



A man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family.



We are responsible for each other... if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish.



I speak as a Hard Headed man of business who has to take risks and know what he's about.



You mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl



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



You're pretending everything's just as it was before.



But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people.



She'd swallowed a lot of disinfectant. Burnt her inside out of course.



I've done nothing I am ashamed of or that won't bear investigation.... I used my influence to have her request for help refused.



Look at them, the famous younger generation, and they can't even take a joke.



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



The lighting should be pink and intimate until the Inspector arrives and then it should be brighter and harder.



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



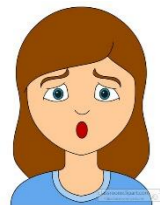
Not quite at ease... half shy ... half assertive



So I'm really responsible?'



"I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport"



She was giving herself ridiculous airs. She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position.



'Ghoul' and 'Goole' are phonetically linked (they sound the same) which may suggest that the Inspector is a supernatural being who is there to enforce the idea that if the Birlings (and society) do not change, they will suffer later 'in fire and blood and anguish'.



You don't understand anything! You never did.

## Context Notes: J B Priestley and the Edwardian Era (1912)

- Priestley was a **socialist** and the play reflects his views that we should all look after one another, and that those who have power over others should use it for the common good, not just for their own benefit. He uses the character of the inspector as a mouth-piece for his ideas to send a message that if people were more considerate of one another; this would improve the quality of life for all. He believed that it was the younger generation who had the ability to change and bring hope.
- **The play was written in 1945 at the end of two world wars.** It is set in **1912**, Edwardian England just two years before the first war. This was a very difficult time for England. It was a period when there were many strikes, food shortages and great political tension. There was also a divide between the people of England at that time; the rich and the poor.
- **In 1912**, England had very little welfare systems or support for the poor in need. **8 million people were working for less than 25 shillings a week** – which was not enough to pay for basic necessities. Women were not yet allowed to vote and were particularly vulnerable to **exploitation**.
- **John Boynton Priestley** was born into a working class family in 1894. He knew early on that he wanted to become a writer, but decided against going to university as he thought he would get a better feel for the world around him by working. Instead, he became a junior clerk with a local wool firm at the age of 16.
- **When the First World War broke out, Priestley joined the infantry** and only **just escaped death** on a number of occasions. After the war, he gained a degree from Cambridge university and then moved to London to work as a freelance writer. Much of his writing was ground breaking and controversial. He included new ideas about **possible parallel universes** (Ouspensky and Dunne) and strong political messages.
- **During the Second World War**, he broadcast a massively popular weekly radio programme which was attacked by the Conservatives for being too left wing. The programme was eventually cancelled by the BBC for **being too critical of the government**.
- **Gender** – as men went to fight during the war, their positions had to be filled by women; this changed perception and **men had to admit that women were just as capable as them**. Not all men saw this though and remained sexist.

## Writer's Methods in a PLAY

- **Any language devices/ word classes** – E.g The use of the noun 'sort' to describe Eva in a derogatory way.
- **Dramatic Irony:** When the audience are aware of something that the characters aren't – E.g The Titanic is 'unsinkable' and 'find the young man and make him responsible'
- **Stage Directions** – used to indicate the specific body language or actions of a character.
- **Interruptions:** To represent growing power or shifts in hierarchy
- **Entrances or Exits:** Used in a dramatic way to create tension or focus on a particular character
- **Cyclical Structure:** The 'sharp ring of the doorbell' and 'sharp ring of the telephone at the beginning and ending of the play which BOTH times interrupts Birling when he is talking to the younger generation.
- **Dramatic Pauses:** to build tension and to emphasise shock or hesitation
- **Contrasts:** contrasting 'substantial and heavily comfortable' lives of the Birling family with the working classes' struggle to survive.
- **Use of lighting:** the light is 'intimate' when the Birling family are blissfully unaware of their sins and then 'brighter' when the inspector arrives.
- **Use of props:** such as cigars to represent the separation of men and women when the women retire to the drawing room.
- **Microcosm:** When a character represents a large group – Eva Smith represents all of the working class.

**Responsibility and Guilt:** All of the family are forced to reflect upon their behaviour towards Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton, and consider how responsible they are for her death. Some characters admit responsibility and feel guilt more readily, such as Sheila and Eric. On the other hand, characters such as Arthur and Sybil are more unwilling to accept responsibility for the girl's demise.

**Age:** Priestley uses age to show the different prevailing attitudes in society at the time. The older characters represent an outdated way of thinking; characters such as Arthur and Sybil believe in only looking after themselves in their family. The younger characters (Sheila and Eric) represent new towards caring about others in society.

**Class and Gender:** Class and gender are also predominant themes in the novel. Eva Smith's position in society is severely weakened because she is from a lower class background and she is also a woman. Because of biases related to class and gender, Birling is dismissive of the hundreds of working class girls looking for a pay-rise, whilst Mrs Birling refers to her as 'a girl of that sort' in a derogatory manner.

**The Supernatural:** The presence of the Inspector weaves a supernatural element into the play. His surname (Goole) is certainly a play on the word 'ghoul' (a ghost). He is unheard of by other members of the police force, leading the characters to at first dismiss him as simply a hoaxer, yet he seems to have prior knowledge of the characters' actions, and foresees the suicide before it happens.

Character summary	
Mr Arthur Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birling is described as “a heavy-looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech.”</li> <li>represents middle class men who have made money via capitalism.</li> <li>refuses to accept responsibility for anyone else except himself, including the death of Eva Smith.</li> <li>represents capitalism and its ideals.</li> <li>He also represents an older generation that is less likely to be influenced by ideas of socialism.</li> <li>Despite his arrogance and confidence, Birling is no match for the wit, precision and intellect of The Inspector.</li> </ul>
Mrs Sybil Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She represents many of the upper and middle class attitudes from the time: arrogance, sanctimony, snobbishness and selfishness.</li> <li>She is part of the older generation that refuses to change or accept new ideas. She is happy to live in the status quo.</li> <li>She uses her influence to hurt other people rather than help them – it is difficult for the audience to do anything but dislike Mrs Birling, as is the case with her husband.</li> <li>She seems to have some control over her husband, determining when he should or should not speak. Her role as matriarch in the family goes against the established patriarchal society of the Edwardian period.</li> </ul>
Sheila Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The daughter of Arthur and Sybil Birling and engaged to be married to Gerald Croft at the start of the play.</li> <li>Sheila shows how gender roles are clearly defined at the start of the play: she is meant to be the sweet, innocent and naïve girl that gets married.</li> <li>As the play progresses, her character changes and she becomes far more determined, confrontational and aware.</li> <li>By the end of the play she represents a younger generation that is far more willing to take responsibility for the people around them.</li> </ul>
Eric Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The son of Arthur and Sybil Birling.</li> <li>Eric represents the younger generation that are more socially responsible than their parents.</li> <li>He drinks because he feels guilt about what he did: by violently forcing himself on Eva, he got her pregnant and helped to drive her towards suicide.</li> <li>Eric sometimes has contrary opinions to his parents and it is he who brings up the idea of war and suggesting his father could have paid Eva more money.</li> <li>Because he accepts responsibility by the end of the play, the audience come to respect Eric a lot more.</li> </ul>
Gerald Croft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged to be married to Sheila Birling and the son of wealthy aristocrats who are also rivals in business to Arthur Birling.</li> <li>He represents the upper classes in the play.</li> <li>We – the audience – want him to change, after all, he did help Daisy with money, but he doesn't.</li> <li>He represents how the old class system is hard to remove – aristocrats don't want to lose their power and their status.</li> </ul>
The Inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspector Goole is described as "an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness."</li> <li>Despite questioning a family of wealthy members of the upper middle classes, the Inspector appears calm and assertive throughout. He seems to have already pre-planned exactly who is going to speak to and when and how he will speak to them.</li> <li>As Sheila comes to understand, the Inspector already knows how all the characters are connected to Eva. Because of this, it gives him a ghost-like or supernatural quality to him.</li> <li>He seems to be operating on a different level of consciousness to the other characters and this has led to a number of theories about who or what Inspector Goole is.</li> </ul>

Act 1
The Birlings are celebrating the engagement of Sheila Birling (the Birlings' daughter) to Gerald Croft, whose family own a rival business to that of Arthur Birling – Sheila's father. The family are celebrating with champagne, cigars and many other luxuries that only a wealthy middle or upper class family of the time could afford.
Mr Birling seems very keen to impress Gerald and even speaks to him in private away from the rest of his family; Sheila mentions about Gerald having not come near her the previous summer; and Eric appears very nervous and anxious around his family. Although the atmosphere is mostly positive, there are hints that there are problems hidden under the surface.
Mrs Birling and Sheila leave the dining room to allow the men to speak on their own. Mr Birling gives Eric and Gerald advice about looking after yourself and not concerning yourself with others. As he is giving this speech, there is a ring at the door.
Edna, the maid, brings in a man who is known as Inspector Goole. A detailed description is provided of Goole and he is said to be serious but also demanding respect. He tells the family that he is investigating the suicide of Eva Smith, who had died after drinking a large quantity of disinfectant.
The Inspector shows Mr Birling a photo of Eva Smith (although makes sure no one else sees it) and Birling admits that Eva used to work at his factory. However, she was later fired for being one of the ring-leaders of uprising and strike action after Birling refused to give any of his workers even a small pay rise. Birling argues that he pays usual rates to his workers and he is not responsible for what happened to Eva after she left his employment.
Sheila comes into the room and the Inspector wants to ask her some questions. It is revealed that Eva found work at a clothes shop after being fired by Birling. However, Eva was fired once more when the Inspector explains a customer complained about her. Sheila admits she was that customer and the reason she got Eva fired was because a dress that Sheila tried on did not suit her and when Eva tried it on, it did. Sheila also believes she caught Eva laughing at her.
When Sheila finds out what happened to Eva, she immediately feels responsible for her death – in complete contrast to her father. The Inspector then reveals Eva, unemployed once more, changed her name to Daisy Renton. Gerald Croft, Sheila's fiancé, gives away that he knew Daisy by his reaction. Sheila sees this. The act ends and the audience are waiting to find out how Gerald is connected to Daisy.
Act 2
Sheila and Gerald are alone on stage and Gerald admits he did know Daisy, but Sheila explains to Gerald that the Inspector has already worked this out.
Gerald reveals to Mrs Birling that her son Eric drinks a lot – she initially refuses to believe him – and he admits that he once had a relationship with Daisy. Sheila works out that this was during the one summer when he wouldn't go near her. Gerald explains that he met Daisy at the Variety Theatre (which was known for prostitutes), and that he stopped Alderman Meggarty – an important man or 'dignitary' – getting involved with her.
Gerald helped Daisy by letting her stay in a friend's flat but she eventually became his mistress, which meant he was having an affair with her behind Sheila's back. Gerald decided to later break off their relationship and gave her money to help her in the future. Mrs Birling says she believes this relationship was 'disgusting', although Gerald does argue back. However, Sheila appreciates Gerald's honesty and says she respects him more now than she did.
Gerald asks to leave the room to get some fresh air after now realising Daisy has died. The Inspector allows him to do this, and during the time he is away the Inspector begins to interrogate Mrs Birling. Mrs Birling eventually admits that she saw Eva/Daisy before she died. Mrs Birling was the chair of a local charity: the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation and Daisy, calling herself Mrs Birling, asked for financial help. It is revealed that Daisy was pregnant at the time, and Mrs Birling used her power as chairwoman of the charity to deny her access to financial assistance.
Mrs Birling found it impudent or insulting that Daisy took on the name 'Mrs Birling' and she also felt the money and responsibility should come from the baby's father. Mrs Birling seems to take pride from her decision, although Sheila quickly realises the missing link here: Eric is the father. This happens after Mrs Birling has said the father of the child should be made an example of. Mrs Birling realises, just as Eric enters at the end of the scene, that her son is the father and she has effectively killed her own grandchild.
Act 3
Eric asks for a drink and his parents refuse, but the Inspector explains it would help Eric through and so they agree. Eric explains how he met Daisy at the same theatre bar as Gerald; they both got drunk and Eric accompanied Daisy back to her flat. There, Eric became very violent and Daisy reluctantly agreed to let him in where they slept together. They met again two weeks later and slept together once more.
Daisy revealed to Eric that she was pregnant with his baby, and he proposed to her. However, she refused stating he did not love her. Instead, she received gifts of money from him, but turned these down when she found out Eric was stealing the money from his father's business. Mr and Mrs Birling are incensed that Eric has stolen £50 from them ( a lot of money in 1912, it would be thousands of pounds now).
All of the family have been involved in her death, but a divide forms between the younger characters and the older family members. The Inspector then gives his famous 'fire and blood and anguish' speech, where he explains society must change or there will be violence. Goole says that everyone must feel responsible for everyone else.
Gerald and Mr and Mrs Birling begin to question the role of the Inspector: was he a real inspector? Was this all a hoax? Did the Inspector show the same photo to everyone? Birling rings the local police station and finds out there is no Inspector Goole working there. Birling, Mrs Birling and Gerald begin to grow in confidence once more, knowing their reputations are in tact and believe they can go back to where they were. However, Sheila and Eric have changed and cannot ignore what has happened. A phone call comes from the police which Mr Birling answers: the police explain a young girl has committed suicide and a police inspector is coming over to ask them some questions.

