

# Themes

What are the main themes?

Generational Divide



Poverty



Change



Politics



Responsibility



Gender



# Author's Intent

Why did Priestley write the play?

To challenge upper class perceptions of poverty in sustain and further social reform.

To solidify the end of exploitation of the working classes and the oppression of women.

To highlight the importance of morality and to promote social responsibility.

To promote a socialist ideology and to condemn capitalist values.

# Characters in An Inspector Calls

Who are the main characters in 'An Inspector Calls' ?

**Mr Birling**  
Capitalist  
Patriarch  
Avaricious  
Ignorant  
Ostentatious  
Hubristic  
Obdurate

**Mrs Birling**  
Aloof  
Supercilious  
Prejudiced  
Aristocratic  
Covetous  
Obstinate  
Haughty

**Sheila**  
Naïve  
Remorseful  
Altruistic  
Socially-Conscious  
Materialistic  
Liberated

**Gerald**  
Aristocrat  
Self-serving  
Cunning  
Capitalist  
Charismatic  
Philandering  
Unrepentant

**Eric**  
Irresponsible  
Remorseful  
Reticent  
Childish  
Socially inept  
Acrimonious  
Sagacious

**Inspector**  
Conduit  
Socialist  
Authoritative  
Methodical  
Pansophical  
Efficacious  
Philanthropic

## Key Quotes

What are some useful quotations to know for AIC?

'Fire and blood and anguish'  
Inspector

'Community and all that nonsense'  
Birling

'I did nothing I'm ashamed of'  
Mrs Birling

'I was in a state where a chap easily turns nasty'  
Eric

'You were her fairy prince'  
Sheila (about Gerald)

'Girls of that class'  
Mrs Birling

'These girls aren't cheap labour, they're people'  
Sheila

'Silly little war scares'  
Mr Birling

# Plot Summary

What happens in 'An Inspector Calls'?



ACT 1

The family are celebrating the engagement of Sheila and Gerald. Mr Birling Lectures the gentlemen on his successes at work. The Inspector arrives and interrogates Birling and Sheila about their involvement in a girl named Eva Smith's death. It is revealed that Eva later changed her name to Daisy Renton and Gerald recognises this name.

ACT 2

Gerald is questioned and we learn that he too was embroiled with Eva Smith before selfishly cutting her loose. Mrs Birling is revealed to have refused a request for charity from Eva despite her now being pregnant and in desperate need. Mrs Birling accepts no responsibility for Eva's death and insists that the father of her child be made responsible. The Inspector assures her this will happen.

ACT 3

Eric is revealed to be the father. He had forced himself upon her whilst drunk. He did however offer to help her financially by stealing from Birling & Co. The Inspector warns them that mankind must change or society will crumble like their family is now. Gerald reveals that the Inspector was a fraud and Mr and Mrs Birling believe they are in the clear until the police station call.

# Techniques

What techniques does Priestley use?

**Dramatic Irony** – When the audience knows something that the character(s) don't

**Stage Directions** – helps the actors maintain the tone as Priestley intended

**Interruptions** – various characters are interrupted to show power imbalance & build tension

**Setting** – their household reflects their growing affluence and Mr Birling's desire to progress further.

# Context

What was going on in society at the time?

WW2 – The play was written in the austerity of post war Britain – meaning people had come together during the war but had begun to separate again

Titanic – the Titanic represented new opportunities for all social classes but this dream was shattered when it sank.

Labour Party – Unease amongst the working class lead to the creation of the labour party seeking to fight for equal rights

Priestley's views – Priestley needed a new outlet to share his views on society after his wartime radio show was cancelled