

An Inspector Calls

Act 1	Act 2	Act 3	Staging Techniques	
The Birlings are celebrating the engagement of Gerald and Sheila. An inspector arrives to tell us a woman has committed suicide. The inspector starts questioning the characters and we learn that Mr Birling fired Eva Smith from his factory and Sheila had her fired from a shop she was working in.	Gerald admits that he had a relationship with Eva Smith (Daisy Renton). He leaves the house. The inspector then moves on to questioning Mrs Birling. We learn that Eva came to her women’s charity because she was pregnant. Mrs Birling refused to help and blames the father for Eva’s condition. It is discovered that Eric is the father of Eva’s baby	Eric reveals that he took money from the business to help care for Eva and the child, but Eva didn’t want the money. The inspector leaves. Gerald arrives with news that there is no Inspector Goole in the police force. The older characters relax, and the younger characters still feel guilty over the events. Birling rings the infirmary to confirm that no suicide has taken place. A telephone rings and Mr Birling learns that a police inspector is on his way to interview him in relation to a woman’s suicide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Set in the dining room of an Edwardian house which represents safety and privacy. We see what the family are really like and not the public persona they present to others.</u>• Dramatic irony – the audience knows something the characters on stage don’t• Photograph – used to slowly unpick the puzzle• Structure – each character’s connection is revealed at a time – shaped around the characters – each one more shocking than the others• Adverbs – how the characters speak is often more important than what they say• Exits and entrances – when the characters are off stage this creates tension as they don’t know the full story when they return• Secrets – each character has a secret and this is a cause of tension in the play• Politeness – the characters are usually polite, but it is telling when they aren’t polite	
Characters				
<u>Mr Birling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represents how power and money get what you want because he has money• Rich feared the poor and was suspicious of their actions• The rich are fear losing money• Earned his money through hard work so expects people to work hard in life – represents new money• Shows how old people will refuse to change their mind• Represents a capitalist’s view of the world – only interested in money. Capitalism / Arrogance / Self-interest / Ignorance	<u>Mrs Birling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlights how women didn’t always sympathise with other women• Shows how people only care for their family and their reputation• Shows how people are only kind and charitable when it suits them• Shows how women abused their power too• Gives the audience an idea of what Sheila could become• Shows how that the inequalities were caused by both genders – not just men treating women badly Hypocrisy / Classism / Prejudice / Denial	<u>Sheila Birling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represents the childish behaviour of the young and their arrogance – think they know best.• A symbol of a possible future – both Sheila and Eric are the characters that want to learn from the events in the play and improve.• Shows how women are changing – Mrs Birling is rigid in her thoughts, but Sheila is willing to listen and change• Becomes an adult during the play – learns that actions have consequences• Sheila is the character that changes the most in the play – Why? Conscience / Transformation / Empathy / Guilt	<u>Eric Birling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contrasts with Sheila. Can’t cope with his actions. Sheila accepts her actions.• Copes with things by hiding things and stealing money.• Shows some guilt towards what has happened, and, in some ways, he hates what he has become.• Eric’s behaviour before the play reflects that of the other men, but through the course of the story, has regrets and wants to be somebody different.• Shows a new way of dealing with relations with the poor – a relationship between rich and poor Rebellion / Regret / Irresponsibility / Addiction	<u>Gerald Croft</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlights how the men treated relationships with women – quick to start or end a relationship• Shows how men are only concerned with their desires• Shows the rich peoples’ carefree attitude towards the poor – not his concern – they served a function• Represents ‘old money’ – money that has been passed down through a family. He will inherit his parents’ money.• He shows how the rich had nothing to fear. Privileged / Complacency / Superficiality / Duplicity
<u>Eva Smith</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A symbol of the poor and how the mistreated them• Shows how resourceful the poor had to be to survive• She was a victim of all parts of society – together they indirectly killed her• She represented an ‘everyman’ figure – she could be replaced by any type of person as she has very little individual personality• The only control she had was in her death• She is a foil – she is used to make the other characters look bad in comparison Injustice / Exploitation / Victimhood / Resilience	<u>Inspector Goole</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contrasts with Sheila. Can’t cope with his actions. Sheila accepts her actions.• Copes with things by hiding things and stealing money.• Eric’s behaviour before the play reflects that of the other men, but through the course of the story, has regrets and wants to be somebody different.• Shows a new way of dealing with relations with the poor – a relationship between rich and poor Morality / Justice / Conscience / Socialism	<u>Social Justice</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We see both rich and poor people living unhappy lives – suggesting that things are not working well now.• A change is needed to fix what happened and will happen to other Eva Smiths• The choices and decisions made by the rich affected Eva’s life. One small change and her life would be better.• The unfairness seems to be inherited from parents• Several types of injustice – rich/ poor, male/female, young/old, strong/weak• The young, poor females don’t have a voice in society.	<u>Gender</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To survive, Eva Smith plays different female roles. As a woman she must adapt to survive. The men don’t.• Very few female figures in the play – more men than women.• Eva Smith and Edna are the only two females with a job. What connects them?• Three main roles of women in the play – mother, wife and daughter. Men are more respectful to those roles.• A young female is dead at the end of the play and a young female has started to change – Sheila and Eva linked• A young woman’s destruction is at the heart of the play	<u>Responsibility</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each is partly responsible for Eva Smith’s death – not one character is fully responsible – it is a shared responsibility• Eva Smith would be alive if everybody took some responsibility• Priestly didn’t just want one or two people to be responsible for others – that’s why he made all the characters almost equally responsible• The whole play is about questioning. Questioning who is responsible – the Inspector isn’t just questioning the death but questioning the responsibility of the weak in society• Priestley wanted the rich to be responsible.

