1
DRAMATIC IMPACT
With Birling, there is relatively little drawing out of time. He thinks he may have heard the name Eva Smith and then he recognises the person in the photograph. There is a page of dialogue, including Gerald offering to leave, before Birling tells the story, spread over three speeches (pp. 14–15).

Gerald is startled by the first mention of Daisy Renton, and asks for a drink. He tries to deny knowing her, then admits to it but tries to avoid saying more. Even once he admits to Sheila that he has had an affair and lied to her, he hopes it can be kept from the Inspector. This is spread over the end of Act One and the first part of Act Two, prolonging the suspense and giving the audience time to anticipate and speculate.

With Mrs Birling, we have her initial denial, followed by her reluctant telling of her story and insistence on having done the right thing. Under the Inspector’s questioning, she forcibly condemns the baby’s father, though it takes her another page to realise, at the end of Act Two, that the father is Eric.

Eric’s confession is drawn out by the issue of his drinking (p. 50), his reluctance to reveal what happened (he takes a lot of prompting from the Inspector) and Birling’s angry interruptions. We also have the twin revelations of the affair and his theft. The climax of his confession comes when he learns that his mother turned the girl away.

Extension activity 1
DRAMATIC IMPACT
Use the timescale table to help you draw a visual representation, such as a flow chart, to show the decline of ‘Eva Smith’.

Extension activity 2
DRAMATIC IMPACT
Create a time chart to show when each character is on stage. Consider what is gained dramatically by the absences and entrances of each character.
HOW TO USE ACTIVITY SHEET 1

Birling’s ‘state of the nation’ speech

The questions on Activity sheet 1 (page 25) could be used in a variety of ways:
• as a focal point for work analysing Birling’s character, or in work on Priestley’s use of dramatic irony;
• before reading the whole play as a basis for discussion of social and historical context: the speech deals with industrial progress, labour unrest, the threat of war, and class differences;
• as an exercise in close examination of a passage.

You could ask students the questions on the questions page, with them answering orally or on paper. You could then show them the answer page, which could lead to further discussion.
ACTIVITY SHEET 1

Birling’s ‘state of the nation’ speech

Read from ‘I’m delighted about this engagement…’ to ‘And we don’t guess – we’ve had experience – and we know.’ (pp.6–7)

1. Why does Birling twice use the word ‘silly’?

2. What is the effect of the repetition in ‘a very good time’ and ‘better time’?

3. How does he describe himself?

4. What is his attitude to the strike?

5. ‘Don’t worry. We’ve passed the worst of it.’ What does his use of these short sentences show?

6. When he says, ‘And we’re in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity’, who does he mean by ‘we’?

7. ‘I believe you’re right, sir.’ What does Gerald’s line show?

8. When Eric interrupts (‘What about war?’), how do Birling’s words show his attitude?

9. What is ironic about ‘half-civilized folks in the Balkans’?

10. What attitude is shown by Eric’s interruption?

11. What is Birling’s attitude towards Eric here?

12. Is it true that development makes war impossible?

13. Why does Priestley introduce the Titanic, and why does Birling repeat its weight?

14. What does this mention of the Titanic make us think about Birling’s views?

15. ‘…facts like that, progress like that’. What does Birling understand by the words ‘facts’ and ‘progress’?

16. How accurate are Birling’s predictions about ‘Capital versus Labour agitations’?

17. Why does Mrs Birling interrupt?

18. Why does Birling use the word ‘youngsters’?

19. Who were Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, and why does Birling mention them?

20. How does Birling see himself in the last line of his speech, and how do his words reinforce this?
ACTIVITY SHEET 1

Suggested answers

1. He uses ‘silly’ to dismiss these opinions as childish.

2. The repetition shows that he is completely confident and wants to persuade his listeners.

3. He sees himself as a hard-headed business man.

4. He does not take the strike seriously.

5. Simple assertions show his confidence.

6. He means his class.

7. Gerald is ‘onside’ and wants to show respect.

8. His casual language shows his dismissal of those who predict war.

9. First, because World War One began in the Balkans and, secondly, because Birling thinks he is civilised.

10. Eric disagrees, but is not confident enough to challenge his father.


12. Technology makes war even more horrific.

13. Dramatic irony: audiences know it sank. He is impressed by the sheer size of the ship and seems to think that this is a sign of progress. As a factory owner, he is used to quantifiable facts.

14. His inaccurate prediction about the Titanic makes us question all his views.

15. He sees his views as facts, and progress as clear-cut.

16. Class conflict and war continue.

17. She may feel embarrassed because of Gerald – and the interruption is, dramatically, a believable way to end the speech.

18. He is being patronising.

19. Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells were left-wing authors and intellectuals who, in Birling’s view, lacked practical business experience.

20. He sees himself as someone who is qualified to speak by virtue of his experience in industry, unlike the intellectuals. For him, it is an undeniable fact that he, and men like him, know best.
**ACTIVITY SHEET 2**

**Birling’s character**

Fill in the right-hand column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>What it shows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of cash. (p. 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We employers at last are coming together to see that our interests – and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the interests of Capital – are properly protected. (p. 6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…these Bernard Shaws and H. G. Wellses (p. 7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself (p. 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was Lord Mayor here two years ago when Royalty visited us. (p. 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you don’t come down sharply on some of these people, they’d soon be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asking for the earth. (p. 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, it’s my duty to keep labour costs down (p. 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why the devil do you want to go upsetting the child like that? (p. 21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the matter with that child? (p. 33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the whole thing’s different now. Come, come, you can see that, can’t you? (p. 70)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# ACTIVITY SHEET 2

## Suggested answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>What it shows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They worked us hard in those days and kept us short of cash. (p. 9)</td>
<td>He is proud to have come from a relatively humble background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We employers at last are coming together to see that our interests – and the interests of Capital – are properly protected. (p. 6)</td>
<td>He supports the social and economic system that has allowed him to become successful. The word ‘properly’ shows that he thinks protecting the interests of industrialists is good for the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...these Bernard Shaws and H. G. Wellses (p. 7)</td>
<td>He dismisses left-wing intellectuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself (p. 9)</td>
<td>Birling believes in the pursuit of self-interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was Lord Mayor here two years ago when Royalty visited us. (p. 8)</td>
<td>He is smug and self-important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you don’t come down sharply on some of these people, they’d soon be asking for the earth. (p. 15)</td>
<td>He thinks employers need to be tough with workers who want more money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, it’s my duty to keep labour costs down (p. 15)</td>
<td>He thinks that the good of the nation depends on businessmen maximising their own profits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why the devil do you want to go upsetting the child like that? (p. 21)</td>
<td>He is protective towards Sheila and critical of Goole. He sees Sheila as a child. The phrase ‘that child’ could refer to a whining three-year-old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the matter with that child? (p. 33)</td>
<td>He does not understand his children or respect their views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the whole thing’s different now. Come, come, you can see that, can’t you? (p. 70)</td>
<td>He has learned nothing from the Inspector’s visit. He is simply relieved to have avoided a scandal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY SHEET 3

Gerald and Sheila

In Act Two Gerald begins to explain how he came to know ‘Daisy Renton’ (p. 34).

1. Why does he say to Sheila, ‘Thanks, you’re going to be a great help, I can see’? (Think about how he is likely to feel at this point.)

2. When Mrs Birling says, ‘It would be much better if Sheila didn’t listen to this story at all,’ Sheila says that she is ‘supposed to be engaged to the hero of it’. Why does she call Gerald a ‘hero’?

3. How does Gerald excuse his initial approach to Daisy? (See bottom of p. 35.)

4. Gerald says (top of p. 37), ‘I didn’t install her there so I could make love to her.’ From what you see of him in the play, do you think this is true?

5. How well or badly do you think Gerald treated Daisy?

6. How do you think Sheila should treat Gerald now that she has heard his story? Give reasons for your answer.

7. In the 1954 film version of the play, Eva/Daisy appears as a character. Draw a two-column table. On one side, list the dramatic advantages of not revealing her as a character; on the other side, list the advantages of revealing her. Do you think Priestley should have included her in the play? Explain your answer.
ACTIVITY SHEET 3

Suggested answers

1. He does not relish the prospect of making a full confession of his affair. He feels it will be bad enough without Sheila making ironic comments to underline his guilt. He responds in kind, with this sarcastic comment.

2. This is another of Sheila’s ironic comments. She has been hurt by his infidelity and now she is reacting with bitter, self-defensive irony. She actually thinks he has behaved in a far from heroic way – even though Daisy may have seen him as her hero at first.

3. He says that Daisy, trapped by Joe Meggarty, gave him ‘a glance which was nothing less than a cry for help’.

4. This is debatable, but it could be argued that Gerald is basically a well-meaning, honourable man. Inspector Goole acknowledges that Gerald at least made her happy for a while. There is no evidence to suggest that he is lying at this point.

5. Answers will vary. Gerald was kind to Daisy, making sure she had enough to eat and a roof over her head. He may even have been in love with her. However, he must have known that he had no intention of marrying her: he did not break off his relationship with Sheila. He should therefore have foreseen that he would have to leave her and that she would be very hurt by this.

6. Answers will vary. They should note that Gerald has been unfaithful and lied to Sheila, and he will now have to regain her trust. She is an independent young woman, who could find another husband, but she does have enough feeling for Gerald to have become engaged to him. It is also significant that she says she respects him more after his frank confession. On the other hand, like the older Birlings, he does not seem to have learnt anything about social responsibility by the end of the play.

7. Not revealing her leaves open the possibility that she is in fact more than one girl, which makes the play dramatically interesting and underlines Priestley’s view, expressed by the Inspector, that there are ‘millions of Eva Smiths’: she represents all underprivileged, exploited working-class women. There is also dramatic interest in having her come to life through the very different viewpoints of the characters.

Revealing her as a character would make the play more straightforward and less mysterious. The problem with not revealing her is that she is the one character with whom audiences might be expected to sympathise deeply. In her absence, our sympathy is likely to be intellectual rather than emotional. It is hard to engage emotionally with a character we never see on stage.
ACTIVITY SHEET 4

How each character is involved with Eva

1. Write down the chronological order in which each character is involved with Eva.

2. In which Act does each character tell his/her story?

3. Which of these does Birling not call Eva?
   (a) good-looking  (b) country-bred  (c) honest    (d) a good worker

4. At the time of the strike Eva was about to:
   (a) get a pay rise     (b) get promoted   (c) get fired     (d) get a holiday

5. The women at Birling’s factory wanted their weekly wage to average:
   (a) 25 shillings  (b) 15 shillings  (c) 35 shillings    (d) 18 shillings

6. Birling fired her for:
   (a) asking for more pay     (b) leading a strike    (c) laziness     (d) bad work

7. What item of clothing did Eva model for Sheila?

8. Why did Sheila get angry with Eva?

9. What effect did Eva’s prettiness have on Sheila?

10. Where did Gerald meet Eva?

11. To whom did the ‘obscene fat carcass’ that wedged Eva into a corner belong?

12. What name did she call herself when she met Gerald?

13. Gerald says the girl gave him ‘a glance that was nothing less than a __________ __________ __________.’ (Fill in the three words.)

14. Fill in the three missing words: ‘I didn’t install her there so that I could make __________ __________ __________.’

15. Mrs Birling thought Eva was ‘impertinent’ because she:
   (a) swore      (b) called herself Mrs Birling    (c) laughed at her    (d) shouted

16. What did Mrs Birling say Eva should do?

17. Where did Eric meet Eva?

18. What does Eric particularly regret about the first time they had sex?

19. Where did he get the money he gave her?

20. Eric says ‘In a way, she treated me – as if I were a __________.’ (Fill in the missing word.)
ACTIVITY SHEET 4

Answers

1. Chronological order: Mr Birling, Sheila, Gerald, Eric, Mrs Birling

2. Act One: Mr Birling, Sheila
   Act Two: Gerald, Mrs Birling
   Act Three: Eric

3. (c) honest

4. (b) get promoted

5. (a) 25 shillings

6. (b) leading a strike

7. A dress

8. While Sheila was trying on a dress that did not suit her, she saw Eva smiling. (Eva had previously held up the dress, and it suited her.)

9. It made her jealous and therefore more angry.

10. The stalls bar of the Palace music hall.

11. Alderman Joe Meggarty

12. Daisy Renton

13. ‘...a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help.’

14. ‘I didn’t install her there so that I could make love to her.’

15. (b) called herself Mrs Birling

16. Find the father of the baby and make him take responsibility.

17. The Palace bar (the same place as Gerald).

18. He could not remember anything about it afterwards.

19. He stole it from the office at his father’s works.

20. ‘In a way, she treated me – as if I were a kid.’
# ACTIVITY SHEET 5

## Themes

Add notes to the table to show how characters relate to themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Birling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goole</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ACTIVITY SHEET 5
Suggested answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birling</td>
<td>Feels that he should look after himself, his family and the interests of capital. He does not feel responsible for his workers or the poor.</td>
<td>Has worked his way up the social ladder and married someone from a higher class. Identifies with fellow capitalists. Needs to show off his status – e.g. that he has been mayor. Wants a knighthood.</td>
<td>Takes a traditional view on the roles of men and women. Treats his daughter like a little girl, telling her to ‘run along’.</td>
<td>Feels his business experience gives him the right to lecture his children. Does not learn from the family’s fright over Eva: only concerned about avoiding scandal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Birling</td>
<td>Feels no responsibility for the death of Eva. Insists that the father of her child is to blame – until she learns that it is Eric.</td>
<td>Looks down on the poor (‘girls of that class’). Is embarrassed by Birling’s slightly lower-class manners.</td>
<td>Tells Sheila that wives must accept coming second place to their husbands’ work. Expects Birling to take command.</td>
<td>Tries to rule Sheila and Eric, but ineffectually. Learns nothing from the play’s events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald</td>
<td>Has no clear sense of responsibility for his workers or the poor, but does treat Eva kindly and admits to having behaved badly towards her and Sheila.</td>
<td>Has the easy self-confidence of the wealthy upper class.</td>
<td>Has to some extent exploited Eva, if unintentionally.</td>
<td>Only a few years older than Sheila, but shares her parents’ attitudes towards social responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>Behaves irresponsibly in Milwards, but quickly accepts her role in Eva’s death. Still feels guilty even after discovering no girl has died.</td>
<td>In Milwards, assumes that she should be shown respect because she is wealthy and upper class.</td>
<td>Does not share her mother’s attitude of deference towards men. Asserts herself.</td>
<td>Learns from the fright over Eva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Behaves irresponsibly with Eva, using her for sex when he is drunk. Steals money from the family business to give to her. Accepts his responsibility when he learns she has died – though he also blames his mother.</td>
<td>Although his use of Eva could be seen as class exploitation, he does sympathise with the factory workers. He shows no desire to inherit the business.</td>
<td>Does exploit Eva, but feels guilty about it.</td>
<td>Feels misunderstood and overlooked by his parents. Objects to their view that they can return to normal if Goole was a hoax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goole</td>
<td>Tries to make the family take responsibility. His parting message is that we must all take responsibility for each other.</td>
<td>Of indeterminate class background. Unimpressed by Birling’s connections.</td>
<td>Thinks men have no right to exploit women.</td>
<td>Comments that the younger generation are more open to moral growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to use the Evidence sheets

1. Give students Evidence Sheets 1 and 2. These contain a number of unattributed quotations. Students should fill in the blank columns. Point out that the second column tests their basic knowledge of the play, while the third column develops their ability to make deductions from the evidence.

2. Tell students to learn as many of the quotations as they can – perhaps for homework.

3. The answer sheets can be used for students to self-mark or for revision.
## EVIDENCE SHEET 1

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## EVIDENCE SHEET 1

### Answers

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<td>Arthur, you’re not supposed to say such things—</td>
<td>Mrs Birling to Birling (p. 2)</td>
<td>She thinks it is lower class to compliment the cook in front of a guest (Gerald).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was awfully busy at the works all that time.</td>
<td>Gerald to Sheila (p. 3)</td>
<td>He does not want to admit to having an affair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re squiffy.</td>
<td>Sheila to Eric (p. 3)</td>
<td>She is acting like a big sister. A modern girl, she likes using slang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We hard-headed practical business men must say something sometime.</td>
<td>Birling to Eric and Gerald (p. 7)</td>
<td>Proud of being a tough businessman and thinks he knows what is right for the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You seem to be a nice well-behaved family—</td>
<td>Gerald to Birling (p. 8)</td>
<td>Is getting on well with Birling but is still keen to ingratiate himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man has to make his own way – has to look after himself…</td>
<td>Birling to Eric and Gerald (p. 9)</td>
<td>Believes in the pursuit of self-interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, she was in great agony.</td>
<td>Inspector to Eric and family (p.11)</td>
<td>Wants the family to know how Eva suffered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s the way I like to go to work. One person and one line of inquiry at a time.</td>
<td>Inspector to family (p. 12)</td>
<td>He insists on following his own methods and will not be influenced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we’d had anything to do with, it would be very awkward…</td>
<td>Birling to Inspector (p. 14)</td>
<td>Feels no sense of responsibility for Eva or anyone other than his own family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It isn’t if you can’t go and work somewhere else.</td>
<td>Eric to Birling (p. 15)</td>
<td>Sympathises with Eva and the working class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t play golf.</td>
<td>Inspector to Birling (p. 16)</td>
<td>He will not be intimidated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people.</td>
<td>Sheila (p.19)</td>
<td>Sympathises with Eva and the working class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A nice little promising life there, I thought…</td>
<td>Inspector to Birling (p. 21)</td>
<td>He wants the family to feel guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve been through it – and now you want to see somebody else put through it.</td>
<td>Gerald to Sheila (p. 28)</td>
<td>He expects her to be vindictive and to want him to suffer like her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# EVIDENCE SHEET 2

## Answers

<table>
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<th>Quote</th>
<th>Who says? To whom?</th>
<th>What does it show about the speaker?</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>You see, we have to share something. If there’s nothing else, we’ll have to share our guilt.</td>
<td>Inspector (p. 29)</td>
<td>He feels we are all linked and must share responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls of that class—</td>
<td>Mrs Birling (p. 30)</td>
<td>She is prejudiced against young, working-class women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The girl… gave me a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help.</td>
<td>Gerald to Inspector (p. 35)</td>
<td>He feels he was responding to Eva’s need, not preying on her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were the wonderful Fairy Prince. You must have adored it…</td>
<td>Sheila to Gerald (p. 38)</td>
<td>She is being ironic about Gerald’s motives because she is bitter about his betrayal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame.</td>
<td>Mrs Birling to Sheila (p. 43)</td>
<td>Mrs Birling has no regrets or sympathy for Eva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t even remember – that’s the hellish thing.</td>
<td>Eric to Inspector (p. 52)</td>
<td>Regrets that he was too drunk to remember sex with Eva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve got to cover this up as soon as I can.</td>
<td>Birling to Eric (p. 54)</td>
<td>Concerned to cover up the theft to avoid a scandal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don’t understand anything. You never did. You never even tried…</td>
<td>Eric to Mrs Birling (p. 55)</td>
<td>He feels that she killed Eva and never tried to understand him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.</td>
<td>Inspector to family (p. 56)</td>
<td>He believes in shared social responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I suppose we’re all nice people now.</td>
<td>Sheila to Gerald (p. 63)</td>
<td>She is being sarcastic and sees that they are all still guilty, even if the Inspector was a hoax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And I say the girl’s dead and we all helped to kill her – and that’s what matters—</td>
<td>Eric (p. 65)</td>
<td>He accepts blame and says the family should.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ll have a good laugh over it yet.</td>
<td>Birling to Sheila (p. 71)</td>
<td>He thinks everything is all right as the Inspector was a hoax. He has learned nothing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Starter activity
Remind students of the particular requirements of their exam board but bear in mind that all the questions here could be useful practice. Ask them to list any particular concerns they have, such as ‘Will I have enough time?’ ‘How do I present evidence?’ ‘What is the examiner looking for?’

Using the sample answer
To get the most from the sample question and answer, help students to break down the question given, exploring the meaning of its different elements. Then challenge them to make a plan for this essay. They could compare their plan with the plan given in the magazine, bearing in mind that this plan does not represent the only valid approach.

You could get them to write the essay before showing them the annotated sample A* answer.
Exam practice

An A* response to the following question:

‘Priestley’s great dramatic gamble in An Inspector Calls is to show the central character, Eva Smith, only through the accounts of others.’ Write about how Priestley portrays her, and how far you think his gamble pays off.

J. B. Priestley did take a risk in writing a play whose central character, ‘Eva Smith’, has no lines and is already dead at the start of the play. An Inspector Calls is a ‘well-made play’, based on a genre dating back to Aristotle. One feature of the genre is preserving the three dramatic unities: time, action and setting. Unity of action means that there is really only one plot. In the case of An Inspector Calls, this plot revolves entirely around Eva Smith. Despite being dead, and perhaps not even existing as a single person, she is the focus of the play. This has advantages and disadvantages.

The biggest disadvantage is that in order to become absorbed in a drama, we need to have a sense of identification with at least some of the main characters. This means we have to care about them and feel for them. We cannot be on the edge of our seats waiting to learn what Eva’s fate will be, because the Inspector reveals soon after his arrival that, ‘Two hours ago, a young woman died in the Infirmary’. This removes all suspense about her fate and focuses the suspense instead on how this happened and who is to blame. Eva Smith is the character most deserving of our sympathy, but it is hard to identify with someone we never ‘meet’.

To try to engage our sympathy for Eva, Priestley works hard to make us feel for her sufferings. We learn from the Inspector – who has conveniently found her diary – that she ‘Burnt her inside out’ and died ‘in great agony’, a phrase repeated later on. He wants to prime the Birlings for their moral lesson, but such phrases are also aimed at the audience, to make up for the absence of the character herself.

There are, of course, advantages in having a dead, non-speaking central character. We piece together her story from other characters’ accounts and the Inspector’s comments. This engages our interest in the girl as we try to put together the jigsaw of her life and character. However, we also learn about the Birlings and Gerald. Their accounts shed light on their characters as much as hers.

We learn from Birling that she was a ‘lively good-looking girl – country-bred… A good worker’. These superficial details help us to picture her. We also learn that she was outspoken: ‘She’d had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go.’ What to him is the mark of a troublemaker may be to us the sign of someone with a sense of justice, prepared to stick up for herself and her colleagues.

From Sheila we learn that the girl had a sense of humour – she smiled at the sight of Sheila in a dress that did not suit her – and that she was pretty. The Milwards incident serves largely to give us an insight into Sheila, who admits to being in ‘a furious temper’, ‘rude’ and ‘jealous’. We learn that Sheila can behave like this, but also that she can admit to being wrong: ‘I’ll never, never do it again to anybody.’ She clearly regrets her actions.
We learn most about the dead girl from Gerald, because he spent the greatest length of time with her and got to know her. We see her as someone suffering hardship (‘desperately hard up… actually hungry’) and threatened by an abusive, male-orientated world in the shape of Alderman Joe’s Meggerty’s ‘obscene fat carcass’. She was ‘young and pretty and warm-hearted – and intensely grateful’ to be given a roof over her head. At the end of their affair, she was ‘gallant’. We see further depth in her character in the information from the Inspector that at the end of the affair she used Gerald’s money to go away for two months, ‘to be alone, to be quiet, to remember’. At the same time we see Gerald as essentially honest and well-meaning, despite his lapses into dishonesty.\(^{10}\)

Eva Smith’s finer feelings are confirmed by Eric’s account of her refusal to marry him, despite her pregnancy, because it would be wrong for them both, and of her reluctance to take money from him. We see her caring for him in that she treated him, as he puts it, ‘like a kid’. Mrs Birling, of course, dismisses the idea that ‘girls of that sort’ could have such feelings – which reveals a great deal about her class prejudice and lack of compassion.\(^{11}\)

Not seeing Eva Smith in person leaves open the possibility that she is more than one person, or represents all working-class women. This is in accord with the Inspector’s resounding parting speech, in which he moralises to the Birlings, saying that there are ‘millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths’ and that their lives are intertwined with the lives of the more fortunate. This possibility makes for a more mysterious and perhaps meaningful play, but at the expense of our being able to identify closely with Eva Smith. This is why the film version shows her in flashback. This also gives a cinema audience the variety of a number of settings, whereas the theatre audience has to rely on the actors’ skill in recreating the characters’ involvement with the young woman.\(^{12}\)

Overall, the play is a partial success. Priestley makes his political point, using the Inspector as his mouthpiece, and warning the audience, with a flourish of rhetorical imagery, of the lesson that ‘they will be taught… in fire and blood and anguish’ if they do not share social responsibility. This point was particularly relevant when the play was written, just after World War Two.\(^{13}\) However, to a modern audience the weakness of the play remains that we cannot feel much for a character we never meet and who may not even exist!\(^{14}\)