

## An Inspector Calls Knowledge Organiser

| Plot   | Character and Quote   | Vocabulary   | Context  |
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| <p><b>Act 1.</b> The Birlings are celebrating the upcoming marriage of Sheila Birling to Gerald Croft.</p> <p>An Inspector arrives claiming that a young woman called Eva Smith has just committed suicide.</p> <p>Eva was employed by Mr Birling and was fired unfairly. She was then taken on by a shop, Millwards, where Sheila used her influence and got Eva fired.</p> <p>Sheila feels terrible remorse.</p> <p><b>Act 2</b> Gerald admits that he used Eva as a mistress and leaves upset.</p> <p>Mrs Birling was also involved by refusing to give Eva (now pregnant), any money when she came to beg for charity. Mrs Birling is adamant that the</p> | <p><b>Mr Arthur Birling:</b> The head of a family, and is arguably the main subject of Priestley's social critique. Dominant, arrogant, self-centred and morally blind, he is insistent throughout about his lack of responsibility for Eva/Daisy's death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward'</li> <li>• 'If you don't come down hard on these people they'd soon be asking for the earth.'</li> <li>• '(Unhappily) Look, Inspector - I'd give thousands - yes, thousands -'</li> <li>• 'That fellow obviously didn't like us. He was prejudiced from the start. Probably a socialist or some sort of crank'</li> <li>• 'The famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke.'</li> </ul> <p><b>Sheila Birling:</b> Accepts responsibility for her part in Eva/Daisy's death and becomes more rebellious toward her parents, supporting her brother against them and assisting Goole in his interrogations. By the end of the play, she represents the younger generation's protests against the morality of the older generation and seems the most responsive to Goole's Socialist views about moral responsibility towards others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'But these girls aren't cheap labour. They're <i>people</i>.'</li> <li>• 'When I was looking at myself in the mirror I caught sight of her smiling at the salesgirl, and I was furious with her.'</li> <li>• 'I must obviously be a selfish vindictive creature.'</li> <li>• 'And I know I am to blame – and I am desperately sorry...'</li> <li>• 'But now you're beginning all over again to pretend that nothing much has happened.'</li> <li>• '(Flaring up) Well, he inspected us, all right! ...Between us we drove that girl to suicide.'</li> <li>• '(Tensely) I want to get out of this. It frightens me the way you talk.'</li> </ul> <p><b>Gerald Croft:</b> The son of Sir George Croft and a member of the aristocracy, a competitor of Birling and Company. He is celebrating his recent engagement to Sheila Birling. Gerald is revealed to have secretly known Eva/Daisy and installed her as his mistress, becoming, "the most important person in her life", before ending the relationship. He is shown as cowardly and thoughtless for taking advantage of a vulnerable woman.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To Birling he agrees that 'You couldn't have done anything else' (in sacking Eva Smith)</li> <li>• 'It's a favourite haunt of women of the town.' <i>distressed</i> sorry – I – well, I've suddenly realized – taken it in properly – that's she's dead-- (he waits a moment, then in a low, troubled tone.) she told me she'd been happier than she'd ever been before – but that she knew it couldn't last</li> <li>• 'No girl's been brought in after drinking disinfectant.'</li> <li>• 'Everything's all right now Sheila. (Holds up an engagement ring) What about this ring?'</li> </ul> <p><b>Sybil Birling:</b> The wife of Arthur and mother of Sheila and Eric Birling. She is her husband's social superior and is keen to show him the correct etiquette. As the leader of a women's charitable organisation, she refused help to Eva/Daisy when she was pregnant. Like her husband, she refuses to accept responsibility for the death of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (stage direction) 'a rather cold woman who is her husband's social superior'</li> <li>• 'Girls of that class –'</li> <li>• 'Yes, I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence – quite deliberate – and naturally that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case.'</li> </ul> | <p><b>Bourgeoisie – Upper class</b></p> <p><b>Capitalist - A business person who believes we are all solely responsible for ourselves</b></p> <p><b>Conservative (right wing) - Someone who believes in individual freedom e.g. The Birlings</b></p> <p><b>Conscience - a sense of right and wrong</b></p> <p><b>Hierarchy - A society which is unequal</b></p> <p><b>Materialistic – someone who is money orientated</b></p> <p><b>Microcosm- A smaller version of a bigger thing</b></p> | <p>AIC is set in 1912, a time of immense inequality and there were no rights for workers, such as Eva Smith</p> <p>The play was first performed in 1945, just after a sweeping Labour election victory. The Labour victory in the 1945 election had a message for a better world post WW2, "everyone regardless of class should be looked after by the state from the cradle to the grave."</p> <p>They called for a Nationalised Health Service, benefits for those poor who needed it and good housing for all as a basis for a moral society.</p> <p>Priestley's play was a call to his audience to believe in this new society as a better way to protect the poor and vulnerable.</p> |

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| <p>father of the child take responsibility. This turns out to be her son, Eric and she is seen as a hypocrite.</p> <p><b>Act 3:</b> Eric admits that he is the father of Eva's child. He feels terrible for what he has done. The Inspector leaves and they are all shocked. Gerald returns and informs the Birlings that there is no Inspector Goole working at the local police station.</p> <p>A phone call confirms this. However, the final lines in the play state that a girl has just died and they are all to be interviewed by an inspector.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'I'll tell you what I told her. Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility.'</li> <li>'She was giving herself ridiculous airs. She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position.'</li> <li>'I'm sorry she should have come to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame for it at all.'</li> </ul> <p><b>Eric Birling:</b> Eric Birling is the son of Arthur Birling and Sybil Birling. Eric is revealed to have made Eva Smith pregnant as well as stolen some money from his father's business to support Eva when the Inspector is revealed to be a fake, he and Sheila are the only two who still feel guilty over Eva's death. By the end of the story he seems to have learned his lesson and feels as guilty as Sheila does for his part in Eva Smith's death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices.'</li> <li>'I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty-'</li> <li>'And that's when it happened. And I didn't even remember – that's the hellish thing. Oh – my God! - how stupid it all is!'</li> <li>'Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything – but I liked her – she was pretty and a good sport—'</li> <li><i>(nearly at breaking point)</i> Then – you killed her. She came to you to protect me – and you turned her away – yes, and you killed her – and the child she'd have had too</li> <li>'Well, I don't blame you. But don't forget I'm ashamed of you as well – yes both of you'</li> <li><i>(Bursting out)</i> What's the use of talking about behaving sensibly. You're beginning to pretend now that nothing's really happened at all. And I can't see it like that. This girl's still dead, isn't she?</li> </ul> <p><b>The Inspector:</b> A mysterious interrogator who introduces himself as "Inspector Goole" claiming that he has seen the dead body of Eva/Daisy earlier that day after her slow and painful suicide by swallowing disinfectant, and that he has "a duty" to investigate the Birlings' responsibility for her death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Creates an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He speaks carefully, weightily.'</li> <li>'They might. But after all it's better to ask for the earth than to take it.'</li> <li><i>(Harshly)</i> Yes, but you can't. It's too late. She's dead.'</li> <li><i>(Sternly to them both)</i> You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt.'</li> <li><i>(Massively)</i> Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.'</li> <li><i>(To Mrs B)</i> I think you did something terribly wrong – and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it.'</li> <li>'Each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. <i>(He looks from one to the other of them carefully.)</i> But then I don't think you ever will.'</li> <li>'One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and bloody and anguish. Good night.'</li> </ul> <p><b>Eva Smith/Daisy Renton:</b> the unseen working class women who Goole claims has committed suicide whilst pregnant with Eric's baby, and has been mistreated by each of the Birling family.</p> | <p><b>Misogynistic – extremely sexist</b></p> <p><b>Social responsibility -</b><br/>The idea we're responsible for vulnerable members of society</p> <p><b>Socialist (left wing) -</b><br/>Someone who believes in social responsibility e.g. Inspector Goole and Priestley</p> <p><b>Superficial - To be shallow, artificial or insincere</b></p> <p><b>Welfare State –</b><br/>A system where the government protects its citizens (E.g. NHS, pensions, council houses, benefits etc.)</p> | <p><b>Themes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsibility</li> <li>War bringing its own form of socialism</li> <li>Class</li> <li>Gender and women</li> <li>Young and Old</li> <li>Rights of workers</li> <li>Poverty and wealth</li> <li>Individual vs State</li> <li>Time</li> <li>Honesty and truth</li> <li>Hypocrisy and double standards</li> <li>Prejudice</li> </ul> |
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