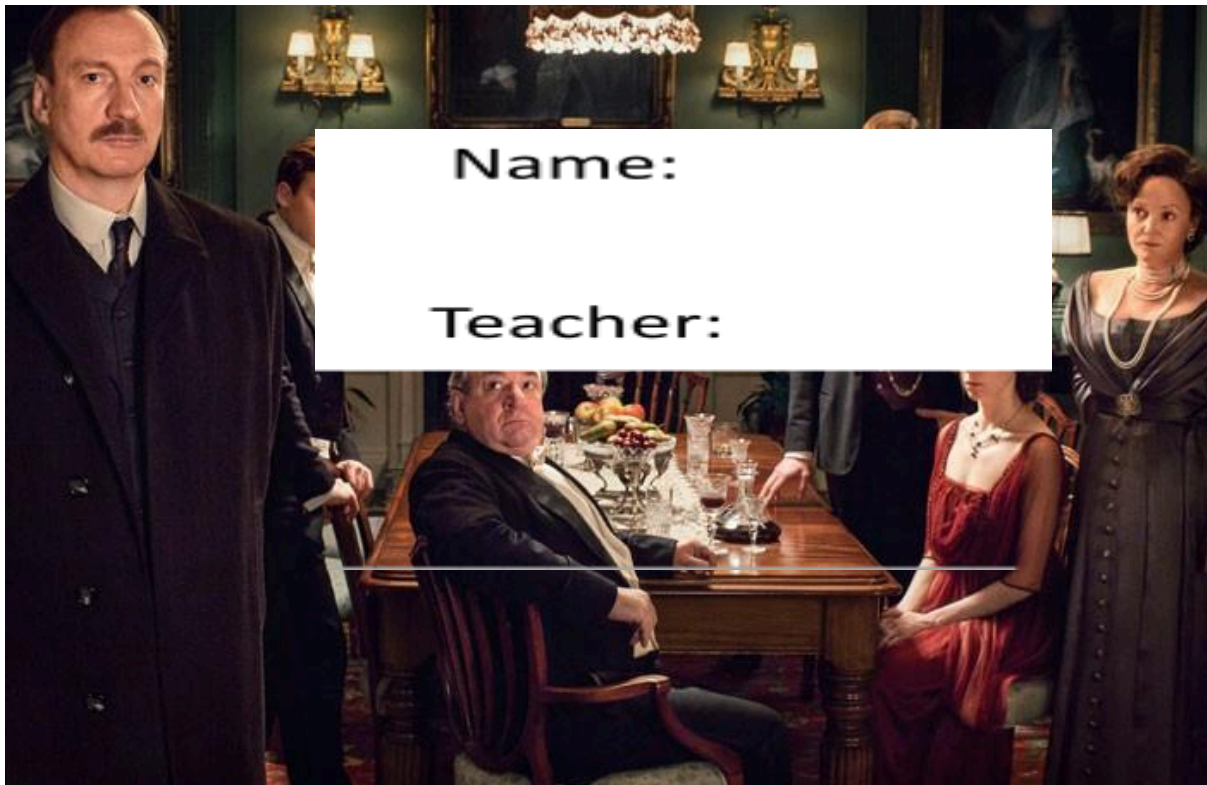


# An Inspector Calls

*J. B Priestley*

## GCSE Revision Book



Name:

Teacher:





## **Contents**

- Context
- Plot Summary
- Visual summary of plot
- Mr Birling mind map
- Mr Birling key quotation grid
- Mrs Birling mind map
- Mrs Birling key quotation grid
- Sheila mind map
- Sheila key quotation grid
- Eric mind map
- Eric key quotation grid
- Gerald mind map
- Gerald key quotation grid
- Inspector Goole mind map
- Inspector Goole key quotation grid
- Eva Smith / Daisy Renton mind map
- Eva Smith / Daisy Renton key quotation grid
- Sample essay plan
- Past questions
- Exemplar answers
- Glossary
- Knowledge Organiser

# Context

## Genre:

Follows the conventions of a classical Greek drama

3 unities:

- Time (takes place in real time – one evening)
- Place (one location – the dining room)
- Action (one plot)

The Inspector adopts the role of the chorus

## When was the play written?

- The play as written in 1945 but set in 1912

1912 had a rigid class system and politics of the time were Conservative (individual responsibility). In 1912, the upper and middle classes lived comfortably. Working classes worked hard for very little money and they often worked in factories owned by the middle classes. Society wasn't equal and people with money had more power. Priestley uses the unequal society of 1912 to get the audience thinking of inequality in 1945. The audience knows that the characters' world in 1912 is going to go through terrible changes (WW1). He wants to challenge the audience and warn us that disasters can happen if we don't learn from our past mistakes. He is asking the audience to unite and improve society.

## In 1912:

- Support for those in need was limited
- Only men who owned property could vote
- Upper classes didn't question class system because it worked for them – limited sense of social responsibility

The characters in the play are representative of their classes

- Working class – hard jobs/no money =Eva/Daisy
- Middle – owned factories/professionals = Birling
- Upper – inherited land and money, high status, Lords and Ladies = Gerald. The Birlings are exaggerated caricatures of the ruling classes
- 87% of all the money in England belonged to 5% of the population

There were certain expectations of middle class families in 1912 – be content with position, parents in charge, children obedient and unquestioning, defined gender roles (men should support and protect and women marry into money, plan parties, visit friends, have children, no chores). However, within the working classes, women sometimes worked in the factories or as servants.

## It's a murder mystery play.

The Inspector sets out to uncover the reasons behind Eva Smith's death. However, the play twists traditional 'whodunit' because the suicide might not have happened and he isn't really trying to solve a mystery – he knows who is responsible.

## It's a morality play.

The Inspector teaches the characters and the audience a lesson by showing us that division in classes results in misuse of power. He believes in collective responsibility – we are members of 'one body'. K. B. Priestley believes that Capitalism exploits the proletariat.

# Context

## Employment

- With the capitalists in control, England has no welfare system.
- For those lucky enough to be employed, there were no unions or laws that helped and protected people at work.
- There was no minimum wage
- The average number of hours worked was 65
- Factory owners paid workers a pittance
- Often, people who tried to take a stand against the pay would find themselves out of a job

## Why is the play set in 1912?

By setting the play in the past, Priestley can make use of dramatic irony – the audience knows what happens after the events in the play (WW1 and the sinking of the Titanic) but obviously the characters don't.

### For example:

“Just because the Kaiser makes a speech or two...And I say to that – fiddlesticks!” These are the words of Birling and his comments make him look foolish in front of the audience. WWI is used in the play to show that mankind needs to change. The reference to the war may also remind the audience of what happens when individuals seek power for themselves rather than caring for others.

The play is deliberately set in 1912 – rigid class and gender boundaries. However, in 1945, most of these boundaries had been breached and he wanted to make the most of these changes. In 1945, there was a great desire for social change. Clement Atlee won a landslide victory for the Labour Party in this year.

## What is Priestley's message?

Priestley fought in WW1 and, after the war, he returned to strikes, hunger marches, unemployment and recession. It was a time of broken promises – Lloyd George said in 1918 that Britain would be a “fit country for heroes to live in.” Priestley is warning that if social conditions don't improve in 1945, post WWII, this could be the consequence.

Responsibility is arguably the most important theme of the play. The words “responsible” and “responsibility” appear a number of times. At the beginning of the play, Mr Birling gives his interpretation of “responsibility” and towards the end of the play, Inspector Goole gives his alternative interpretation. These speeches reflect the opposing viewpoints in the play:

- Individual responsibility v collective responsibility
- Capitalism v Socialism

## Capitalism

In the play, Birling represents a capitalist society. This is an economic system that is based on private ownership of industry.

Capitalism often leads to the few exploiting the many and creates a situation where those who have money have the power to stop others from sharing the wealth.

Capitalism is often part of Conservatism. Conservatives believe that people should take greater responsibility for themselves. Traditionally, Conservative governments keep taxation low in the belief that people can enjoy the benefits of hard work and success. Opponents of conservatism believe it reduces social mobility and that it benefits the rich over the poor.

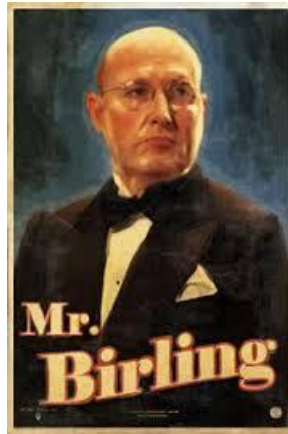
Materialistic

Arrogant

Patronising

Ambitious

Social climber



Old fashioned

Selfish

Capitalist

Wealthy

Foolish

Hard-headed

**Mr Birling Key Quotations and Analysis**  
**Biblical Sin = Greed**

Quotation	Analysis
'Fairly large suburban house belonging to a prosperous manufacturer'	
'a heavy looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties with fairly easy manners but rather provincial in his speech'	
'you ought to like this port, Gerald...it's exactly the same port your father gets from him'	
'lower costs and higher prices'	
'we're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity'	
'absolutely unsinkable'	

## Mr Birling Key Quotations and Analysis

### Biblical Sin = Greed

Quotation	Analysis
'she had a lot to say – far too much –n she had to go'	
'horrid business'	
'we've been had, that's all'	
'the famous younger generation who know it all'	

Summarise why the character of Birling is important and how he links to Priestley's message:

Cold

Upper class

Heartless

Prejudiced

Proud



Snobbish

Ignorant

Uncaring

Social superior

Stubborn

Sanctimonious

**Mrs Birling Key Quotations and Analysis**  
**Biblical Sin = Pride**

Quotation	Analysis
'A rather cold woman and her husband's social superior'	
'Very well, just a little thank you'	
'I'll ring when we want coffee'	
'I think Sheila and I better go into the drawing room'	
'silly boy'	
'claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples'	

**Mrs Birling Key Quotations and Analysis**  
**Biblical Sin = Pride**



# Sheila Birling Key Quotations and Analysis

## Biblical Sin = Envy

Quotation	Analysis
'rather pleased and very excited'	
'now I really do feel engaged...Is this the one you wanted me to have'	
'But these girls aren't cheap labour'	
'this girl had been impertinent'	
'why – you – fool – he knows'	
'cutting in'	
'you mustn't try to build up a wall between us and that girl'	

# Sheila Birling Key Quotations and Analysis

## Biblical Sin = Envy

Low self-esteem

Analysis

Impulsive

'impertinent is such a silly word'

'mother, don't you see

Lacks confidence

'I still can't forget'

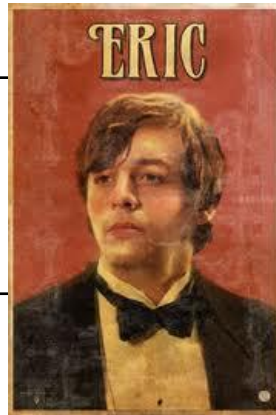
Deceitful

Repressed guilt

anguish'

nd

'Not yet. It's too soon. I must think.'



Emotional

Remorseful

Summarise why the character of Sheila Birling is important and how she links to Priestley's message

Regretful

Impulsive

## Eric Birling Key Quotations and Analysis

### Biblical Sin = Lust

Quotation	Analysis
'Not quite at ease, half-shy, half-assertive'	
'suddenly guffaws'	
'(involuntary) My God!'	
'could I have a drink first?'	
'And that's when it happened. And I didn't even remember – that's the hellish thing'	
'She was a good sport'	

--	--

## Eric Birling Key Quotations and Analysis

### Biblical Sin = Lust

Quotation	Analysis
'You're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble'	
'you don't understand anything'	
'we all helped to kill her'	
'I agree with Sheila. It frightens me too.'	

Summarise why the character of Eric Birling is important and how he links to Priestley's message



A bridge between generations

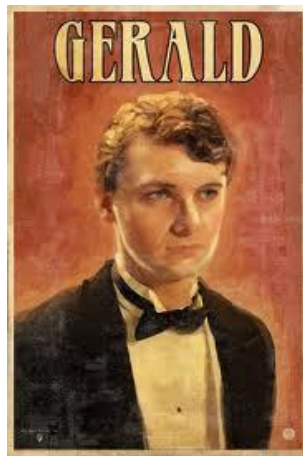
Selfish

Unchanging

Misogynistic

Upper class

Evasive



Manipulative

Deceitful

Suave

## Gerald Croft Key Quotations and Analysis

### Biblical Sin = Lust

Quotation	Analysis
'easy, well-bred man about town'	
'I've told you I was awfully busy at work'	
'Well, this will help to stop it (produces a ring)	
'I know we'd have done the same thing. Don't look at me like that Sheila'	
'It's a favourite haunt of woman of the town'	

**Gerald Croft Key Quotations and Analysis**  
**Biblical Sin = Lust**

Quotation	Analysis
'She was very pretty – soft brown hair and big dark eyes – (breaks off) My God!'	
'as I'm rather more – upset – by this business than I probably appear to be'	
'that man wasn't a police officer'	
'Everything's all right now Sheila. What about this ring?'	

Summarise why the character of Gerald Croft is important and how he links to Priestley's message:

Blunt

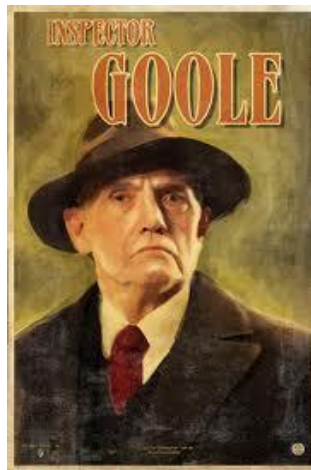
Honest

Assertive

Omniscient

Uncompromising

Social conscience



Powerful

Classless

Priestley's mouthpiece

Moral compass

Dominant

## Inspector Goole Key Quotations and Analysis

Quotation	Analysis
'sharp ring of the doorbell'	
'massiveness, solidity and purpose'	
'man in a dark suit'	
'cutting in'	
'a chain of events'	
'burnt her insides out'	

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

## Inspector Goole Key Quotations and Analysis

Quotation	Analysis
'Goole. G, double O, L, E'	
'we'll have to share our guilt'	
'Each of you helped to kill her'	
'Millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths'	
'we are member of one body'	
'fire and blood and anguish'	
Summarise why the character of Inspector Goole is important and how he links to Priestley's message:	

Symbol of proletariat

Largely symbolic

Victim

Archetypal working class

Blameless



Integrity

Opinionated

Virtuous

## Eva Smith / Daisy Renton Key Quotations and Analysis

Quotation	Analysis
<b><i>Analysis of her name:</i></b>	
Eva	
Smith	
Daisy	
Renton	
Inspector: 'She'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her insides out'	
Mr Birling: 'lively, good-looking girl'	
Mr Birling: 'She had to go'	
Sheila: 'she was very pretty and looked as if she could take care of herself'	
Sheila: 'impertinent'	

--	--

## Eva Smith / Daisy Renton Key Quotations and Analysis

Quotation	Analysis
Gerald: 'very pretty – soft brown hair and big dark eyes'	
Gerald: 'she was young and pretty – and intensely grateful'	
Mrs Birling: 'As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money'	
Mrs Birling: 'I didn't like her manner'	
Eric: 'I didn't even remember – that's the hellish thing'	
Eric: 'good sport'	
Inspector: 'there are millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths'	
Summarise why the character of Eva Smith is important and how she links to Priestley's message	

## Opening stage directions

'very pleased with life and rather excited'

## First Impressions

'Now I really feel engaged'

## Link to Priestley's message:

Sheila rejects Capitalist ideology

Hope lies with the younger generation

Link to Suffragette movement

## Reaction to Inspector's arrival

'But these girls aren't cheap labour, they're people'

Sample essay plan  
Sheila

## Reaction to Inspector's message:

'impertinent is such a silly word'

'so I'm really responsible?'

It's too soon'

## Treatment of Eva Smith:

'the girl had been impertinent'

