

## CHARACTERISATION (AO2)

**Arthur Birling:** avaricious Edwardian businessman; pompous; driven by reputation; stubborn; a social climber; archetypal capitalist; no remorse; ridiculed by Priestley; middle-class; a caricature; a misogynist; a patriarch; a hypocrite; evokes contempt & derision; symbol of capitalism.

**Sybil Birling:** aloof & supercilious; upper-class; prejudiced; infantilises her children; no remorse; stubborn; antithesis of her daughter; an aristocratic fossil; evokes contempt.

**Sheila Birling:** naïve (start); materialistic (start); stereotypical middle-class young woman (start); compassionate; perceptive; curious; wiser; a proto-feminist; has a social & moral epiphany; transformation; role-model for the younger generation; symbol of hope.

**Eric Birling:** juvenile (start); socially inept (start); reckless; frustrated; repentant; undergoes transformation; unloved; does not fit the mould; a victim of parents' values.

**Gerald Croft:** an aristocrat; a misogynist; manipulative; entitled; exploitative; enjoys adoration of women; unchanged – intransigent; ruthless & callous; a barrier to change.

**Inspector Goole:** 'massiveness'; systematic; didactic; unflappable; mysterious; a prophet of doom (if no equality); voice of each character's conscience; blunt; Priestley's mouthpiece; Arthur Birling's iceberg; preacher of socialism.

**Edna:** voiceless, the underdog, working-class, visual reminder of silent working class.

## KO — AN INSPECTOR CALLS

**ACT 1:** Dinner party, Arthur's speech. Inspector arrives, interviews Arthur (sacked Eva) and Sheila (got Eva sacked).

**ACT 2:** Gerald admits affair, then leaves. Mrs Birling interviews: she refused Eva charity then blames the unnamed father.

**ACT 3:** Eric reveals he is the father, Inspector leaves, Gerald reveals inspector is lying. Phone call – an inspector is on his way.

## WRITERS METHODS (AO2)

### LITERARY FORMS (3)

**(1) WELL-MADE PLAY:** A complex and intricate plot which builds towards a dramatic climax. They usually deal with events which happened prior to the events of the play and end with a return to order.

**(2) MORALITY PLAY:** a play that seeks to teach the audience a lesson. In this case, that community and acts of kindness to others is good for society

**(3) CRIME THRILLER:** A crime thriller is a genre that tells a gripping tale based around a crime. The audience receives clues on who has committed the crime and tries to guess what happened before the end of the action.

**RELIGIOUS ALLUSION:** References to Christian beliefs – e.g. Eva Smith (symbol of all women – first sin); 'members of one body' (Corinthians – united in the church through Christ); 'fire and blood and anguish' (Armageddon & hell).

**DRAMATIC IRONY:** Birling's faith in progress and peace (e.g. 'unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable'); Mrs Birling's realisation that Eric = father; Gerald jokes about 'police scandal' in Act 1; Mr and Mrs Birling accuse Sheila/Eric of childishness; 'charity worker' Mrs Birling commits worst crime; socialist message really for post-war audience, not Birling family (breaks fourth wall).

**CYCLICAL NARRATIVE:** the ending takes story back to beginning of inspection; symbolically, Priestley is warning against returning to errors of pre-war Edwardian era; Ouspensky's theory of time; prolepsis gives Birling family an opportunity to repent & change.

**SYMBOLISM:** Titanic = Edwardian middle-class; ring = traditional female role; one body = a society that works for each other; pink lighting = Birlings' conceit; wall = class divide; slab = middle-class cruelty

**CONTRAST:** Sheila vs (is the antithesis of) Eva Smith; appearance vs reality; the family's immorality vs Eva's morality; Inspector's blunt language vs Birling family's euphemistic language.

**TENSION:** hints of unrest in opening stage directions; claustrophobic single setting; Arthur & Sybil at table; Inspector secretive with photo.

**DRAMATIC MOMENTS / CLIMAX:** Inspector breaks 4th wall in final speech; Inspector arrives in Birling's 'look after himself' speech; Mrs Birling realises Eric is father; Eric's entrance end of Act 2; surprising/enigmatic denouement (ending).

## PRIESTLEY'S THEMES & IDEAS (AO1)

**CLASS SYSTEM:** class system destroying Britain; working-class oppressed; middle-class arrogant /hypocritical; social status more important than morals

**WEALTH AND POVERTY:** employers mistreat their workers; the poor remain voiceless; poverty is inescapable; the rich build a 'wall' between themselves and the poor.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** middle-class must take responsibility for society; actions of rich have huge effect on poor; failure to take responsibility will cause war/apocalypse; audience must examine their consciences & change.

**GENDER:** misogyny rife in Edwardian society; no social safety net for unmarried, pregnant women; working-class women main victims; emancipation of women will lead to a fairer & stronger society.

**CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM:** capitalists are selfish & uncaring; capitalists foolish to believe in never-ending progress; socialism will cure the ills of society; socialism is the future.

**AGE:** future lies in the hands of the young; old are stubborn & unwilling to take responsibility; intransigent young (e.g. Gerald) are a threat to society.

### CONTEXT (AO3)

**POVERTY:** 1892: turn of the century, 30% of people living in London lived in absolute poverty – e.g. unable to feed & clothe themselves or find shelter.

**LABOUR:** 1900: Keir Hardie & his party represented the trade unions. The workers from the shop floor were starting to challenge factory owners. Accompanied by worker unrest, strikes, violent riots., etc.

**EDWARDIAN ERA:** 1901-1914: was a time of great social inequality. Industrialisation & empire combined to create huge wealth. Britain owned ¼ of the world; ¼ population in the British empire; navy twice as large as the next biggest. However, wealth in the hands of the few, not the many.

**LIBERAL REFORMS:** 1906-1916: General election. Landslide victory for Liberal Party who brought in social reforms including free school meals, pensions, workers benefits, etc. Groundswell of public opinion in favour of fairer Britain. (Labour victory of 1945 mirrors Liberal Victory of 1906.)

**TITANIC:** 1912: A metaphor for the end of the Edwardian age of confidence & the beginning of the modern age of anxiety.

**WOMEN:** 1913: Few rights – e.g. wage inequality (1/2 man's wage for same job), abortion illegal, social stigma of pregnancy out of wedlock. 1913 saw rise in Suffragette violence after government rejected The Conciliation Bill.

**WAR:** 1914 & 1939 - British empire collapsed; devastating economic impact; people calling again for a new and fairer Britain after the wars

**1945:** Priestley writes an Inspector Calls. Clement Atlee's Labour Party wins landslide General Election on a platform of welfare reform – pension extensions, more workers' benefits (unemployment and sickness) & NHS.