

**English Literature**

**An Inspector Calls**

**Revision Guide**

* **Key Quotes**
* **Characterisation**
* **Context**
* **Methods**
* **Sample Essay Questions**
* **Sample Essay Answers**

**Contents Page**

Key Quotes – Pg 3

Practice Questions – Pg 5

Plot Summary – Pg 7

Character Points – Pg 8

Structure Points – Pg 12

Key Themes – Pg 14

Sample Essays

Mrs Birling – Pg 16

Gerald – Pg 18

Mr Birling – Pg 20

Sheila – Pg 22

Eric – Pg 24

Inspector – Pg 26

Eva – Pg 28

**Key Quotes**

-Learn these off

-Make postcards with these

-Get someone to test you!

* **Act 1 Quotes**
* ‘When you’re married you’ll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend time … on their business’.
* Crofts and Birling are working together – for lower costs and higher prices.’
* ‘hard-headed business man’
* ‘a man has to make his own way’
* ‘community and all that nonsense’
* ‘so long as we behave ourselves’
* ‘My God!’
* ‘It’s my duty to keep labour costs down’
* ‘Why shouldn’t they try for higher prices?’
* ‘Oh – how horrible!’
* ‘I can’t stop thinking about this girl’
* ‘But these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people’
* ‘we’re respectable citizens and not criminals’
* ‘You abused the power you had’.
* ‘If I could help her now, I would’

**Act 2 Quotes**

* ‘I can’t stop thinking about it …. I know I’m to blame – and I’m desperately sorry’.
* ‘You mustn’t try to build up a wall between us and that girl’.
* ‘You and I aren’t the same people who sat down to dinner here’.
* ‘Public men have responsibilities as well as privileges’.
* ‘that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case’.
* ‘she had only herself to blame’.
* ‘Go and look for the father of the child. It’s his responsibility’.
* ‘Mother – I begged you and begged you to stop – ‘

**Act 3 Quotes**

* ‘you’re not the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble’.
* ‘You killed her…..damn you, damn you –’
* ‘I’m not likely to forget’.
* ‘I’d give thousands.’
* Just used her ….like an animal, a thing, not even a person’.
* ‘One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us’.
* ‘We don’t live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other’.
* ‘If men will not learn that lesson, they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish’.
* ‘was he really a police Inspector?’ / ‘he never seemed like an ordinary police inspector’
* ‘There’s every excuse for what both your mother and I did’.
* ‘I’m ashamed …but you’re all beginning to pretend that nothing much has happened’.
* ‘We’ve been had’.
* ‘I suppose we’re all nice people now’.
* ‘It’s too soon’.

**Practice questions**

You could use these to

-write up sample answers

-plan an essay

-create an essay plan

* How does Priestley use his characters to demonstrate the life of the lower class?
* How does Priestley use his characters to demonstrate the life of the wealthier classes?
* To what extent could you argue that Priestley has given a voice to the lower class within the play?
* How does Priestley use the character of Eva Smith as an important symbol in the play?
* How does Priestley present the character of Mr Birling as a stubborn man who refuses to recognise the rights of others?
* How far does Priestley present the character of Mr Birling as someone who is uninterested in those around him?
* How does Priestley present Mrs Birling as a character who is interested in privilege over values?
* How far does Priestley present Mrs Birling as a person who is unaware of the society she lives in?
* To what extent does Priestley use the generations within the play effectively?
* How does Priestley present the character of Gerald as someone who is a product of the society he lives in?
* To what extent does Priestley portray the character of Gerald as unlikeable?
* To what extent does Priestley demonstrate a change in the character of Eric throughout the play?
* How does Priestley present the character of Eric as someone who grows in maturity as the play develops?
* How does Priestley convey Sheila as a representation of change in the play?
* How far does Priestley present Sheila as a character who breaks from tradition?
* How does Priestley use the character of the Inspector as an important symbol in the play?
* To what extent could you argue that the Inspector is the most important character in the play?

-To what extent does Priestley examine the consequences of greed within the play?

- How does Priestley convey the importance of the social classes in the era the play was set?

-To what extent does Priestley convey the role of money and wealth within the play?

- How has Priestley used the key message of his play to create a strong meaning for the audience?

-To what extent has Priestley created an effective ending in the play?

- How has Priestley conveyed the importance of social responsibility within the play?

- How has Priestley demonstrated the values of the characters within the play?

- To what extent do you think the Inspector has been successful in his role in the play?

- How has Priestley presented the role of gender within the play?

- To what extent has Priestley effectively conveyed the role of women within the era the play was set?

- How has Priestley presented romantic relationships within the play?

- How has Priestley presented familial relationships within the play?

- To what extent has Priestley demonstrated the political values of the era the play was set in?

- How has Priestley conveyed the importance of the social hierarchy within the play?

- How effective has Priestley been in demonstrating his key message within the play?

- To what extent has Priestley conveyed the role of change within the play?

**Plot Summary**

**Act 1:**

* In Act 1, the characters and setting are introduced in the dining room of the Birling family during an engagement party for Sheila, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Birling because Sheila is engaged to Gerald Croft.
* This is followed by the arrival of the Inspector, which changes the whole course of events.
* He later announces the very recent suicide of Eva Smith and starts to question Mr. Birling, after showing him the photograph of the girl, who turns out to have worked for Mr. Birling’s firm and to have been dismissed for trying to obtain a pay rise and going on strike.
* The Inspector goes on to question Sheila, who admits her jealousy of Eva because of the way she looked in a dress Sheila had liked. Her complaints about the girl’s rudeness contributed to Eva losing her job. After this, it emerges that Gerald had an affair with Eva during the previous summer.

**Act 2:**

* In Act 2, Gerald talks about his relationship with Eva Smith (who was also known as Daisy Renton).
* When Gerald leaves the room, the Inspector turns his questioning on Mrs Birling and the audience learns that she had refused Eva’s pleading for help when she was pregnant and had no money to survive. Mrs Birling also states that the man who got Eva pregnant should admit his guilt and take responsibility for his actions.

**Act 3:**

* In Act 3, Eric returns from a walk and becomes the next to be questioned by Inspector Goole: he also confesses to a relationship with Eva, which had led to her pregnancy. He admits that he gave her money at first, but that she refused to take it when she learned that it was stolen from Mr Birling’s office. At this point, Inspector Goole leaves, and there is a bitter family argument, with all of the family blaming one another.
* Gerald returns and announces that the Inspector is a fake. They check with the local hospital and are told that no girl has committed suicide that night.
* There is a great sense of relief, and the family concludes that the whole story was a bluff.
* Sheila and Eric quarrel with their parents. At this point the phone rings. It is the police, who are ringing because a girl has committed suicide. It seems that an inspector is on his way to ask them some questions about this suicide.

**Mr Arthur Birling**

* A capitalist – focuses on his business and developing his reputation
* Tries to impress Gerald to advance business success
* Dramatic irony conveys not as knowledge and does not have the authority he thinks. Repetition of phrases used to convince when simply undermines himself.
* Patronising and condescending to others – length of turn overpowers over 
* A very selfish man, who wants to look after himself and his family above everything else. Narcissistic – can only contemplate how actions will affect him
* Pompous; he tries to use his connections to intimidate the Inspector.
* Worried that his knighthood may not be given to him if there is any scandal over Eva Smith
* Determined to protect his reputation.
* Opposed to new ideas, such as socialism.
* Depersonalises his workforce – uses for his advantage for profit
* Traditional views that women (except lower class) should not be exposed to world
* Is not close to Eric – places blame on him. Ironically much closer to Gerald
* Unable to learn to accept responsibility, complacent and set in his ways.
* Birling has no remorse and is greatly relieved when Gerald seems to have proved they have been hoaxed

**Mrs Sybil Birling**

* ‘About fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband’s social superior’
* Snobbish – looks down on lower class ‘that class’
* Lacking in respect for the Inspector and arrogant in her attitudes towards him.
* Regards Sheila and Eric as still being children rather than adults – is distant from their lives
* In denial over Eric’s drinking problems: dismisses the fact that Gerald had an affair with Eva/Daisy
* Acts in a prejudiced way because of her strict beliefs.
* Judgemental of others – expects lower class to immoral
* Works at charity as part of upholding her reputation and what is socially expected
* Ironic – does not actually help Eva/Daisy
* Refuses to accept warning from Sheila
* At the end of the play, still refuses to accept that she has done anything wrong.

**Sheila Birling**

* ‘A pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited’.
* Seems immature and focused on her engagement at beginning
* Not close to Eric at beginning – insults each other but united in beliefs at end
* Do see impact of Capitalist upbringing – abused her role to have Eva fired – acts as a foil to her show difference in class systems/ view of women
* Perceptive, intelligent and curious; quick to realise the truth about people, for example when it is revealed that Gerald knew Daisy Renton/Eva Smith.
* Very sympathetic to Eva when she hears how her father treated her – shows ability to change / think independently
* Horrified to discover that she has played a part in Eva Smith’s downward spiral.
* The first to express doubts as to whether the Inspector is a real inspector – shows insightful
* Growing in maturity as the play progresses and in many ways is much wiser by the end of it.
* Angry with her parents because they ‘pretend that nothing much has happened’ – role reversal.
* Takes on the role of Inspector – continues to try to impress his message on parents
* Able to accept fully her own responsibility and that of others in the family for what happened to Eva
* At the end of the play, when her parents appear to be relieved, Sheila exclaims, “You’re pretending everything’s just as it was before.”

**Eric Birling**

* ‘In his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive’
* Embarrassed and rather awkward – see is not close to family
* A heavy drinker – uses alcohol as unhappy with life – irony compared to Eva/Daisy’s life
* Again, abused his role in society in forceful behaviour towards Eva
* Feeling guilty about how he treated Eva and, by the end of the play, prepared to accept his responsibility.
* Ashamed of what his actions had led to.
* Uses time off stage to reflect and comes to own realisation of his actions independently
* More concerned about what happened to the girl than the fact that he had stolen money from the firm.
* Able to stand up to his father in the end and tell him he disagrees with his attitudes.
* Prepared to stand with Sheila in opposing his parents’ wishes to cover up the events.

**Gerald Croft**

* An attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a “dandy” but very much the ‘easy well-bred man-about town’.
* Very well born, from an aristocratic family, son of Sir George and Lady Croft, socially superior to the Birling family.
* Shares same attitudes and values as older generation Birlings
* Unwilling at first to admit anything as he pretends not to have known the girl; is very moved when he hears of her death.
* Did show some altruistic actions but too consumed with the idea of her loving him
* In contrast to Eric, rather than reflect on actions, searches for evidence to disprove existence of Inspector
* Had potential for change but did not take this
* Believes can continue engagement – shows has not recognised her change in attitude
* Someone who, at the end of the play, has learned very little, much like Mr and Mrs Birling

**Inspector Goole**

* Name a pun on ‘ghoul’ – suggest supernatural links + otherworldly character to show his foreknowledge of events
* Someone who works in a very methodical way, facing suspects with facts to make them speak.
* A figure of great authority and firmness
* Is not intimidated by Birlings – remains calm and in control throughout
* Someone with a great amount of knowledge about Eva Smith/Daisy Renton and the Birling family; is clearly perceptive.
* Able to tell seemingly what is going to happen; appears **omniscient.**
* A man with a strong message for the characters and audience – provides a voice for Priestly and his views.
* Represents a socialist viewpoint and acts as voice for Eva
* A mystery figure. Is he real? Is he an inspector? Is he a ghost? How does he know so much?

|  |
| --- |
| **Eva Smith/Daisy Renton*** Not strictly speaking a character in the play, as she is dead and never appears on stage.
* Described as ‘very pretty’.
* Said to be the daughter of parents who had died
* A working-class girl from the country.
* Brave – unafraid to ask for a rise. Suggest socialist
* eva smith.jpgSomeone with principles – would not accept stolen money. Suggests is a moral character
* Representative of people who are treated unfairly by upper/middle classes.
 |

**Structure**

**Order of interrogations**

Mr Birling = older generation + does not take responsibility.

Sheila = younger generation + does take responsibility

Gerald = engaged to Sheila = younger but same values + attitudes of older generation

Mrs Birling = older generation + does not take responsibility

Eric = younger generation + does take responsibility

**Analysis**

Contrast/ juxtaposition between older + younger = show different in their attitudes, values + approach

Gerald in middle – has links to both.

Had potential to change but did not do so – sided with the older generation. Engagement to Sheila is broken

**Entrances + Exits + analysis**

Mr Birling – shares capitalist views – this appears to be what triggers the arrival of the Inspector to convey his socialist message

Mrs Birling and Sheila leave – show the gender divides in society – women move to let men speak after dinner.

Mrs Birling is not present when Inspector arrives = this has an impact on her not fully understanding his message as she never fully engaged in his visit

Her actions when arrives are ‘social’ and ‘smiling’- direct contrast to tension

Exits

Gerald exits as upset – however uses this time to find evidence Inspector NOT exist – shows not taking responsibility

Eric exits as upset – however uses this time to TAKE RESPONSIBILITY – comes back ready to admit

Inspector exits after key speech to allow characters to process this

Eva never present – shows lack of importance in society

**Cyclical structure**

Mr Birling opens play – shows male dominance. Straight away shows trying to impress Gerald.

Also closes the play – shows he has not changed.

Return of Inspector – shows some characters did not take the opportunity to change
Reflection of World Wars – show consequences will continue if actions do not change

**Lighting**

Starts ‘pink and intimate’ – shows the celebratory tone and atmosphere and the Birlings are clearly feeling comfortable

As play develops, lighting gets brighter and harsher – shows the Inspector is shedding light on their behaviour and trying to get the characters to see what they have done

**Setting**

The set remains in the Birling house throughout – shows the Birling family have failed to connect with the world outside of their own perception.

Failed to recognise world beyond this and other classes.

**Adheres to three Greek unities**

Time – place takes place over the course of one evening

Action – action takes place continuously as the play develops in time it would take

Place – set remains consistent throughout

**Devices used in Inspector’s closing message**

Repetition of ‘remember’ – enforces what he wants them to do – keep thinking about the message he has given

Repetition of ‘killed’ – emotive language – try to connect with characters

Short sentences – blunt and direct message given

Addresses the characters as individuals

Triplet of ‘millions and millions and millions’ – highlights how many other people the Birlings can still have an impact on

Anaphora (three sentences starting the same) – ‘We’ – re-enforce message

‘We’ = inclusive pronoun – highlights wants community to act together

Uses ‘Eva Smith + John Smith’ as representation of lower class

‘fire and blood and anguish’ – triplet of destructive language – link to World War for the horrific impact of not changing.

**Themes**

**Responsibility**

* From his first appearance, the Inspector introduces the idea of our being responsible for helping others, and taking responsibility for our actions. This is central to the whole play, with this compassionate view contrasted with a self-interested view, which is represented particularly by the capitalist Mr. Birling.
* Everyone has a collective responsibility within society.
* Priestley presents each character as having a different attitude towards responsibility, but also makes the audience question their own views.

**Social Classes**

* The play is set in a period when there were clear divisions between the upper, middle and working classes. The play looks closely at the way the class system worked, with some people who did very well out of it, like Mr. Birling, and others who suffered great hardships because of it, like Eva Smith. This was one of Priestley’s great personal concerns.



**Love, Marriage and Women’s Rights**

* The position of women is explored with the only option suggested for Sheila as being a suitable marriage. This is contrasted with the struggle of lower-class women who have no status and who may be forced through hardship into becoming mistresses or even prostitutes. Marriage is seen by Mr. Birling as an alliance to further his business and social ambitions.
* In 1912, the year the play is set, women did not have as many options or rights as they have today. Birth control methods were limited. If a single woman became pregnant, there were no benefits to support her – like there are today. As such, single mothers were often pressured to give up their babies. Abortions, if available, were carried out in secret and were very expensive. Meanwhile, a few brave women, the suffragettes, were fighting for women to have the vote.

**Age and Generation**

* The older generation and the younger generation take the Inspector's message in different ways. While Sheila and Eric accept their part in Eva's death and feel huge guilt about it, their parents are unable to admit that they did anything wrong.

**Political and Economic Beliefs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Left - Socialism** | **Right - Capitalism** |
| * Economic and political system where the **workers** **share** in the **economic profits.**
* During the early 20th century, more people began to believe in an ideal socialist system where the wealth could be shared.
* socialism.jpgJ.B. Priestley disagreed with war and wanted to see more “collective responsibility” of the government and state (**“welfare state”).** The Inspector shares these views on responsibility.
* Eva Smith showes her beliefs in socialism by **leading a strike** against Mr. Birling to ask for higher wages.
* The Inspector hints at the “millions and millions and millions” who are “still left with us” (p56) – he is possibly referring to the many **workers** who are **exploited** for low wages so that a few factory owners can benefit and become wealthy.
 | * Economic system where **owners** of land and factories **make** the greatest **economic profits** that they can to become **rich.**
* **Mr. Birling is a Capitalist.** He uses cheap labour to maximize his profits (“lower costs and higher prices” p4).
* He says he is a “hardheaded practical man of business” (p6)
* capitalism.jpgThis is why Mr. Birling came “down sharply” on Eva and those involved in the strike at his factory (P16).
* Mr. Birling thinks the Inspector is a “Socialist or some sort of crank” (P60).
 |

**To what extent does the character of Mrs Birling change throughout the play?**

Within the play, we do not see a change in her character as it develops. The audience recognise that the visit of the Inspector has no impact on her and despite his message she fails to take responsibility for her actions in relation to Daisy Renton or the lower class as a whole.

We first see how Mrs Birling reacts at the beginning of the play. The opening stage directions describe her as **‘cold’** which demonstrates how she reacts throughout. The fact she is described as her husband’s **‘social superior’** gives an immediate insight into her place in the social hierarchy and this is reflected from the beginning. We see she is very conscious of how she is expected to act and criticises her husband for thanking the cook. More importantly, we see how she almost excuses Gerald for not seeing her daughter more – **‘you’ll realise that men with important work sometimes have to spend time on their businesses’.** This indicates she has also accepted Mr Birling’s work and recognises this as a key part of the social order which she adheres to which is also seen when she follows the tradition of leaving the men after the dinner. We see that the traditions of her class are deeply embedded as she continues these without question.

We see that her place in society indicates the high moral expectations which she enforces on those around her. We firstly saw this in Act 1 when Eric and Sheila are squabbling and she shows her distaste when Sheila calls Eric **‘squiffy’.** She responds with **‘the things you girls pick up these days’** which show her dislike of Sheila using this colloquial term. This is shown further when she is disgusted both at Gerald’s affair and Aldermand Meggarty – this shows her contempt for behaviour which does not meet her high and exact standards. This will later be extremely dishonest when we see her own role but this starts to indicate the judgemental nature which she conveys to those around her.

We see her social pretences further when she first meets the Inspector. She shows her unawareness of the tension in the room and the stage directions show her as **‘smiling’** and **‘social’**. This shows she is trying to also convey her role as the powerful lady of the house to the Inspector and like Mr Birling tries to demonstrate her superiority over him by reminding him of her husband’s role of Lord Mayor. This shows again how reliant she is on her social standing and believes this means she is exempt from his questioning. We see how she expects her children to also behave in a certain way, repeatedly telling Sheila to **‘go to bed’** and treating her in a rather childish way. Ironically, she completely disregards her daughter’s advice to ‘**not build up a wall between us and that girl’** which shows she feels that she knows better than anyone else. The way she responds here shows she does not like to have her authority challenged.

The way she refers to the lower class before her own interrogation conveys her narrow minded view and lack of interest. She repeatedly refers to Eva/Daisy as **‘girls of that class’** which conveys her contempt and open distain for them. Mrs Birling fails to see them as individuals and like her husband simply objectifies them as having lower morals due to their status in the class system. Ironically, we have seen her children act in a completely different way by showing some sympathy towards what has happened but it is during Mrs Birling’s own interrogation which completely reveals her cold attitude towards both Eva and the lower class who she represents.

The way she treated Daisy is the key insight we are given into her character and the defiant attitude she responds to the Inspector with which she believes she is entitled to as she has down nothing wrong in her eyes. The audience are told she works for the Brumley Women’s Charity Organisation – in 1912 the lack of the welfare state meant the role of charity was key to those in need and this would have been a key way for Mrs Birling to present an image of herself to the community. Despite being a **‘prominent’** member, we see the irony of how easily she refused to help when she felt that her place on the social hierarchy was being challenged when Daisy selected the name Birling to present herself. This caused Mrs Birling great offense as she does not feel that they could be any connection – this small action means she admitted she was ‘prejudiced’ against her case. She judged her simply on this and refused to help. She repeatedly called her case **‘nonsense’** and **‘ridiculous’** which shows she did not feel she had any responsibility to help and was keen to pass the responsibility back to the Father without showing any human kindness. She was extremely demeaning to her by stating **‘as if a girl of that sort would ever turn down money’** which shows the low expectations she maintains of the lower class, completely missing the irony that Daisy acted in a much more moral way than her own son. These actions clearly represent Mrs Birling as a judgemental woman who abused her own status to dismiss someone who had simply annoyed her.

However, it is Mrs Birling’s reaction to this and her behaviour when the Inspector leaves which show that she has not moved on from her earlier behaviour. She is quick to point out he ‘**didn’t make her confess’** and stated that she always believed there was something not right about his role. She is more concerned about the way she has been spoken to that what he has actually said to her. She latches on positively to the news Gerald brings back and refers to him as **‘clever’** – this shows she is clearly only thinking of her own position rather than the way he has treated her daughter. This displays the narcissistic elements of her personality which show even at the end of the play she, unlike her children, refuses to accept any wrong doing on her part. She is behaving in a way which parallels her earlier actions and so has not changed.

The structure of her interrogation highlights the fact that she is in direct contrast with the younger generation in the reaction to the Inspector. In the same way Mr Birling and Sheila’s questioning was paralleled, we see the contrast between hers and the following confession of Eric to highlight the difference in these. Even as the lights of the play get brighter, she fails to metaphorically see the impacts of her actions. In the same way that the play conforms to the three Greek unities, this allows the audience to further recognise the lack of change in her character over these. The fact the play all takes place in the Birlings’ house completely highlights that she has failed to see the world beyond her own limited view and fail to recognise the impact she has had negatively on others.

Despite the Inspector’s message that **‘we don’t live alone’**, Mrs Birling has failed to see how her actions have had a negative impact on others. She remained unchanged by the visit and is still the same selfish and arrogant woman who is more concerned with her status and reputation.

**How is the role of Gerald significant in the play?**

Gerald is presented as the newly engaged husband to be to Sheila Birling and is present on this evening to celebrate this. However, his role in the play goes much further – he is challenged to show where his values in life lie and the extent to which he will go to secure his and his family’s reputation.

He is firstly presented in a positive way to Mr Birling and as a foil to the character of Eric, Mr Birling’s own son. The opening lines of the play are actually directed to Gerald which instantly displays the high regard that Mr Birling holds him in and demonstrates the lengths he will go to please him. The port is used as a symbol of social acceptance from Mr Birling in order to ‘fit in’ with Gerald’s family. He uses Gerald as a judge as to accept him and recognise him as a social equal. Gerald is also used as a way to demonstrate Mr Birling’s capitalist views – throughout Act 1 Gerald parallels his business views **‘We would have done exactly the same’.** This shows us that Gerald, like Mr Birling, has been brought up in a capitalist way and fully adheres to the use of lower class women in the factories on lower wages as way of creating their profits. His political and business views are clearly aligned with Mr Birling which suggests why Mr Birling is also so pleased with the engagement as it will lead to **‘Crofts and Birlings working together for lower costs and higher prices’**. Gerald is clearly associated with the business values and this is why Mr Birling refers to him as the **‘son in law he has always wanted’** which shows how much Gerald is valued by him.

He is also used in direct contrast to Eric as a further way of highlighting the distance in Mr Birling’s relationship with his own son. This quote shows a level of dismissal towards his own son. We see Gerald use this approval in the family and mocks Eric at several opportunities eg **‘unless Eric’s been up to something’.** This indicates that Gerald is also fully capable of manipulating his position and saying or doing what he wants. As stated, his attitude towards business is identical to Mr Birling’s whereas we see Eric state **‘I’d have let them stay’** highlighting their differences. We see a clear contrast between Eric and Gerald has formed.

We also see Gerald as a character used for Mr Birling to seek approval from when he shares the news about his Knighthood. He deliberately tells him this in order to gain a sense of approval – this is key to him as he seems to think that Lord and Lady Croft feel Gerald could have done better for himself than his daughter. He is used to represent the aristocratic position which Mr Birling is striving to achieve.

Like the rest of the characters, Gerald has also used this position in order to manipulate others to a much further extent than making fun of Eric. We have been aware of underlying tension in his relationship with Sheila from the beginning when she references last summer and the Inspector acts as a way of explaining this fuller by highlighting Gerald’s affair with Daisy. Although this affair did commence with altruistic purposes with Gerald offering her food and accommodation, he is of course able to do this due to his position and this is again a way of him showing off the wealth he has. It was this feeling which led to the affair developing and Gerald admitted he did **‘adore’** being her Fairy Prince. This shows Gerald’s real intent – he liked the feeling of having someone love him and look up to him but again ended the affair when he wanted to. Some associate this with the name Priestley uses – ‘Renton’ to demonstrate that Gerald has only made use of her for a short time when it suited him. However at this point, we do see some genuine human emotion from Gerald which is key in allowing the audience to question if this means that he – like Sheila and Eric will go on to do – will recognise his impact on others.

The fact that Sheila breaks off the engagement would have been seen as a shocking action as Gerald would – as we have seen through Mr Birling’s happiness – have been just the kind of suitable and appropriate man a woman from the high class would have liked to have been with. However, this break in the engagement highlights the distance which is now developing between the attitudes and values of Gerald and Sheila. The fact he leaves the stage at this point of the play is extremely significant in recognising the further role and importance of Gerald. He is the only character along with Eric who leaves the house during the course of the play. This could act as a way of showing the characters the world which they are part of outside of the confines of the **‘large suburban house’** which signals their wealth. However, the contrast between Eric and Gerald continues here - Eric has used this time to reflect on his actions and recognise the impact of these. Gerald, on the other hand, uses this time in order to set in motion the process of events which prove the Inspector is not real by questioning this with another officer. Gerald has used this time to excuse his actions and pass responsibility rather than accept it which makes this absence from the stage critical. It reveals his true personality.

The final way in which Gerald’s role is significant is by sharing this news with the rest of the Birling family. The older generation are all too ready to accept his version and he aligns himself further with them through his actions of ringing the Infirmary to ask if a girl has been admitted. It is interesting that his interrogation was placed exactly in the middle of these which reflected his status in the generation – he had the potential to change due to the kindness he did show. However, rather than recognise and accept his wrong doing, he follows the same leads of the older members of the Birlings and like the beginning still shares and accepts the same values of them. This is fully evident when Sheila refuses to accept the engagement ring back – she fully acknowledges that **‘you and I are not the same people who sat down here for dinner tonight’** whereas he has not recognised the role of the Inspector. Ironically, we have seen the light on stage getting brighter with his message but by leaving the stage Gerald has remained oblivious to the changes that Sheila and Eric have made.

Gerald is a very interesting character in the play – his initial reactions lead us to believe that he does show kindness for others. However this is shattered when we recognise that his actions have to be with him at the forefront and that the aristocratic world of money and profit is one which is too deeply embedded in his character to make any significant changes despite the opportunity he is given.

**What do we learn about the character of Mr Birling throughout the play?**

Mr Birling acts as a representative for those who are determined to better themselves through the use of money and profit. They are focused purely on this and on themselves rather than look at the impact of their actions on those around them.

The first way the character of Mr Birling is presented is through his behaviour at the dinner party before the Inspector arrives. He uses this opportunity to demonstrate his superiority in his family but also the audience can see the desperation he has to maintain and improve his standing on the social hierarchy. The fact he has the opening words in the play convey the dominance the male member of the family would have over his household in 1912 but also show his need to please Gerald who is from a much more important family through pointing out the port matches what his Father drinks. His need for social approval here is key. The fact the dinner party is to celebrate the engagement of Sheila and Gerald also acts as a way of seeing his pleasure at how this will benefit himself – **‘Crofts and Birlings are working together for lower costs and higher prices’.** His narcissistic nature is evident through this and through his excessive length of turn shown by Priestley here. He uses this to display his thoughts on the world. This is extremely significant due to the dramatic irony employed here – his predictions about the Titanic being **‘unsinkable’** and the triplet regarding **‘peace and prosperity and rapid progress’** make him feel knowledgeable and his authority in 1912 but the post 1945 audience will fully recognise that he is not as intelligent as he believes and actually highlight his own naivety. This is further highlighted through the repetition of **‘hard headed practical business man’** which he believes is convincing to all but instead undermines our initial view of him as a character who is not as superior as they like to believe.

This behaviour also serves to portray Mr Birling as a proud capitalist who is more than happy to share his views on business. This could be partly to align himself with the successful Gerald Croft but it is evident that Mr Birling believes that wealth is accumulated through the manual work of others in his factory for his own self progression. He makes derogatory comments about socialists – those who advocate equality (like the Inspector will proceed to) as **‘nonsense’** and states that **‘a man should make his own way’**. Priestley does this to make it clear to the audience the business orientated attitudes and values of Mr Birling at this point in the play. However, it is also seen as the trigger for the arrival of the Inspector who arrives at this point. This can clearly be seen as the reason that he has arrived – in order to question Mr Birling on his views and challenge these.

However, the character of Mr Birling is revealed further in his contempt for both Eva Smith and in correlation the Inspector himself. This shows his dismissive attitude of others who fail to agree with him. He refers to Eva as a **‘wretched girl’** which shows his negative view of her and this is shown further when he automatically assumes that she was fired from Milwards for **‘causing trouble’**. This demonstrates his negative view of her due to her social class - much like his own wife who simply refers to them as ‘girls of that class’. This highlights that both of the older generation are dismissive and demeaning towards them. Ironically, we have seen Mr Birling objectifying his workers as a way simply of making extra money when this is also what Eva was striking for – to earn more money. However, she was fighting for this for equality and as she believed it was right whereas Mr Birling states **‘it is my duty to keep labour costs down’**. His priorities are solely seen through business and how he can make more money at the expense of others. He clearly states **‘I can’t take any responsibility’** showing he does not recognise how his actions have had an impact on her. This contempt is also shown to the character of the Inspector. Despite Eric and Sheila’s emotional reaction to her death, he is simply described as being **‘impatient’**. This is further displayed when he tries to intimidate the Inspector by using his social standing to try to halt the Inspector by telling him about his role of Lord Mayor and having royalty staying. He further tries to manipulate him by saying he **‘played golf’** with the Inspector’s boss as a way of using his power and connections to surpass this conversation. It is clear that Mr Birling thinks his role and authority in the community means he is exempt from responsibility.

Mr Birling’s character is further developed in the way in which he reacts to different members of the younger generation. His influence over the upbringing and behaviour of Erica and Sheila is clear as both have shown a parallel with him in how they abused his role in both Milwards and through the theft of money. However, despite both of his children admitting their wrong doing (unlike him) the way he treats them is very different. We see his traditional role towards Sheila by trying to protect her and referring to her as a **‘child’.** He does fail to see the irony that he acts in this way towards his daughter but failed to do so towards Eva. However, we see his anger is reserved solely towards Eric when he finds out about the stolen money. This could again highlight the importance of money to Mr Birling as this greatly infuriates him and his temper towards Eric is clear. We have seen from the beginning of the play that Mr Birling feels he has more in common with Gerald, calling him **‘the son in law I’ve always wanted’**. This highlights the pride he feels that Gerald and him have values in common whereas Eric begins to disagree with him and the way Mr Birling has treated the workers. The relationship breaks down further as Eric points out **‘you’re not the kind of father a chap can go to’** which shows a deep seated resentment and distance between them. The way that Mr Birling has treated them clearly reveals a hypocritical approach and a resentment towards his son – all of which again stems from his want for wealth.

Despite Mr Birling’s interrogation being first, he has not changed his view point or perception based on what he has seen after this. We are told that the lights on the play get brighter as the play develops but this does not seem to have any impact on the vision of Mr Birling. He is present for the majority of the play but this further re-enforces the point that he has failed to change. The fact that the same set remains highlights that Mr Birling is so deeply embedded in the world he has made for himself that he can’t see beyond this to the world of **‘Eva and John Smiths’** beyond this. Interestingly, before the Inspector leaves, he offer to pay **‘thousands’**. This truly conveys he has missed the lesson – his money can not bring him what he wants yet he still uses this as a symbol to get his own way and his main focus is still his reputation after this. This is the key reason why he is happy to believe this is a **‘bluff’** when Gerald returns – Mr Birling simply is willing to accept the version which best suits his vision of himself just like his wife. However, the fact he takes the final call from the police Inspector heightens the cyclical message the Inspector delivered **regarding ‘fire and blood and anguish’.** This repeat visit could reflect the recent WWII as a reminder of what happens when we refuse to accept any responsibility – just like Mr Birling.

Mr Birling remains unchanged by the message of the Inspector – he will have the face the consequence for this by the second visit. He was given the opportunity but his arrogance and belief in his own superiority meant he was not willing to listen to others or decline his capitalist views which he clearly values so deeply.

**To what extend do we see the role of Sheila develop over the course of the play?**

Sheila undergoes the greatest transformation in the play as she changes from being a stereotypical female member of her class to becoming a much more independent young woman. The visit from the Inspector has a clear impact on him to the point we see her elevate to complete his teachings after his departure to the contrasting older generation family members.

The opening of the play is used as a key way of promoting Sheila as a young ‘carefree’ woman who represents the lifestyle of many other women with the same social standing in 1912. Her engagement to Gerald is used to demonstrate the usual life pathways or opportunities presented to a woman of this class and we see her happy and positive reaction towards this **– ‘isn’t it a beauty’**. We do however see a glimpse of tension when she brings up **‘last summer’** which seems to be the source of a disagreement which could suggest there is more to their relation that we see at this point. We also see a rather dismissive attitude towards her brother when she refers to him as an **‘ass’** which shows they do not seem very close and a rather immature side to her in how she refers to her mother. We see her come across as a young woman who is simply very pleased at the news of her marriage.

The use of how she knew Eva Smith is also important in showing the way in which Sheila used to act. Priestley creates a foil between these two characters to highlight their many similarities of pretty young women of a similar age but uses their different positions in the social hierarchy to show the importance of class in Edwardian England. Their similar interests are demonstrated through the use of the clothes shop Milwards – Sheila is a regular customer there due to her parents’ money whereas for Eva this is simply a much more pleasant working environment than the Birling factory. It is here we clearly see the impact of her capitalistic upbringing when she abuses her ‘**bad mood’** to ensure Eva is fired. The Inspector points out her **‘jealously’** at Eva’s looks which is extremely ironic as Eva had much more reason to be jealous of Sheila who simply, like her Father, objectified her as a way of taking out her mood on others. Like the name Eva Smith symbolises, Sheila just saw her as an indistinctive member of the working class without any real identity behind her. This shows us the previous character attributes of Sheila and how heavily influenced she was by the upbringing she had.

However, the change in Sheila is evident early into the visit of the Inspector. As soon as he arrives, we see an immediate change in her behaviour. Her reaction to the death of Eva – **‘How horrible!’** mirrors that of her brother’s **‘My God!’** The exclamation mark is used here to show genuine shock and concern about the death of the girl and at this point it is evident that Sheila is capable of displaying sympathy for her death – much more than her Father is.

In the same way we see Eric diverting from the views of his Father regarding business, we also see Sheila’s confidence in her individual response that **‘these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people!’** In direct contrast to how she herself had earlier treated Eva, she is now recognising the individuality of the working class and that they are not simply there for the disposal of the more powerful classes. She recognises the clear parallels between their lives which Priestley has cleverly set up – she is celebrating a new chapter of her life which is about to begin by drinking champagne. However, in direct contrast, Eva’s life has come to an abrupt end through drinking disinfectant. This signals that Sheila is showing much more awareness for the lower class due to the arrival of the Inspector.

The tension created at the end of Act 1 is important in developing the character of Sheila. The structure of the play is extremely important in the order of interrogations – Mr Birling has been questioned first to represent his role of head of the family but has clearly stated **‘I don’t accept any responsibility’.** Sheila is questioned directly after to heighten the differences in their responses as she states **‘I know I’m to blame and I’m desperately sorry’.** She fully accepts her part in the death but more significantly recognises the role of the Inspector in this. She tries to warn Gerald at the close of the Act that ‘**he knows’**. Sheila is the first – and only – character to recognise the foreknowledge his character clearly contains.

We see this knowledge that she has uncovered develop through Act 2 as we see the beginning of a role reversal between her and her mother. The mother who Sheila sought approval for when showing off the engagement ring is now seen by Sheila as someone who is acting in a naïve way and she tries to warn her of this. She shows her recognition of the Inspector’s message by stating **‘you mustn’t try to build a kind of wall between us and that girl’** which shows she fully appreciates the message he is giving that they are not as separated as the Birlings first thought. The fact the play only takes place in their house represents the closed minded view of the older generation which Sheila clearly recognises here.

Sheila has grown in independence throughout the play despite her parents and even Gerald trying to protect her and send her to bed to avoid **‘unpleasant news’**. However, she shows her change by questioning Gerald herself and through ultimately through the epiphany that **‘you and I aren’t the same people who sat down here for dinner tonight’.** The act of removing the engagement ring would be seen as a scandalous act in 1912 and shows how much she has changed from the opening scene. The fact that she doesn’t take the ring back at the end of the play heightens this despite the pressure that Mr Birling seems to place on her. She has recognised that their values and attitudes are too different and that this is more important than financial security or prestige for her Father. She has made a clear change.

The final way we see a clear change is through her behaviour in the close of the play. Despite previously arguing with her brother, they are now both aligned by their similar views against their parents. However, it is possible to interpret that the Inspector has had a greater impact on Sheila as she goes as far as to mirror and repeat the words that he used – **‘fire and blood and anguish’**. This shows he has had a very deep impact on him and she is open about the fear she feels about the fact her parents are acting like nothing has happened. She has shown that the message of the Inspector is now deeply embedded in her character.

It is clear that the character of Sheila has changed dramatically through the trigger of the Inspector. His visit has given her the confidence to break many society’s deeply engrained traditions and act as a more independent, socially aware young woman.

**To what extent does the Inspector have an impact on the character of Eric?**

Eric both begins and ends the play seeming isolated and disconnected from his parents. However, the actions as to why this is and his own character has changed dramatically in his time as the Inspector has a large impact on his life and how he evaluates his actions.

Before the Inspector arrives, Eric is evidently sullen and withdrawn from the rest of his family. He seems out of place with the celebratory atmosphere around him. The opening stage directions already show him as someone who feels out of place ‘**half shy, half assertive’.** We see this firstly as no-one seems to speak directly to him at the beginning except with Sheila makes a snipe at him telling him **‘not to be an ass’** and he later responds with **‘steady the buffs’**. There seems to be a sense of tension here but much more so with his Father, Mr Birling who seems dismissive and almost frustrated by him. We see Mr Birling act in a rather patronising way to them all by referring to them as **‘youngsters’** but is more so to Eric **–‘just let me finish’** when he tries to say his thoughts on war. The cause of this tension is demonstrated further when the women leave. We have already heard Mr Birling refer to Gerald as ‘**the son in law I’ve always wanted’** which suggests Eric has not fulfilled the qualities he wanted as a son and we see how he treats them differently when they are together. We see his abrupt speech towards him in comparison to Gerald. This clearly reflects at this early stage of the play that Eric is an outsider in the family.

Despite Eric feeling left out, the behaviour his past character demonstrated through his actions with Daisy shows how much he has been influenced by his Father’s lifestyle and attitude. We see there are similarities between them as Eric has also used money as a way of solving his issues when he got Daisy pregnant. This misuse of money and dismissive behaviour of the lower class is clearly learned behaviour from his Father. This also ironically points out the similarities between himself and Gerald as both have made use of Daisy as simply an object for their own pleasure on their terms. Many see the name ‘Renton’ as a suggestion for how she is treated by them – rent suggesting used for a short time just when needed. It is important that we recognise Eric’s previous behaviour to show how he moves on from this empty and hedonistic lifestyle when the Inspector arrives.

It is when the Inspector arrives that we see Eric become more confident to share his own views and opinions. Like Sheila, we see his initial reaction to the death contains genuine shock and emotion – **‘My God!’** The exclamation mark here is used to show that he does show real sympathy here and this is the audience’s first gauge that Eric has the potential to change. This reaction allows him to develop into a more humane figure who is willing to defend the workers in the factory and demonstrate an understanding of their plight. He is willing to show his different views from both his Father and Gerald – which would not have been an easy choice to make. His statement **‘Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages’** shows that he is beginning to recognise their rights and question the state of his father’s factory – his own work place. He shows a greater sympathy for them saying **‘I would have let her stay’** demonstrating an understanding of the lower class which is own Father and Gerald are oblivious to. Interestingly, Sheila begins to share similar views which shows there is perhaps more which the younger generation have in common than they previously thought.

Interestingly, Eric shows a the Inspector has had a deep impact on him as he is one of the only characters who has already made the connection to Daisy himself and returns ready to confess this. Priestley has structured the play for maximum impact through the use of dramatic irony so that the audience are made aware through Mrs Birling’s interrogation that Eric is the Father – a fact which she had remained frustratingly naïve to. This shows that unlike Gerald, Eric has used his exit from the stage to reflect on his actions and has been able to take what the Inspector has already taught him and apply this to his own life. In direct contrast, Gerald used this time outside of the house to shift the responsibility for his actions. Eric is the only member of the Birling family to leave the house. The house acts as a metaphor for the narrow minded narcissistic view they have had but Eric shows he is able to shed this and recognise the impact of his actions.

When Eric returns to the stage, we see the full impact of the Inspector’s message embedded. His anger and frustration is clear through his disjointed speech and coarse language **‘You killed her – you killed her – damn you, damn you!’** It would not have been seen as appropriate for a man to openly display his feelings but we see Eric is extremely emotional when he realises the full impact of both his and his mother’s actions in the death of Daisy and his child. Their interrogations again are placed together to show the direct contrast between these and their reactions. Despite the news of the death of the baby, the priority of Mr Birling is more focused on the money which Eric stole which shows how little he has learnt from the evening. However, Eric refuses to back down and sides with Sheila to show their disgust at their parents. They have fully appreciated the message of the Inspector that **‘We do not live alone’**. He has recognised how this applies to him.

At the end of the play, Eric is still distanced from his parents – arguably even more so than at the beginning. However, he has instead learnt about the impact of his own poor treatment and forceful nature of his personality on the lower class. However, the layers of his personality are quickly revealed as we see the potential for a more independent character who shows an appreciation for the socialist way of thinking and shows an understanding of the plight of the lower class. Eric’s character has been deeply impacted by the Inspector.

**How is the role of the Inspector portrayed within the play?**

The role of the Inspector is vital in the attempt to hold the Birling family to account for their actions towards Eva/Daisy who is symbolic of the lower class. He acts as Priestley’s voice piece for the emerging socialistic view in the 1940s in comparison to the more traditional capitalistic view represented by the Birling family.

The name of the Inspector is extremely important. He is introduced as the Inspector Goole on arrival. Priestley has used a pun of the word **‘ghoul’** on his name to suggest a certain supernatural element to his character. This could be what allows for him omnipresent nature which gives him the foreknowledge of both the fate of Eva/Daisy as well as the information regarding the characters. This also allows Priestley to employ dramatic irony here as our suspicions regarding who the Inspector is are raised much quicker than those of the characters in the play who do not start to question his existence to the end.

The lighting used throughout the play is also extremely important in conveying the role of the Inspector. Before he arrives we are told the lighting is **‘pink and intimate’** which conveys the naïve nature of the Birling family who are simply celebrating and are unware of how their evening will progress. However, we are told that the light **becomes ‘brighter and harder’** over the course of the play. This is extremely significant for the staging of the play as it fully represents the purpose of the Inspector – he is there to shed light on their actions and to help them see the impact of their behaviour on the lower class. With the absence of Eva Smith due to her death and the lack of reference to his own social status, he could also be seen as a method of giving her the voice which she was denied right the way through her death. The same way as a police inspector tries to maintain justice, we could also see his character as trying to get her and in turn the lower class justice which they have been refused. His role is to make them see the impact of their actions on the class.

However, the reactions to his appearance differ between the characters. It is again interesting to note the point in which he first enters – it could be interpreted that Mr Birling’s staunch capitalistic statement **–‘a man has to make his own way’** and derogatory and dismissive view of socialism as **‘nonsense’** could be what triggers his arrival. This again suggests his foreknowledge for such a significantly timed entrance. However, we see the more senior members of the Birling family feel threatened by his natural authority in their house. Both separately try to intimidate him by reminding him of their status in community eg ‘**Lord Mayor, ‘having royalty stay’** and **‘playing golf with the Chief Constable’**. However, the Inspector remains calm and unaware of the manipulation they try to use at this stage, simply answering in a **‘dry’** tone. He shows he does not feel threatened by their role and this displays again his message that we should face the consequences of our behaviour regardless of our acts.

His calmness and control is shown on many occasions. He only lets the characters see the photograph one at a time and states he follows **‘one line of enquiry at a time’**. He clearly shows he is in charge and has a clear view of the case. A key phrase which he uses soon after his arrival is **‘a chain of events’** which highlights his belief that all actions have a consequence – regardless of class. This control lasts throughout the play as it is he who chooses the order of the questioning and most importantly by letting Eric have a drink at the start of Act 3. This shows he is clearly overpowering Mr Birling who would have taken great offence at this as his own authority is being challenged in his own house. However, despite this, the Inspector remains focused on the questioning at hand.

This focus on the questioning quickly has had an impact on the younger generation. We have seen that the older generation are more annoyed at someone else showing control in their own house but his arrival also triggers the more independent thoughts of Sheila and Eric. Both are more prepared to show their initial sympathy for her death - **‘How horrible!’** and **‘My God!’** The use of the exclamation mark shows more genuine emotion that the impatience of their Father. They are both more in alignment with the upcoming socialist views of the Inspector by questioning their Father over the firing ‘**Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages’** and **‘these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people’**. This shows the immediate and rapid impact the Inspector has had on them.

This reaction continues on them as both act to continue his work after his departure. We see he has triggered a clear role reversal in the family with the younger generation now prompting the older generation about their actions and showing their disgust towards them. Sheila had earlier recognised his foreknowledge by warning Gerald that **‘he knows’** about their behaviour and also trying to warn her stubborn mother. However, at the end she even mirrors his own words - **‘fire and blood and anguish’**. She fully appreciates the destruction he alluded which the audience would recognise as a symbol for war and continues to warn them. This shows the long lasting impact of the Inspector even after his departure.

However, it is the closing words of the Inspector which hold the most impact and demonstrate his message fully. We see him again take control over the growing chaos with a short imperative **‘Stop!’** This is also followed by the short sentences which address various members to conclude what he has taught them. We see the Inspector repeat the emotive term **‘kill’** to really show the characters the impact of their actions as well as the warning **‘remember’**. This is clearly picked up by the younger generation. We see Priestley use this as a key way to convey his own views in the triplet **–‘We do not live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other’.** The repetition of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ also emphasises the socialist viewpoint of equality and togetherness which was growing in 1940s. Most importantly, as already discussed he alludes to the destruction if this is ignored in the triplet **‘fire and blood and anguish’** which the audience would clearly associate with the war taking place. Most significantly, he uses this as a clear warning. The final twist at the close of the play with the imminent arrival of an Inspector could easily link to the second World War as Priestley’s message that if we do not listen to the words of the Inspector, nothing will change.

The Inspector is vital in the play. He is one with the ultimate control to reveal the outside world beyond the set of the Birling house which is all they appeared to be aware of. The younger generation take advantage of the knowledge which he brings to try and bring change which shows the deep impact the Inspector has had.

**Although Eva is not is not present in the play, to what extent does she play an important role in the play?**

Eva Smith does not appear in the play but she is a vital character within it. It is her character which triggers the inspection of the Birling family and she is the symbol for the working class in the play to show their treatment at the hands of those further up the social hierarchy. She may not appear on stage but her presence is felt throughout.

She is important because it is her life which has constantly been intertwined with those in the Birling family –even though all of them failed to see the significance of her when they met her. What is important is that all of the characters treated her in a negative way when she was alive but it is only after her death that they become aware of the importance of their actions on her life. In the words of the Inspector, **‘the chain of events’** which connects them. It is the character of the Inspector who is most important to link to Eva as many see him act as an advocate or voice for Eva which she is unable to have in the play. The fact that she is not present and is dead could represent the fact that she is still seen an unimportant by the characters of the Birling family but the presence of the Inspector heightens her own importance by forcing them to see how they treated her.

The way in which they did treat her is very important in showing her role in the play. She is the direct consequence of most of their actions and also provides a much deeper insight into the rigid class system of Edwardian England of 1912. We see her as part of the labouring class when she worked for Mr Birling – this provides an insight into the workers in factories which allowed the upper middle class to maintain their wealth. Despite clearly being a prominent member of his work force due to the actions which happened, the fact that he doesn’t even recognise her name or photograph instantly conveys his dismissive attitude of the lower class and his workers. Eva is key to show the treatment factory workers faced. We see they were clearly objectified and not given many rights which is what led to the strike. The strike is a key event in understanding the importance of Eva – despite the fact women were not given the right to vote until 1918 and 1928 if between 21-30, she clearly demonstrates someone who is fighting for equal rights. The fact she was a vocal member of the strike also demonstrates socialist values and mindset – in a direct contrast to her employer Mr Birling. We see her moral qualities here as she was prepared to lose money to make a key point and had to sacrifice her only form of employment in doing so.

This shows her importance as she was advocating for individual rights in contrast with how she was seen by Mr Birling.

The next way she proves an important character is in how she can be contrasted with Sheila. Both women were similar in age but the key defining separation is their place in the class system. Priestley creates a foil between them by showing several likenesses in their characters but the point in their lives is very different. Sheila does later recognise the irony of her drinking champagne to celebrate the start of what would have been an exciting new start in her life. However, Eva has been reduced to drinking disinfectant in order to try and end her life. The fact both frequented Milwards creates another parallel but also serves the differences – for Sheila this is part of her life of leisure but Eva recognises her luck in gaining employment there. A small moment of Sheila’s bad mood has dire consequences for Eva – Sheila gets to go home and continue her life but this is a defining moment for Eva as she has now lost two jobs and is unlikely to get another. Sheila is delighted by the **‘beauty’** of her engagement ring and is warned by her mother she will have to accept her husband to be working long hours. She is caught up in the materialistic lifestyle which will continue having secured a husband. Eva, however, is simply used by Gerald and Eric for a sexual relationship which she is aware has no real future or prospects. Their lives are very different due to the class system.

The way in which men respond to her is also very different and this is again another reason why her role in the play is key. We have seen the comfortable life Sheila lives due to her family background however this is very different for Eva. Men treat her very differently. We see that the other characters are constantly trying to protect Sheila from hearing **‘unpleasant news’** and telling her to go to bed. However, this protection is rarely shown to Eva. We do see Gerald ‘rescue’ her from Aldermand Meggarty but again this was more a way for him to feel he was doing a good deed and the impact on him. The location of the Palace Stalls Bar suggests her position of the vagrant class and her association with prostitutes is made through this. We see both Gerald and Eric have a relationship with her which shows the male dominance in this – particularly in Eric’s as he recognised he was in the state where he could have **‘turned nasty’**. Both dispose of her and end the relationship when it is no longer convenient to them – hence why some critics associate the name selected as ‘Renton’ to show their short term use of her. Unlike Sheila, all know that the class system would not allow a more serious relationship to develop. The role of Eva/ Daisy highlights the differences of how men viewed women in different class systems.

Finally, the role of Daisy is used to show the judgemental nature many of the higher class held against them. The fact she changed her name straight away highlights she knew she would be judged and her attempts to create a different life for herself despite her limited means. However, when her fortunes did not improve, we can clearly see the impact of a society which lacked a Welfare State. People would have been expected to be more reliant on their families or charitable organisations. As Daisy’s parents were dead, she was reliant on a charity but ironically the **‘prominent’** member is Mrs Birling. This would have been a way in which she maintained her reputation in the community through her association with this. It would have been viewed in a very negative way for Daisy to be having a child outside of marriage which is why we see her use a married name in order to gain more support. However, by using the name Mrs Birling, we see the judgemental nature of Sybil who was then **‘prejudiced’** against the case. Despite what Sheila had warned, Mrs Birling believed there was a **‘wall’** between them and did not like the association between them. Her distaste had already been evident and she again refers to her as ‘girls of that class’. Her dismissive attitude is evident here and ironically believes her class position had a direct correlation with her morals – she doesn’t recognise the lack of morals in her own family. Despite knowing the outcome, Mrs Birling never feels any guilt or shame for how she treated Daisy and in fact her own grandchild. The role of Daisy shows the biased, prejudiced and judgemental attitude of the upper class.

The role of Eva/ Daisy is key. The news of her death does trigger a change in the personalities of Eric and Sheila who appreciate the message of the Inspector that although **‘one Eva Smith has gone, there are millions and millions and millions of Eva and John Smiths’**. The triplet heightens how many other people their actions have consequences on and they have responsibility for. Although Mr and Mrs Birling fail to recognise the importance of Eva in their lives, the returning Inspector shows that the role of Eva is not about to be forgotten. She plays a key role despite not appearing in the play.