

GCSE: An Inspector Calls Knowledge Organiser

1. Characters

Mr Birling	Arrogant and Capitalist businessman who hates social equality and loves money. Sacks Eva from his factory when she asks for equal pay.
Mrs Birling	Snobbish and cold-hearted Capitalist who believes everyone is responsible for themselves.
Inspector Goole	Priestley's mouthpiece (represents JBP's ideals), keen Socialist who fights for community responsibility and gets the Birlings to face up to what they have done.
Sheila	The daughter. Starts off as a spoilt rich girl but quickly changes her views, feels sorry for Eva Smith and starts to become Socialist.
Eric	The son. Drinks too much and has a one-night stand with Eva. Changes his ways by the end of the play.
Gerald	Sheila's fiancé. Businessman who has Capitalist ideals and is similar to Mr Birling politically. Shows some regret for his affair with Eva, but happy to act like nothing has happened when it suits him.

2. Plot

Act 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The family are celebrating Sheila and Gerald's engagement. Birling makes speeches saying there will be no war, and the Titanic is unsinkable. An Inspector arrives and tells them Eva Smith has committed suicide. He gets Mr B to admit sacking her. He doesn't take blame. Inspector gets Sheila to admit getting her sacked for laughing. She feels guilty and ashamed of herself.
Act 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspector gets Gerald to admit having an affair with Eva Smith (now called Daisy Renton after a name change). Sheila is upset and questions her relationship with Gerald. Inspector gets Mrs B to admit not helping Eva when she came to Mrs B's charity for help when she became pregnant. Mrs B says it should be the father's responsibility. At the end of the Act, we realise that the father of Eva's baby was Eric.
Act 3	Eric's involvement with Eva is revealed and a possible rape is hinted at, as he says he forced Eva. The Inspector gives his final speech about fire, blood and anguish. He is warning the family that if they don't start to take responsibility for others, they will live to regret it. Inspector then leaves. Gerald finds out that the Inspector wasn't a real inspector. Mr B rings to check and there is no Inspector Goole. Also, there is no dead girl! Mr and Mrs B (and Gerald) celebrate and act like nothing has happened. Sheila and Eric still feel guilty and can't go back to how they were before. Right at the end, the telephone rings and they are told that a girl has just committed suicide and an inspector is on his way over to ask some questions

3. Context

<p>1912 – when the play was set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before WW1 and the sinking of the Titanic Highlights societal issues: class system, Capitalism, sexism
<p>1945 – when the play was written and performed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After WW2, society changed for the better The benefit system started to be introduced, and we had more equality for women and less of a class divide because of different classes and different genders mixing in the war effort JBP supported and encouraged these Socialist changes
<p>Socialism – A political system whereby everyone is treated equally and take care of each other. JBP was a keen socialist.</p>
<p>Capitalism – A political system whereby making money is more important than human rights. JBP hated Capitalists</p>
<p>Outdated ideas – In 1912, the social classes were segregated, women got paid less than men for the same work, there was no benefit system or help with unemployment or housing. Society was patriarchal (men ruled).</p>

4. Themes

Ambition / Greed	Power	Ignorance
Class	Death	Gender
Fate and free will	Responsibility	Power
Equality	Guilt	Manhood

5. Form and Structure

<p>Setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single set: claustrophobic and intense. Emphasises the Birlings' insular lifestyle. Lighting 'pink and intimate' symbolises the Birlings' 'rose tinted glasses' Lighting becomes 'brighter' and 'harder' with the arrival of the Inspector, emphasizes harsh reality
<p>Foreshadowing of problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistencies in the character explanations Hint at lies told by Gerald to Sheila Mr Birling as ignorant in regards to opinions on future events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each act ends with a cliffhanger- creates tension and forces the audience to reflect Delayed action to prolong the conclusion of the play
<p>Dialogue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheila's language develops from infantile to assertive Inspector uses direct and plain language whereas the Birlings tend to talk euphemistically