

Plot		Characters		Key Quotations		Social, Historical Context	
Act 1	The Birling family are celebrating Sheila and Gerald's engagement . Mr Birling talks about his capitalist ideas . An inspector arrives and reveals the suicide of Eva Smith . He questions Mr Birling (who sacked Eva Smith from his factory) and Sheila Birling (who got her fired from her next job, at a department store.) It ends on the cliff-hanger that Gerald knew Eva by the name Daisy Renton.	Arthur Birling	A symbol of the Capitalist wealthy business owner. A social climber.	'Community and all that nonsense.' – Mr Birling	J. B. Priestley	(1894-1984). Priestley was a well-known socialist. He fought in WW1 and his radio broadcast supported the Labour party.	
		Sybil Birling	A symbol of the arrogance and pride of the upper classes. Cares about her reputation – pretences.	'Crofts and Birlings are working together for lover costs and higher prices' - Mr Birling	Edwardian Society	A strong class system with a huge divide between the rich and poor. No welfare state. Conservative society but lots of social unrest.	
		Sheila Birling	Starts off naïve and unaware but becomes socially and politically empowered representing the changing roles of women in society.	'pleased with life and rather excited' – stage directions describing Sheila	1912 Play is set	Pre world wars: a conservative, capitalist and more classist society.	
Act 2	The inspector questions Gerald Croft (who had an affair with Eva, who had changed her name to Daisy Renton.) Eric, becomes distressed and leaves. The Inspector questions Mrs Birling (who refused to give Eva help when she came to Mrs Birling's charity.) It becomes clear that Eva was pregnant . We realise at the end of the scene that Eric was the father of the child as he walks into the room.	Eric Birling	The typical rich and irresponsible son of wealthy parents. An outcast from his father; disagrees with his father's viewpoints but finds it hard to find his place. Inspector empowers him to change and speak up to his Father.	'I'm to blame and I'm desperately sorry.' – Sheila	1945 Play was written	The World Wars (WW1 1914-1918; WW2 1939-1945) bought about much social change. The class system was less divided, society had become more socialist, the Labour party had won the vote by a landslide victory and women had the right to vote.	
		Gerald Croft	Upper class, son of a rival business owner. Shows those who have the potential to change but ultimately values money and status.	'but these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people' – Sheila			
		Inspector Goole	A symbol of socialism and Priestley's mouthpiece. Aims to teach the family a moral lesson about how to behave as a responsible citizen.	'We're respectable citizens and not criminals.' - Gerald			
Act 3	The inspector questions Eric (who got Daisy pregnant and then stole money for her.) The inspector gives a final speech about how 'we are responsible for each other.' The family discover that the inspector might not be real. The police then call to say another young girl has committed suicide and another inspector in on his way..	Eva Smith / Daisy Renton	Represents the working class female. Someone who initially was quite strong and determined but was worn down by the unjust treatment of her by Capitalist society.	'So I insisted on Daisy moving into those rooms and I made her take some money.' – Gerald	Social Class	The division of society based on their social and economic status. Generally, those with titles e.g. Lord/ Sir would be considered Upper Class; those who owned businesses or were educated in a profession would be considered middle class and those who worked for others would be seen as working class.	
		Edna	The Birlings' maid. Has very few lines and represents the voiceless working classes – like Eva Smith.	'disgusting affair' – Mrs Birling about Gerald and Daisy			
				'As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money.' – Mrs Birling			
				'I did nothing I'm ashamed of.' – Mrs Birling	Women's Rights	The suffragettes fought for women to have the right to vote which was granted in 1918 following women's role in WW1. However, this was only for women over the age of 30 or who owned their own house (or their husband did). All women did not gain the right to vote until 1928.	
			'I was in that state where a chap easily turns nasty.' – Eric				
			'Taught it in fire and blood and anguish.' – Inspector Goole				
				'We are members of one body.' – Inspector Goole			

Priestley's Methods

The Greek Unities	Time (no more than 24 hours, set it real-time); Place (only one setting); Action (only one story-line, no complicated sub-plots). All used to make the play seem more realistic.
A Morality Play	The characters all represents one (or more) of the seven deadly sins. The Inspector is there to teach the characters to steer away from the path of evil and adopt a more moral and Godly life.
Dramatic Irony	When the audience know something the characters don't – for example the sinking of the Titanic or the World Wars.
Proleptic Irony	When the character gives a warning or hint about what's going to happen in the future – for example in the Inspector's final speech he alludes to the war.
Climatic Curtain	Each act ends on a high point of tension (see the act summaries).
Stage Directions	Tells us how the character says something or the character's actions e.g. <i>'cutting in massively'</i> .
Monologue	Speech by one character to other characters or the audience. All of the characters have these during their interrogation with the inspector.
Didactic Play	A play that is teaching us a lesson. For example, to be good, responsible and moral people. The Inspector's final monologue is particularly didactic.
Detective Genre	Although this generally is a detective genre (the inspector is investigating the suicide of a young woman) Ultimately, he is really there to morally 'inspect' the characters' behaviours.

An Inspector Calls

Key Themes	
Responsibility	<i>An Inspector Calls</i> was first performed in the UK just after the end of World War Two, in 1946. It was a time of great change in Britain and many writers were concerned with the welfare of the poor. At that time there was no assistance for people who could not afford to look after themselves. Priestley wanted to address this issue. He also felt that if people were more considerate of one another, it would improve quality of life for all. This is why social responsibility is a key theme of the play. Priestley wanted his audience to be responsible for their own behaviour and responsible for the welfare of others.
Gender	Age is an important theme in <i>An Inspector Calls</i> . Priestley uses it to show how he believed that there was hope in the younger generation's ability to learn and change. The older characters' opinions and behaviours are stubbornly fixed. Mr Birling refuses to learn and Mrs Birling cannot see the obvious about herself and her children. Eric and Sheila however are younger - they accept their mistakes and offer the chance for a brighter future.
Class	<i>An Inspector Calls</i> was written after World War Two. As many British men went away to fight during the war, their positions in work had to be filled by women. This helped change existing perceptions. Men had to acknowledge the fact that women were just as capable as them. As a result of this, many women enjoyed a newfound freedom that working and earning money allowed them. Not all men saw this change in attitude as a good thing and stayed stuck in the past. Priestley explores the impact of these new gender roles through the independence of Eva Smith and the sexist attitudes of Mr Birling.
Age / Generations	Before World War Two, Britain was divided by class. Two such classes were the wealthy land and factory owners and the poor workers. The war helped bring these two classes closer together and rationing meant that people of all classes were eating and even dressing the same. The war effort also meant that people from all classes were mixing together. This was certainly not the case before. Priestley wanted to highlight that inequality between the classes still existed and there was still more change to be done.

Key Vocab	
Naïve	Morality
Ignorant	Pretences
Prejudice	Patriarchal
Privileged	Unjust
(Un)remorseful	Aware
Deceitful	Stereotype
Hypocritical	Reputation
Dismissive	Symbolic
Compassionate	Responsibility
Impressionable	Inequality