



An Inspector Calls Knowledge Organiser

Vocabulary
Socialism
Capitalism
Aristocracy
Bourgeoisie
Proletariat
Affluent
Egocentric
Hubrist
Unrepe
Puerile
Condescending
Obstinate
Culpable
Reckless
Evasive
Exploited
Submissive
Impoverished
Patriarchal
Omniscient
Altruistic
Principled
Microcosm

Key concepts/themes

- **Generational differences/age** – the older generation symbolise capitalism and a reluctance to accept blame or change. The younger generation become a symbol of socialism and change as the play progresses. They are less concerned with reputation and public 'scandal' than the older generation.
- **Class differences** - Priestley explores the theme of class through the treatment of working-class Eva Smith who was exploited and denied social justice by the bourgeoisie Birlings and aristocratic Gerald Croft, who held a disproportionate amount of power.
- **Gender inequality** – Priestley highlights the mistreatment of women in Edwardian Britain. Mr Birling shows a patronising view of women and Gerald makes superficial and sexist comments about both Sheila and women at the Palace Bar. Even women like Mrs Birling can hold the same patriarchal, old-fashioned Edwardian values as the men.
- **Social responsibility** – The Inspector, and by proxy Priestley, felt everyone had a duty to look after each other and support those in poverty. The Inspector is sent to uncover the family's wrongdoings and to make them take responsibility for others.

Methods/devices

- **Morality play** – an allegorical drama where the characters personify moral attributes
- **Dramatic irony** – used in Birling's speeches to highlight his ignorance and pompous nature
- **Euphemism** – used by Birlings to avoid culpability and avoid directly saying what they have done
- **Tragic structure** – the play follows a tragic structure, starting with a happy family and ending with a tragic outcome
- **Cyclical structure** – repeated ideas used at the end of the play to convey a message about a lack of change within Mr and Mrs Birling
- **Microcosm** – the Birlings represent society as a whole, Brumley representing Edwardian Britain.
- **Inversion of the detective thriller** – all of the Birlings are accused and found guilty in turn (rather than the accused be narrowed down), to show that the whole of society is guilty of neglecting its most vulnerable.

Characters

- **Mr Birling** - self-made industrialist, ignorant, ostentatious, hypocritical, primary concerns with reputation and a public 'scandal', lacks social responsibility and culpability.
- **Mrs Birling** – husband's social superior, representing snobbery of the bourgeoisie. Sees proletariat as morally inferior, condescending, prejudiced, representative of the prejudiced and obstinate older generation.
- **Eric** – youngest of the Birlings. Reckless, dishonest, irresponsible. Avoids culpability initially though shows remorse by the end, symbolising hope for the younger generation
- **Sheila** – initially envious and petulant, but becomes compassionate and repentant by the end. Recognises the Inspector's message that we are all collectively responsible.
- **Gerald Croft** – engaged to Sheila which benefits Birling financially. Exploitative, evasive, patriarchal. Acts as a bridge between the older and younger generation.
- **Inspector Goole** – Priestley's mouthpiece, serves as Birlings' conscience, advocates social justice and responsibility. Authoritative, imposing, interrogative

Context

1912 Edwardian – gender divisions, and exploited at v conservative ideol and businesses fo Patriarchal societ subservient to m would start in 2 years.

1945 post-war society – living through WW1 and WW2 reduced class and gender divisions. Introduction of the welfare state in 1941.