

PRIESTLEY'S INTENTIONS AND HOW A 1945 AUDIENCE MAY HAVE REACTED

The play is set two years before the outbreak of WW1. Looking back on it now, or from the perspective of 1945, the Edwardian era appears like a secure time: Britain had an empire, an unrivalled Navy and was wealthy. For people like the Birlings, times were good. But, as we have seen, for those like Eva, they were not so good. Although Edwardian society might seem comfortable with hindsight, it was very uncomfortable for the majority who lived in it.

Priestley might not be trying to produce an advertisement for socialism, but he does point out the serious flaws in a society that allows treatment of someone like Eva alongside the privilege of the Birlings.

It's really important to look too, at why 1945 was such a key time for the play to first produced:

- The war with Germany had only ended in May 1945 and Europe was in ruins
- During the Blitz, the evacuation of city children meant people were thrown together in a way which was quite new
- In an effort to survive the war and repel the Nazis there was a big focus on the 'British spirit', which was about pulling together for the common good and looking after each other
- Many of the young men and women, who had done much of the fighting, were determined to make the world a better place.
- In the July 1945 General Election, a labour (left wing) government was formed, which was committed to economic and social reform, including the creation of the NHS which came into force in 1948 (this is where everybody paid taxes so everybody could get free health care, however rich or poor they were – obviously against an each man for themselves philosophy)

In this social and political climate, Priestley join the rising voices of the day who were calling for a world where people supported each other for the common good.

The play asks to what extent Eva Smith's tragedy can be blamed on the society in which she lived, a society which rewarded rich men who exploited the poor for profit and used women for pleasure.

TASK: Using all the information you have learnt about society and politics in 1912 and 1945, answer the following question:

How might have a contemporary (1945) have responded to the play? How might this be similar or different to the way a modern audience responds to the play?

ARTHUR BIRLING

At the start of the play Birling is presented as a successful, “hard-headed businessman”. He believes he is a bastion of values and decency and is proud of his position in society. During the celebratory engagement party he makes his views on the world very clear to his guests.

Look at his attitudes and philosophy towards: social class, the future, society, socialism, appearances.....

PAGE	POINT/QUOTATION	ANALYSIS
4	<p>Prosperous businessman - capitalist</p> <p>“for lower costs and higher prices”</p>	<p>Business is his primary purpose. Looking to make money – consequence of lower costs is lower wages</p> <p>Might seem innocent at first, but the consequence of this attitude comes though later</p>
6	<p>View of world = simple, self-satisfied, confident, assured, self-righteous, comfortable, smug</p> <p>“You can ignore all this silly pessimistic talk.”</p>	<p>Shows his confidence and arrogance – telling others ‘you’</p> <p>Belittles people’s political predictions as ‘silly’ and ‘talk’</p> <p>Audience, both 1945 and modern day, know he’s wrong – Priestly gets us to disagree with him from start, so we will disagree with rest of message</p>
6	<p>Proud of own position/social standing:</p> <p>“I’m talking as a hard-headed practical man of business”</p>	
6	<p>Proud of own position/social standing:</p> <p>“I’m talking as a hard-headed practical man of business”</p>	<p>Refers to himself in this way twice – shows how strongly he believes it. Thinks it’s a good thing – but ‘hard’ also makes us think he’s hard-hearted?</p> <p>‘Practical’ man – not into the theory of helping others – he’s in the ‘real’ world where he has actually had to do business and has actually had to make money.</p>

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6	<p>Unwavering optimism about future + reliance on technology:</p> <p>War:</p> <p>'you'll hear some people say war is inevitable...fiddlesticks!'</p>	<p>As above – we realise he's stupid – ploy by Priestly so we don't agree with his position</p> <p>'Fiddlesticks!' again belittling other's ideas. Exclamatory sentence – he's passionate and convinced about what he's saying</p>
PAGE	POINT/QUOTATION	ANALYSIS
7	<p>Progress:</p> <p>'The Titanic – she sails next week...and unsinkable, absolutely unsinksable.'</p> <p>'in 1940 – you may be giving a little party like this...there'll be peace, prosperity and rapid progress'</p>	<p>As above – realising he's stupid.</p> <p>Brings the irony of what he's saying to contemporary audience – in 1945, they've just come out of war, there is no prosperity and the industrial progress has led to the first two fully mechanised wars and the deaths of millions of men.</p>
7	<p>Politics:</p> <p>"these Capital versus Labour agitations"</p>	<p>'agitations' makes them sound like they're not a big deal – just an irritation. Again, belittling those with a different political point of view.</p>
7	<p>Political views. His philosophy concerning society, welfare & responsibility:</p>	
9	<p>"A man has to make his own way"</p>	<p>Doesn't think we should support others. He is a self-made man (<i>if I can do it, other's can</i>)</p> <p>Singular 'a man', not 'men' highlights that it's down to the individual to take care of themselves.</p>
10		

<p>8</p> <p>8</p>	<p>Places value on social status & sensitive to class issues.</p> <p>“Don’t blame her.it’s only natural”</p> <p>“I gather there’s a very good chance of a knighthood”</p>	<p>(about Gerald’s mother having some reservations about marriage).</p> <p>Sees social class divisions as ‘natural’ – not something we should fight against and try to overcome.</p> <p>He’s come from a lower class background, and instead of fighting against the difficulties and going for equality – he’s more interested in climbing the social ladder. He wants to have higher social status.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>“we broke out and had a bit of fun sometimes”</p>	

Connection with Eva & reaction to the Inspector's interrogation		
11	"and I'm still on the bench" (as in prominent political member)	Trying to show off his credentials to put off the Inspector. Shows his arrogance. Also shows that he thinks he is above the law and can wheedle his way out of the situation. Shows he believes in corruption of class system.
12	"(rather impatiently)Horrid business. But I don't understand why you should come here."	Says it's a 'horrid business' but is pretty willing to move and on and forget about it. Can't see why he would be involved. He's impatient to get back to his dinner party. No sympathy.
13	"Perhaps I ought to explain first that this is Mr Gerald croft – the son of Sir George Croft."	Again, playing on class system. Emphasises 'sir' – thinks Inspector should be impressed.
14	"Still I can't accept any responsibility" Unsympathetic to lower class workers:	Not willing to change his views. 'any' responsibility – not even willing to take a little bit
15	"Well it's my duty to keep labour costs down"	'duty' to who? Himself and shareholders and other businessmen who make money. Not doing his duty to workers who need a living wage.
16	"Perhaps I ought to warn you that he's an old friend of mine"	Referring to the Chief Constable- trying to warn the Inspector off. Again, shows that he is part of 'old boys club' – prepared to use social status to get him out of trouble. Also shows that he thinks the inspector is being rude and out of order; he 'warns' him like a threat
17	"Nothing to do with you Sheila. Run along."	Shows he doesn't think that women have any place in listening – both wants to protect Sheila, but also doesn't believe she's capable of being involved because of her gender. Gives he a command: 'run along' – he's in control

17	"I was quite justified."	Thinks that his business sense overrides any moral obligation he has. He feels hard done by, by them striking, and this was an appropriate response from him. 'quite' justified – like completely – no room for allowing any responsibility
21	"We were having a nice little family celebration...nasty mess"	Again, almost like Eva' s death is an inconvenience to his night. Wants to get back to what he's doing. Inspector has created a 'mess' of his plans. Completely unsympathetic to Eva or investigation. Defensive?

Reactions to the Inspector's visit		Analysis
57	"I was almost certain for a knighthood"	His reaction is about the cost to himself when it gets out – not what he's done to Eva.
57	"there's every excuse for what your mother and I did"	'every' excuse – he doesn't find it difficult to justify himself. Has not taken anything on board that the inspector has said.
60	"Probably a Socialist or some sort of crank"	Again, belittling Inspector by saying he has opposing political views: 'socialist' – and equating that with a 'crank' – someone mental or deluded.
63		
70		
71		

ARTHUR BIRLING - Key Points

Sheila Birling

Sheila seems to be the perfect daughter: happy, joking, teasing and very excited about her engagement to Gerald. However, the Inspector reveals her involvement with Eva Smith whilst she was out on a shopping spree at Millwards.....

Page	Quotation	Analysis
Reactions to the Inspector's visit		
17	"(rather distressed) It's just that I can't help thinking about the girl"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She has most humanity out of characters • She cares – she is 'distressed'
19	"I think it was a mean thing to do"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She has empathy with Eva • She doesn't have a business / money approach • She doesn't agree with her father • 'I think' – giving her opinion even though a woman
19	"but these girls aren't cheap labour – they're <i>people</i> ."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People shouldn't be treated like slaves • Women should be equal (?) • Stress on 'people' (prosodic feature) – shows we must care about them because fellow human beings
Her role in the suicide		
23	"So I'm really responsible?" "At least I'm trying to tell the truth"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows she is feeling guilty • She takes on inspector's message (unlike older generation) • Making accusation at Gerald – questioning him (is that a woman's role?) • Taking responsibility for her own actions.
24	"She was a very pretty girl too...and that didn't make it any better'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She is/was jealous and shallow • Use of 'very' – envious of Eva • Women in competition, rather than sticking together and 'helping each other out'
24	"I went to the manager and told him this girl had been very impertinent – and – and – "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition of 'and' – realising she's done something wrong; getting upset • She gets to have her say because she's of a higher class
Sheila's reaction to the accusations		
24	"And if I could help her now, I would-"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She feels partly responsible and wants to make amends • Make it clear to everyone else how she feels.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘could’ – it’s too late to change for Eva, but not for other women like her
25	Sheila is similar to the Inspector:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathising with Eva • Use of exclamation ‘oh’ could be realisation or because she’s really feeling awful • Question - questioning herself, family – and putting it out to audience for them to think about their life and society. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to believe everyone will tell the Inspector something – have something to hide. • Getting frustrated with others
26	<p>“Oh why had this to happen?”</p> <hr/> <p>Sheila realizes his power/omnipotence</p> <p>“Oh don’t be stupid. We haven’t much time”</p>	
Reactions to the Inspector’s visit		
63	<i>Bitterly</i> ”I suppose we’re all nice people now”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage directions (bitterly): annoyed and angry at others • Being sarcastic – trying to make them see they can’t forget about Eva
65	“You’re just beginning to pretend all over again”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows her frustration at going ‘backwards’ • Prepared to stand up to family – men and elders and address them ‘you’re’
70	“Everything we said happened. If it didn’t...then that’s lucky for us. But it might have done”	
71	“It frightens me the way you talk and I can’t listen to any more of it”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not just frustrated by others but actually frightened. • Worried about the future – realises how important this is • Empathises with Eva – she’s young girl, same age etc.

SHEILA - Key Points

GERALD CROFT

Gerald is handsome, rich and comes from an “old, country family” – he is the social superior of the Birlings. He often agrees with Birling’s philosophy on business, politics and women. However, he has been keeping a secret from Sheila.....

Page	Quotation	Analysis
Reactions to the Inspector’s visit		
22	“After all, y’know, we’re respectable citizens and not criminals”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to show his class and status – ‘respectable’ related to not being a ‘criminal’ – higher class can’t do wrong?
Gerald’s view of women		
27	(about Sheila): “She’s obviously had about as much as she can stand”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking on Sheila’s behalf – patronising (link to Gerald’s view of women) • ‘obviously’ – women can’t take too much – as though everyone would agree with him: it’s obvious
27	“Why should you [stay]? It’s bound to be unpleasant and disturbing”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the role of women – is he being protective of Sheila or patronising? • Questioning her and her right to stay – it’s her house after all
Gerald’s role in the suicide		
34	“It’s a favourite haunt of women of the town”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerald, who is after all ‘respectable’ – is happy to socialise in a place with prostitutes • What are his intentions in going there – it’s not clear, but it’s suspicious • ‘women of the town’ – has to speak about them in a euphemism (i.e. can’t refer to them directly as prostitutes)
35	Makes it sound like a rescue mission:	
36	‘[Daisy] gave me a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View on women: Eva/Daisy in distress - women need rescuing • ‘nothing less than’ – he’s interpreting her look and justifying his behaviour – was this really the case or is he trying to make himself seem better
37	“I didn’t ask for anything in return”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He didn’t ask for free sex in return for accommodation, but he got it • He set up the situation – does it make it better that he didn’t ‘ask’

		<p>for it? He still accepted it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is he any better than the men in the club? He gave her hope and then let her down
39	“She told me she’d been happier than she’d ever been before”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happier than ‘ever’ been • Trying to justify that he did the right thing • But if he made her that happy, she had further to fall (more painful) when he turned his back on her so he could go ahead with his marriage to Sheila
Reactions to the Inspector’s visit		
62	Starts idea of Inspector as hoax: ‘That man wasn’t a police officer’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He’s the first to want to discredit the inspector • Thinks if he can discredit him it doesn’t matter – not willing to take responsibility <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a ‘bluff’ – trying make out is some sort of joke, not to be taken seriously
66	‘he bluffs us into confessing’	
68	“there’s still no proof it was really the same girl”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of proof – means absence of conviction of crime – does this mean everything can go back to normal? • If not the same girl – doesn’t get away from the fact that all the things they did actually happened
71	“Everything’s all right now, Sheila. What about this ring?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy to carry on as before • No remorse • Wants to pick things back up with Sheila – forget about Daisy Renton • Poses question to Sheila, as though she will be happy with situation too and not have any problems

GERALD - Key Points

SYBIL BIRLING

At the start of the play Mrs. Birling appears as a lady of good social class, superior to that of her husband. She acts with quiet control in Act One showing an acute sense of propriety. In Act Two we see her cold-hearted, arrogant character emerge during the Inspector's interrogation.

Page	Quotation	Analysis
Reactions to the Inspector & Eva		
29	<i>Smiling, social</i> "I don't think we can help you much."	Smug/confident. Smiling face on front, but defensive underneath.
30	"girls of that class"	'that' class – can't even name it. Looking down on them. Happy to judge people based upon their class – stereotyping and prejudice.
30	"Please don't contradict me like that."	Doesn't think her daughter should have opposing views. Thinks her age makes her superior.
31	Tries to use social position to intimidate Inspector: 'you know, my husband was Lord Mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate'	Like Birling: thinks her social status can buy her favour and bargaining. Shows she's happy to take part in corruptness of system and not be accountable to law – ironic seeing as Birling is part of law system. Shows she also thinks Inspector is out of order for accusing her.
Sybil's role in the suicide		
43	'I'm very sorry. But I think she only had herself to blame'	Not willing to take any responsibility. Paying lip service – is she really sorry for the fact she's dead. Not taking any responsibility
44 44	"I've done nothing wrong – and you know it."	Challenging others to agree with her – can't see that she is wrong. Arrogance. Unwillingness to learn.
45	"Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility."	Being trapped by Inspector. Command: 'go and look' - she's so sure of herself she's willing to tell others what to do. She changes when realises it's Eric. Eager to blame. Naïve about Eric.

46	"She was giving herself ridiculous airs"	Feels offended that Eva called herself Mrs Birling – how can lower classes aspire to be like her. We, as the audience, know why she's given herself this name (dramatic irony) and suspect Eva wasn't 'giving herself airs'. Shows that Sybil believes in class system – and doesn't like others rising and pretending to be something they're not – even though her husband has risen through the social ranks.
47	"But I accept no blame at all"	'at all' - completely unremorseful. 'But' – prepared to contradict Inspector.
48	Gets trapped by Inspector and blames others: 'find this young man and make sure he's compelled to confess'	See notes for above: 'Go and look...' – again another command.

Reactions to the Inspector's visit		
59	"so rude....so assertive"	Attacks the inspector himself, rather than his argument. Again, he's been rude to her.
60	'he certainly didn't make me confess – I had done no more than my duty'	'Certainly' – smug , feels as though hasn't been trapped by Inspector – even though before when realised had killed her own grandchild was distraught: '(very distressed now) No – Eric – please – I didn't know) Hasn't learnt anything, even from such an emotional experience
61	(about Edna) 'I asked her to wait up to make us some tea'	Prepared to move on and think about other things. Inspector's visit not important.
71	Refuses to learn from experience: (about Sheila and Eric) 'in the morning they'll be as amused as we are'	Thinks everyone is the same as her. 'Amused' – by such a traumatising experience? Did she really find it funny??

SYBIL BIRLING - Key Points

ERIC BIRLING

Page	Quotation	Analysis
Reactions to the Inspector's interrogation of his father		
15	"it isn't as if you can go and work somewhere else."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the unfairness of his father's statement, and therefore of his treatment of the workers. • Is willing to question his father- a reflection of their relationship? • At this point shows more of an understanding with the Inspector's questioning than his own father's views. (Birling first to be interviewed so early on in the play). Does this foreshadow his later remorse? 'And that doesn't alter the fact that we all helped to kill her.'
15	"He could have kept her on instead of throwing her out. I call it tough luck."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to Gerald's 'You couldn't have done anything else' (to Birling) • Shows the difference in the attitudes between Birling/Gerald and Eric. You would expect father/son to share similar views. • 'Throwing' emphasises the merciless nature in which Eva was treated. • 'Tough' emphasises the lack of compassion from Birling.
16	"I'd have let her stay"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows he sees his father's actions as unjust and cruel. He would have done it differently. Showing that he sees himself differently to his father. Could argue this is a more personal thing against his father, rather than towards the girl at this point. Especially as... • ...Irony as we later find out that Eric hasn't treated the same girl well either.
Eric's role in the suicide		
51/52	"I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'chap' generalises it, as though Eric is struggling to take full responsibility at this point for his own actions. • 'I was in that state' again shows not fully taking responsibility for his actions. It was the alcohol that made him behave that way, opposed to him behaving in that way. • Is this because of the genuine guilt that he feels at this point? • 'Nasty' could imply a forced rape? His inability to say show suggests shame?
053	"In a way, she treated me – as if I were a kid"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows Eric's lack of control in the situation. He was not responsible

		<p>enough to make the decisions, so she made them for him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Kid' makes Eric seem more vulnerable. Is his behaviour a product of the way that he has been brought up?
53	"Said I didn't love her"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eva Smith herself recognised that Eric was only physically attracted to her. Therefore, love was absent from the relationship. • This + Gerald's treatment of her makes the audience feel more sympathetic towards her. • The fact that she used this as grounds for them not to marry shows that despite the way she has been treated, she was still thinking of Eric.
Relationship with parents		
54	<p>"Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble"</p> <p>"Your trouble is – you've been spoilt"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the problems in their relationship (think about how all this contrasts with the happy image of the family presented at the start of the play). • The fact that this is response to Birling worrying about how he has to 'cover this up' shows that Birling's worries are still not about his son, but about his business and reputation. This therefore reinforces what Eric was saying about not being able to go to him when he needed them. • 'Spoilt' shows that Birling thinks that Eric has had too easy of a life. But surely this is because of the parents? Therefore, they too need to learn from Eric's mistake, but still refuse to accept responsibility. • This is in response to the money being stolen, not Eric's treatment of Eva → so again, it shows us where Birling's values lie. • Is the state system fair when he would be allowed to be spoilt in this way? Not having to earn his money.
55	"You don't understand anything. You never did."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Mrs B. Shows that relationship is strained with both parents. • 'Never' shows that this is not just a result of the Inspector's visit. • Emphasises the questionable nature of Mrs B's 'compassion'.

Reactions to the Inspector's visit		
59	"He was our police inspector all right"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding that it doesn't matter if he was a real inspector or not → he illuminated the true nature of the family.
63		
64	"Whoever the chap was, the fact remains that I did what I did."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking responsibility for his actions, despite the fact that the Inspector may not have been an inspector. Contrast to parents' reactions. 'Remains' shows that he cannot just brush this off.
65	"The girl's dead and we all helped to kill her –and that's what matters"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'We all' shows a collective responsibility to her death. 'Girl' makes her seem younger and more vulnerable, showing the guilt he may be feeling and drawing sympathy from the audience. 'All that matters' shows that he is no longer thinking of himself.
69	"That doesn't matter to me. The one I knew is dead"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows the responsibility he feels for his actions, regardless of what has changed. He is very much focused on the girl, rather than himself.

ERIC - Key Points

The Inspector

Page	Quotation	Analysis
11	“Massiveness, solidity and purposefulness....looking hard at the person”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made to appear dominant from his entrance. • Reflects the dominant role he will play in the play. • ‘looking hard at the person’ suggests he will look closely at things (as does the name ‘Inspector’) and we learn through the play that he sees through the images others will try to put on.
11	Creates uncertainty “I’m on duty”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear that Inspector is not there for a social call- why is he there? • The comfortable, happy nature from the beginning has changed → the Birlings are now out of control and therefore they feel uncertain.
12	“There might be”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the Inspector’s control of the situation, and again, the Birling’s lack of it. The ambiguity of ‘might’ shows that he can control the amount of information, without feeling the need to please the Birlings.
13	“Mr. Gerald Croft, eh”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows that the name may be familiar to the inspector → Birling would assume this would be because of the Croft name, but we come to learn otherwise. Links to the idea of the inspector being omniscient. • ‘Eh’ could also be seen as almost mocking the fact that Birling tries to use Gerald’s name.
15	Steps out of police role “better to ask for the earth than to take it”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows Priestly using the Inspector to deliver a moral message. • The Inspector is directly contradicting Birling’s idea of ‘they’d soon be asking for the earth.’ The Inspector’s response (‘better to’) highlights the selfishness of Birling’s actions, as well as the ruthlessness of his behaviour (‘take’).
16	“Goole”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homophone to ‘ghoul’ → • Meaning: Someone who has a

		<p>morbid interest in death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghost like: suggests something supernatural about the Inspector. Foreshadowing the future events Gerald's discovery about the Inspector. Is this to highlight the fact that it is the family's own responsibility to right their wrongs, rather than the Inspector's (Priestly's message → social responsibility). • Creates a sense of mystery around him, and therefore a sense of unease for the audience and the Birlings. • This also creates a more ominous character which is made sharper by his knowledge about the family's involvement with Eva Smith.
19	"I've had that notion....."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to Sheila's 'But these girls aren't cheap labour- they're <i>people</i>.' • Sarcasm ('notion') used to show that what Sheila thinks is how their morals <i>should</i> be. This sense of morality is dawning on Sheila and Mr and Mrs Birling are still oblivious to it, but it is obvious to the Inspector, Priestly and the audience that Birling's reactions are morally wrong.
22	"Sometimes there isn't as much difference as you think"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to Gerald's 'We're respectable citizens and not criminals.' • The Inspector is hinting at what he knows with regards to Eva Smith's case. This knowledge, without giving too much away, creates a sense of unease. • It also shows the Inspector disputing Gerald's idea that there are two types of people in society morally, and these are separated by class. As we progress through the play, we realise just how correct the Inspector is.
23	"but you're partly to blame. Just as your father is."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'just as your father is' shows that it is not one individual's fault, that it

		<p>is a collective responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the different reactions of Birling and Sheila, even though they are both 'partly to blame'. • We see the chain of events revealing the Birlings' involvement unfolding – the Inspector's accusations control this unravelling.
29	"If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priestly, through the Inspector, talks of 'sharing' to emphasise how important sharing is within a society (link to his socialist ideas). • Here the Inspector is highlighting that the only thing the Birlings will share is their guilt (due to their selfish nature), which will be so large (due to their actions) that the only way to cope with it will be to share it.
30	"we often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the difference in attitudes between the generations (between Mr and Mrs Birling and their children). • The older generation's views represent those of the time the play was set. The younger generation's represent the views Priestly and many others felt Britain should hold after the two wars, in order to move the country forward. • 'impressionable' stresses how important it is that we teach the new generation the right way, the importance of social responsibility. • Mr and Mrs Birling spend so much of the play telling Eric and Sheila what to do, but are the children wiser as they understand the Inspector's (and Priestly's) message.

Inspector passes judgement in final sermon

But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths 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 come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.

Page	Quotation	Analysis
56	'millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths left with us'	<p>Priestley is trying to get us to think about how it's not just about Eva – it's about how we treat all people.</p> <p>Eva stands for all women. Eva – from 'Eve' – the very first women. 'Smith' being one of the most common English names. Also, men too – 'John Smith' – again very common name.</p> <p>Repetition of 'millions' – Priestley trying to stress the scale of the problem and how many people are struggling because the actions of the few rich.</p>
56		
56	'They will be taught in fire and blood and anguish'	<p>'Fire and blood and anguish' brings up images of the two wars fought just before the play was written. Many of Priestley's initial audiences would have been directly affected by this, so the images created are emotional as well as violent.</p> <p>This could also be argued to relate to the Russian revolution, in which poor workers and peasants took over the state and exacted a bloody revenge against the aristocrats who had treated them so badly.</p> <p>'Fire' also conjures up images of hell → the consequences of acting sinfully. (Links to the Birlings representing the 7 deadly sins. → Greed= Mr Birling. Pride = Mr/s Birling.</p>

		<p>Wrath= Mrs Birling/ Sheila. Envy= Sheila. Gluttony = Eric. Sloth = Eric. Lust= Eric/Gerald.)</p> <p>The repetition of 'and' emphasises the enormity of these consequences.</p>
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The Function of the Inspector

- To make the character confess their actions
- To control speech and movement on stage
- To create moments of tension and intrigue
- To act as a vehicle for Priestley's moral message
- To encourage the characters and audience to learn from the mistakes of the past

1. Why are each of these functions important?
2. How successful is the Inspector in achieving them?

STAGE AND SETTING

Re-read the opening stage directions for the play.

The dining room of a fairly large suburban house, belonging to a prosperous manufacturer. It has good solid furniture of the period. The general effect is substantial and heavily comfortable, but not cosy and homelike... The lighting should be pink and intimate until the INSPECTOR arrives, and then it should be brighter and harder.)

At the rise of the curtain, the four BIRLINGS and GERALD are seated at the table, with ARTHUR BIRLING at one end, his wife at the other, ERIC downstage and SHEILA and GERALD seated upstage. EDNA, the parlourmaid, is just clearing the table which has no cloth, of dessert plates and champagne glasses, etc. and then replacing them with a decanter of port, cigar boxes and cigarettes. Port glasses are already on the table. All five are in evening dress of the period, the men in talis and white ties, not dinner-jackets.

Answer the following questions below, trying to explain the significance of these decisions by Priestly. Remember, you can always give more than one interpretation of what Priestly was trying to suggest by these choices!