



## 'An Inspector Calls' by J.B. Priestley: Knowledge Organiser

1 Character overviews		
Inspect or Goole	Priestley's mouthpiece; advocates social justice; serves as the Birlings' conscience	Socialist, moralistic, righteous, powerful, intimidating, unconventional, mysterious, imposing, sardonic, omnipotent
Mr. Arthur Birling	Businessman; capitalist; against social equality; a self-made man (new-money)	Capitalist, arrogant, prejudiced, ignorant, selfish, stubborn, social climber, sycophant
Mrs. Sybil Birling	Husband's social superior; believes in personal responsibility	Arrogant, cold-hearted, insincere, prejudiced, naïve, conformist, bitter, controlling, remorseless
Sheila Birling	Young woman; comes to change views and pities Eva; feels regret	Transformative, remorseful, socialist, sensitive, strong-minded, empowered
Eric Birling	Young man, drinks too much; forces himself on Eva Smith; regrets actions	Rebellious, reckless, immature, compulsive, desperate, disgraced, irresponsible / responsible
Gerald Croft	Businessman; engaged to Sheila; politically closest to Birling (old-money)	Aristocratic, secretive, dishonest, disingenuous, chivalric, privileged
Eva Smith	Unseen in play; comes to represent victims of social injustice; changes her name to Daisy Renton	Victim, symbolic, allegorical, vulnerable, desperate, socialist, moral, principled

2 Dramatic devices and linguistic techniques	
<b>Dramatic irony</b>	When the implications of someone's speech or actions are understood by the audience but not by the characters speaking them.
<b>Irony</b>	The difference between what is said and the intended meaning.
<b>Stage directions</b>	Instructions for the actors – often revealing.
<b>Setting</b>	Where the action takes place.
<b>Foreshadow</b>	To show, indicate or suggest in advance.
<b>Italics</b>	Slanted lettering to show a certain word should be <i>emphasized</i> .
<b>Euphemism</b>	The substitution of a mild expression for one thought to be offensive or upsetting.
<b>Modal verb</b>	A type of verb that is used to indicate likelihood, ability, permission, obligation or advice.

3 Key themes					
Wealth	Power	Blame	influence	Responsibility	Judgement
Social class	Morality	Gender	Generations	Family	Trust
Secrecy	Hypocrisy	Injustice	Respectability	Public vs. private	

4 Plot	
<b>Act 1</b>	Set in April 1912, Brumley, Midlands. The Birling family and Gerald Croft are celebrating Sheila Birling's engagement to Gerald with a dinner. Mr Birling lectures his son, Eric Birling, and Gerald about the importance of every man looking out for himself if he wants to get on in life. Edna (the maid) announces that an Inspector has arrived. Inspector Goole says that he is investigating the death of a young woman, Eva Smith, who committed suicide. Mr Birling is shown a photograph of Eva. After initially denying recognising the woman in the photo, he remembers firing her in 1910 for organising a strike over workers pay. Sheila recalls also having Eva sacked about her manner when served by her in an upmarket department store. The Inspector reveals that Eva Smith changed her name to Daisy Renton. Gerald reveals to Sheila he had an affair with Daisy Renton.
<b>Act 2</b>	Gerald explains to The Inspector that he had an affair with Eva, but hasn't seen her since he ended their relationship back in Autumn 1911. Sheila gives her engagement ring back to Gerald. The Inspector turns his attention to Mrs Sybil Birling. She confesses that she also had contact with Eva when Eva approached a charity chaired by Mrs Birling to ask for help. Eva was desperate and pregnant but help was refused charity from Mrs Birling because she was offended by the girl calling herself 'Mrs Birling'. She tells Eva that the baby's father should be made entirely responsible. She also tells Inspector Goole that the father should be held entirely responsible.
<b>Act 3</b>	Eric is revealed as the father. He stole money from Mr Birling's office to provide money for Eva. The Inspector delivers his final speech. After he leaves, the family begin to suspect that he was not a genuine police Inspector. A phone call to the Chief Constable confirms this. Next, they phone the infirmary to be informed that no suicide case has been brought in. Mr Birling, Mrs Birling and Gerald congratulate themselves that it was all a hoax and they continue can continue as before. This attitude upsets Sheila and Eric. The phone rings. Mr Birling announces to the family that a girl has just died on her way to the infirmary and that a police Inspector is coming to question them.

5 Eva Smith / Daisy Renton – key quotes about her from others	
Inspector:	A young woman died in the Infirmary. She'd been taken there this afternoon because she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course. She was in great agony... Suicide, of course.
Mr. Birling:	She'd had a lot to say - far too much - so she had to go.
Sheila:	How could I know what would happen afterwards? If she'd been some miserable plain little creature, I don't suppose I'd have done it. But she was very pretty and looked as if she could take care of herself. I couldn't be sorry for her.
Gerald:	I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.
Mrs. Birling:	She was giving herself ridiculous airs. She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position.
Eric:	I wasn't in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport.

