

Autumn Term | English | An Inspector Calls

- Priestley was influenced by the context of the class divide, industry, the Titanic, the World Wars, nuclear weapons and the miners' strike of 1910-1911.
- The play is all set in one dining room to show the Birlings' self-absorption in their own 'bubble' or 'world'.
- The Birlings are capitalists: they have champagne, port, cigars and Edna, the maid.

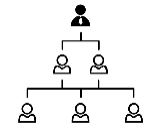
- Sheila is very focused on her engagement ring. Mr Birling discusses business and money during the engagement speech, showing his capitalist mindset.
- Priestley uses dramatic irony to show how foolish Mr Birling is.
- Inspector Goole arrives, announces Eva's suicide and begins to interrogate Mr Birling over firing Eva for going on strike.

- The Inspector now interrogates Sheila who had Eva fired from Milwards.
- Sheila changes: she did lack independence, was treated like a child and was obsessed with appearance. However, she then stands up to her father and Gerald, criticises their treatment of workers as 'cheap labour' and shows clear remorse for her actions, taking responsibility.

- Eva turned to prostitution, common among poor women. Gerald takes her as his mistress because she is pretty and vulnerable.
- Mrs Birling is prejudiced and refuses Eva charity help because she called herself 'Mrs Birling'. She believes her actions were justified and feels no guilt at all.

- Eric admits to sexually assaulting Eva; was this attitude to women normalised?
- The Inspector warns them that they will suffer 'in fire and blood and anguish' if they do not change their ways. This ties to how each character links to the Seven Deadly Sins because of their actions towards Eva.
- They wonder whether the Inspector was a real police offer – Mr and Mrs Birling excuse their actions, whereas Sheila and Eric take responsibility.

- Gerald reveals that the Inspector isn't real, but Eric and Sheila have now changed, shown when Sheila refuses to accept the engagement ring back.
- As Mr Birling mocks the younger generation, the phone rings. A young woman has died; an Inspector is coming to question them.
- The ending and who the Inspector is, has been much debated, but the moral remains: those in 1945 should show empathy for a better, fairer world.



Capitalism	An economic system where the country's trade and profit is privately owned by the wealthy few.
Socialism	An economic system where the country's trade and profit is shared by the whole community.
Bourgeoisie	The middle class who typically own most of society's wealth.
Proletariat	The working class who must sell their labour to financially survive.
Dramatic irony	The audience / reader is aware of something the characters are not.
Dehumanisation	Depriving a person or group of positive human qualities.
Patriarchy	A society controlled by men in which they use their power to their own advantage.
Infantilise	To treat someone like a child deny their maturity.
Superficial	Only considering surface appearance.
Objectification	Treating someone like an object.
Microcosm	A miniature example of a larger system, community or issue.
Mouthpiece	Being a voice for someone.
Hubris	Extreme pride or arrogance.
Circular narrative	Where events start and end at the same place.

