GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE SUPPORT PACK

J.B. Priestley's An Inspector Calls

SUPPORT PACK INCLUDES:

Plot summary

Key characters

Contexts

Golden quotes and Model Essays

Essay advice

Practice Questions

Plot Summary

Act One: Meeting the characters

- The Birling family and Gerald Croft are celebrating Sheila's engagement to Gerald.
- Mr Birling makes a pompous speech outlining his views on the advances in science, new inventions and the relationship between bosses and workers. He says they should ignore the 'cranks' who claim that everybody has a responsibility to care for everybody else.
- The evening is interrupted by the arrival of a police inspector named Goole making enquiries about the suicide of a young woman, Eva Smith.
- Shown a photograph of the girl, Mr Birling admits that he employed her in his factory but sacked her for being one of the leaders of a strike for higher wages.
- Sheila and Eric both feel that their father has acted harshly, while Gerald supports Birling's claim that he acted reasonably.
- Sheila is shown the photograph and realises that, driven by jealousy and ill temper, she later had the girl sacked from her job as a shop assistant.
- When Gerald hears that the girl changed her name to Daisy Renton, his reaction shows that he too has known the girl.
- The Inspector suggests that many people share responsibility for the misery which prompted Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton to end her life.
- Left alone with Gerald, Sheila warns him not to try to hide anything from the Inspector.

Act Two: More revelations

- Gerald admits that he met Daisy Renton in the spring of the previous year and that she was his mistress for six months.
- Sheila is hurt and angry at Gerald's involvement with the girl, yet she feels a certain respect for the openness of his admission.
- Mrs Birling tries to bully the Inspector and to control events.
- Sheila realises that the Inspector's enquiries are well founded, and that her mother might also have had some dealings with the girl.

- While Eric is out of the room, Mrs Birling is forced to admit that the girl asked for the help of a charity she worked for and was refused.
- It is revealed that the girl was pregnant, and Mrs Birling lays the blame for the girl's death on the father of the unborn child.
- There is a suspicion that Eric might have been the father of that unborn child.

Act Three: The Inspector leaves but the mystery continues

- Eric confesses that he got the girl pregnant and that he stole money from his father's firm to support her.
- Learning that the girl had appealed to his mother for help and been turned down, Eric blames his mother for the girl's death.
- The Inspector makes a dramatic speech about the consequences of the kind of social irresponsibility that Mr Birling was preaching at the end of the dinner.
- The Inspector, having shown that each had a part in ruining the girl's life, leaves.
- Between them Gerald and Mr Birling gradually prove that the man was not a real police inspector.
- A telephone call to the Chief Constable establishes that there is no Inspector Goole on the police force.
- A telephone call to the Infirmary reveals that there has been no recent suicide.
- Eric and Sheila continue to feel guilty about what they have done, but the others now shrug off any guilt.
- Mr Birling answers the telephone: a young woman has just died on her way to the Infirmary and an inspector is on his way to make enquiries.

Key characters

Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton: young woman who suffered at the hands of the Birling family and Gerald. We learn she: was sacked by Mr Birling from his factory for leading a strike for better pay; was sacked from a dress shop after Sheila unjustly complained about her; became the mistress of Gerald Croft; was made pregnant by Eric Birling; applied to a charity for help; committed suicide by swallowing disinfectant.

Inspector: presents himself to the Birlings and Gerald as a police officer who has come to investigate the suicide of a young woman. He interrupts the dinner, questions each of the characters in turn, establishes that each had an unwitting part in Eva Smith's death, through either cruelty or disregard for her welfare, gradually takes more control of the situation and has little regard for social class or status, is concerned about honesty and justice, makes a powerful speech about our responsibility to each other in the wider society.

Mr Birling: father of Sheila and Eric, and is a wealthy businessman who owns a factory in Brumley. He has been the city's lord mayor and is a magistrate. He hosts a celebratory dinner for Sheila's engagement to Gerald Croft. He is keen for the Birlings and Crosts to unite in business as well as marriage. He is keen to receive a knighthood. He thinks a man's responsibility is only to himself and his family and not to the wider community. He fears scandal and tries to protect himself and his family from involvement with Eva Smith. His views are the opposite of Inspector Goole's.

Mrs Birling: wife of Mr Birling and the mother of Sheila and Eric. She is a prominent member of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation. During the play, she: adopts a superior tone with the inspector; is disgusted when she learns that Daisy was Gerald's

mistress but forgets about it when she thinks a scandal has been avoided; uses her influence to prevent pregnant Eva receiving help; thinks Eva and the father of the unborn child are to blame; claims she is the only one who stood up to the inspector's questioning.

Eric Birling: the son of Mr and Mrs Birling and sister to Sheila. He works in his father's firm. During the play, he: drinks too much; admits he made Eva pregnant after meeting her at the Palace Theatre; admits he gave Eva money that he stole from his father's firm; accuses his mother of murdering his unborn child; acknowledges his irresponsibility towards Eva and accepts the Inspector's words. Though not a profound as Sheila's change, Eric is greatly affected by the Inspector's words.

Sheila Birling: the daughter of Mr and Mrs Birling and sister to Eric. She is engaged to Gerald Croft. During the play, she: is initially pleased and excited at the prospect of her marriage; is distressed when she hears that a young woman has taken her own life; reveals that she was responsible for Eva Smith's dismissal from Milward's shop; recognises Inspector Goole cannot be lied to; breaks off her engagement to Gerald when she discovers the affair; reveals Eric drinks too much; acknowledges her part in Eva Smith's downfall and takes the Inspector's words to heart. Of all the characters, she changes the most and is greatly troubled by her own actions. Her focus on frivolous concerns shifts and she supports the need for social justice. Sheila represents the belief that young people are open to change.

Gerald Croft: son of a wealthy industrialist and rival of Birling's. He has become engaged to Sheila. During the play, he: shows the same approach to business as Mr Birling; admits he kept Daisy as his secret mistress for six months after rescuing her from a drunken Alderman Meggarty; discovers a police sergeant as never heard of an Inspector Goole; telephones the Infirmary and learns that no girl died that day.

Contexts

J.B. Priestley

1894 John Boynton Priestley is born in Bradford, Yorkshire, into a middle-class suburban family. His mother dies and his father, who becomes a headteacher, remarries.

1910 Priestley leaves school at 16 and takes a job as a clerk in a wool company to have time to write, rather than go on to university. At this time, his father's socialist friends influence his later views, which emerge in his writing.

1914-18 Aged twenty, he leaves to fight in the First World War, in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. He is badly wounded and gassed. The experience affects his views and writing.

1922 He attends Trinity Hall, Cambridge University and achieves a degree.

1922 He works in London as a journalist and publishes his first collection of essays Brief Diversions. He begins his career as a successful writer.

1934 He writes English Journey, which depicts the poor in England during the economic depression.

1939-45 He makes regular wartime broadcasts for the BBC.

1945 He writes An Inspector Calls, the most famous of his plays.

1984 He dies at the age of eighty-nine, having written numerous plays, novels, essays, social history, literary criticism and an autobiography.

As a socialist, Priestley was particularly dismayed at the period between the two world wars that brought widespread poverty, economic depression and political extremism to many countries. An Inspector Calls is a plea for a fairer society.

Social rank

The place in society (class) from which you came was of great importance in Edwardian society:

- Mr and Mrs Birling feel that they must, at all costs, retain respectability and social standing.
- Mr Birling, like many manufacturers in the Victorian and Edwardian period, has amassed wealth, which makes him more acceptable to the aristocracy, a class above his, who were often losing money from estates that were costly to maintain
- We are led to believe that Arthur Birling was not born wealthy, but is a self-made man, keen to keep rising up the social ladder and gain a knighthood.
- His knighthood will also make his daughter more acceptable to Lady Croft.
- Mrs Birling, her husband's social superior has strict manners and behaviour.

Political and working life in 1912

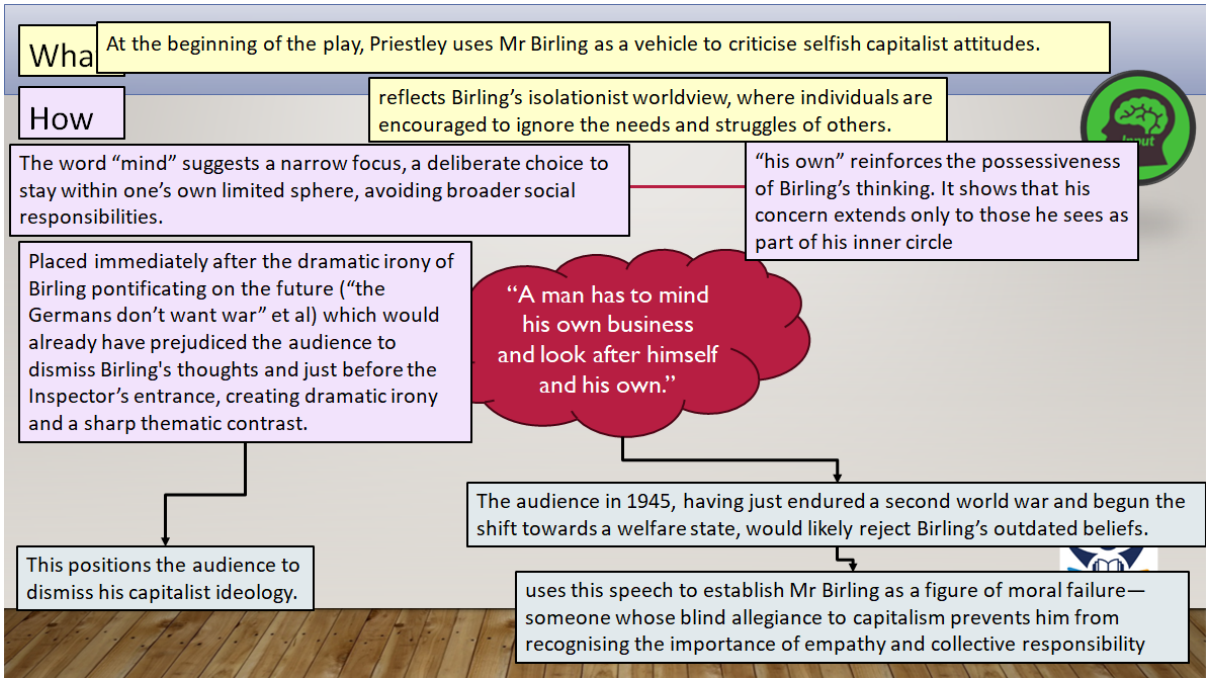
- In 1912 the Liberal party is in power and the Labour party is making headway.
- Suffragettes are calling for votes for women and smash shop windows in Oxford Street.
- Coal miners, after a national strike, secure a minimum wage (meaning pay cannot fall below a particular rate).
- Employers, with the same attitude as Mr Birling, do not take trade unions seriously, though unions do have more powers to negotiate with the employer than workers who take unorganised action.
- The strike Eva took part in was not led by a trade union, so had little chance of success.
- Women are paid less than men for doing the same job or a similar job.
- There is no job security for working people. Dismissal without good references means it is harder to find work.

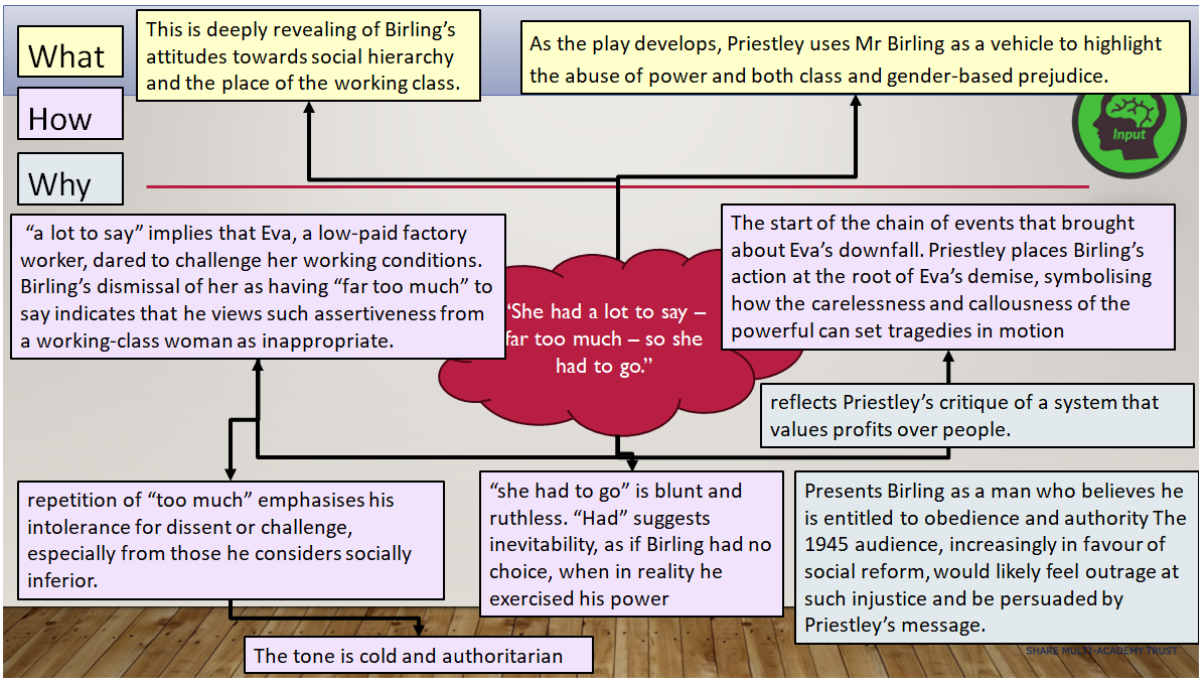
- There is no unemployment pay or benefits to help while looking for a new job, so people go hungry, as Eva Smith did.

	Thesis	Quote 1	Quote 2	Quote 3
Mr Birling	Priestley presents Mr Birling as the embodiment of the arrogant, selfish and morally blind capitalist upper class. Through his dialogue and actions, Birling represents the complacency of those in power, their disregard for the working class, and their resistance to social change. By presenting Mr Birling as overconfident, dismissive, and ultimately unchanged, Priestley uses him as a vehicle for critique, urging the audience to reject capitalist individualism in favour of collective responsibility.	"A man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own."	"She had much to say, far too much, so she had to go."	"I'd give thousands – yes, thousands."
Sheila	Priestley presents Sheila as a character who transforms from a naive and sheltered young woman into a morally aware and socially responsible individual. She serves as a dramatic foil to her parents, representing the potential of the younger generation to create a more compassionate society. Through her development, Priestley uses Sheila to explore themes of gender inequality, emotional insecurity, and the capacity for change—making her a central figure in his social critique.	(Sheila is still admiring her ring).	"These girls aren't just cheap labour, they're people"	"It frightens me the way you talk"
Gerald	Priestley presents Gerald Croft as a complex symbol of the privileged upper-class male, whose charm conceals a deeper moral failure. Through Gerald, Priestley critiques the gender and class hierarchies of Edwardian England and highlights the dangers of ignoring social responsibility when it threatens comfort or status.	"Thirty, manly well-bred man about town"	"Wonderful fairy prince."	"What about this ring?"
Mrs Birling	Priestley presents Mrs Birling as a representation of the cold, hypocritical, and prejudiced upper class. Through her language, behaviour, and beliefs, she becomes a symbol of the emotional detachment and moral failure of Edwardian aristocracy. Priestley uses her to critique social inequality and to highlight the urgent need for compassion and social responsibility in a post-war society.	(a cold woman, her husband's social superior)	"As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money"	"Go and look for the father of the child."
Eric	Priestley presents Eric Birling as a complex and evolving character who represents the moral struggles and potential of the younger generation. Through Eric's inner conflict, careless behaviour, and eventual remorse, Priestley uses him as a vehicle to critique Edwardian masculinity, class privilege, and the need for social responsibility.	(half-shy, half-assertive)	"pretty and a good sport" "I insisted – it seems.. a chap turns easily nasty"	"I'm ashamed of you."
Goole and Responsibility	Priestley presents Inspector Goole as a figure embodying the moral authority that challenges the complacency of the capitalist class and promotes social responsibility. Goole's character is a vehicle for the playwright's critique of individualism and the selfishness inherent in the social system of the early 20th century. Through Goole's commanding presence, rejection of elitist values, and call for collective responsibility, Priestley emphasises the need for social change and unity.	(Impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness).	"I don't play golf."	"Members of one body… fire, blood and anguish."
Eva and Poverty	Priestley presents Eva Smith as a symbolic victim of a class system that devalues working-class lives and offers little protection to women. Although she never appears on stage, Eva's story is central to the play's moral and political message. Priestley uses her to expose the cruelty of capitalism, the invisibility of the poor, and the urgent need for collective social responsibility.	"She had much to say" / "pretty"	"Burnt her insides out"	"Millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths."

Age	Priestley presents age as a key lens through which to examine class, power, and morality. He uses generational differences not just to explore contrasting attitudes, but to critique the rigidity of the older generation and promote the younger generation as a symbol of hope. Through his portrayal of the Birlings, Priestley uses age as a vehicle to expose the flaws of entitlement, highlight the potential for growth, and criticise resistance to change.	"Mummy / squiffy."	"I'm ashamed of you."	"The famous younger generation who know it all."
Gender	Priestley presents gender as a powerful tool through which inequality is upheld in Edwardian society. He critiques patriarchal structures by showing how masculinity is shaped by toxic role models, how women's voices are stifled by misogyny, and how gender roles are deeply intertwined with class prejudice. Through carefully chosen characterisation and dialogue, Priestley exposes the injustices faced by women and challenges the traditional expectations of both sexes.	(Half-shy, half-assertive).	"She had too much to say – far too much, so she had to go."	"Girls of that class."

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Mr Birling 	He fired her from his works in 1910 because she was one of the ringleaders of a strike for more wages.	Mr B's actions were the first link in the chain of events that leads to Eva Smith's suicide. He is more interested in avoiding scandal, and protecting himself and his family, than in what happened to Eva.	He represents the Capistalists who had the power in 1912. He also represents the older generation in 1945 who's actions lead to the World Wars.	The Capitalists of 1912 did not learn from their mistakes, and lead us into a second World War. Priestley shows Mr B as being wrong not to learn from his mistakes, so the 1945 audience can learn from the mistakes of the past and not go into a 3rd world war.

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This is deeply revealing of Birling's attitudes towards social hierarchy and the place of the working class.
As the play develops, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to highlight the abuse of power and both class and gender-based prejudice.
Input
"a lot to say" implies that Eva, a low-paid factory worker, dared to challenge her working conditions. Birling's dismissal of her as having "far too much" to say indicates that he views such assertiveness from a working-class woman as inappropriate.
"She had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go."
The start of the chain of events that brought about Eva's downfall. Priestley places Birling's action at the root of Eva's demise, symbolising how the carelessness and callousness of the powerful can set tragedies in motion
reflects Priestley's critique of a system that values profits over people.
repetition of "too much" emphasises his intolerance for dissent or challenge, especially from those he considers socially inferior.
"she had to go" is blunt and ruthless. "Had" suggests inevitability, as if Birling had no choice, when in reality he exercised his power
Presents Birling as a man who believes he is entitled to obedience and authority The 1945 audience, increasingly in favour of social reform, would likely feel outrage at such injustice and be persuaded by Priestley's message.
The tone is cold and authoritarian
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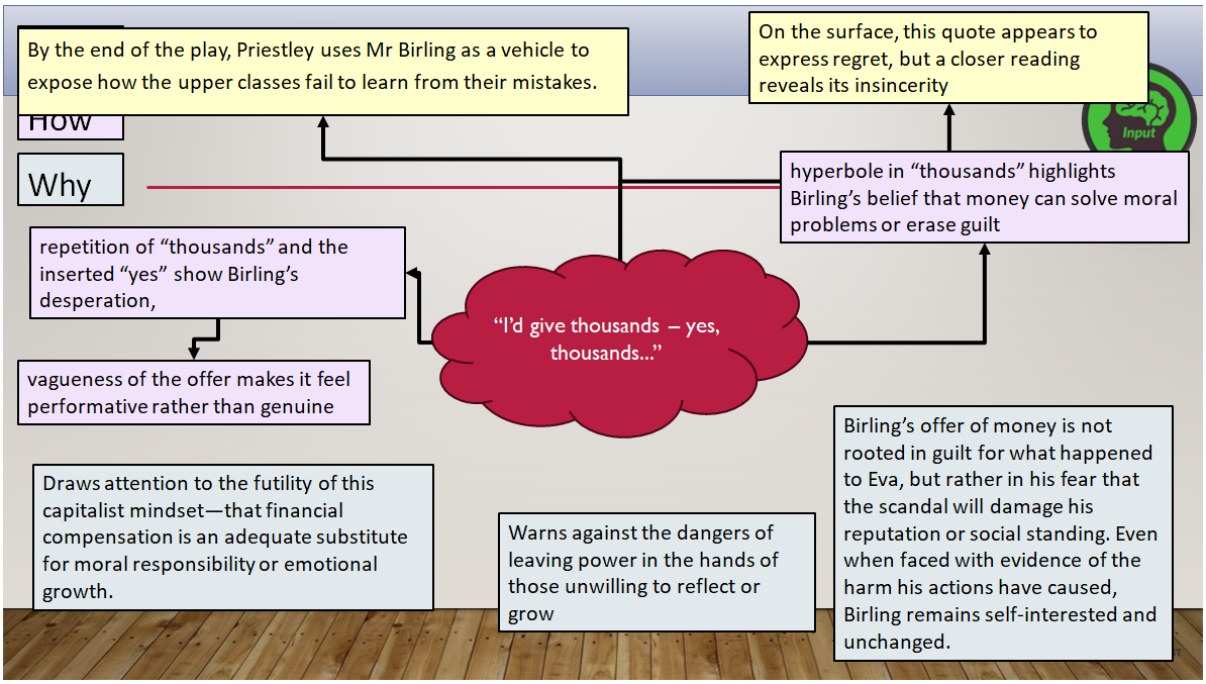
By the end of the play, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to expose how the upper classes fail to learn from their mistakes.
On the surface, this quote appears to express regret, but a closer reading reveals its insincerity
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hyperbole in "thousands" highlights Birling's belief that money can solve moral problems or erase guilt
repetition of "thousands" and the inserted "yes" show Birling's desperation,
"I'd give thousands – yes, thousands..."
vagueness of the offer makes it feel performative rather than genuine
Draws attention to the futility of this capitalist mindset—that financial compensation is an adequate substitute for moral responsibility or emotional growth.
Warns against the dangers of leaving power in the hands of those unwilling to reflect or grow
Birling's offer of money is not rooted in guilt for what happened to Eva, but rather in his fear that the scandal will damage his reputation or social standing. Even when faced with evidence of the harm his actions have caused, Birling remains self-interested and unchanged.

How does Priestley present Mr Birling in 'An Inspector Calls'? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Mr Birling as the embodiment of the arrogant, selfish and morally blind capitalist upper class. He is shown as someone who believes in individual success and ignores the needs of others. Priestley uses Mr Birling to represent the older generation who refuse to change and who care more about money and status than about people. Through his actions and words, the audience is encouraged to see him as a warning against selfishness and inequality.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to criticise selfish capitalist attitudes that prioritise personal success over collective well-being. This is made clear when Birling says, "A man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own." The word "mind" suggests that Birling is choosing to ignore others, showing a deliberate decision to avoid responsibility. The phrase "his own" is possessive, showing that he only cares about people who benefit him, like his family or business. Priestley places this speech just before the Inspector arrives, which creates a strong contrast between Birling's selfish views and the Inspector's message of social responsibility. The audience, especially in 1945, would likely disagree with Birling's ideas and support the Inspector's call for change.

As the play develops, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to expose how the upper classes abuse their power and silence the working class. This is shown when Birling says, "She had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go." The phrase "a lot to say" shows that Eva was confident and tried to stand up for herself, but Birling saw this as a threat. The repetition in "far too much" emphasises how Birling thinks it is wrong for someone of a lower class to speak out. The short phrase "she had to go" sounds cold and final, showing how easily he uses his power to get rid of her. Priestley uses this to show how people like Birling treat workers as disposable, and how the system is unfair to those without power or money.

By the end of the play, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to show how the upper class resists both personal growth and broader social change. This is most clear when Birling says, "I'd give thousands – yes, thousands..." after learning about Eva's death. The repetition of "thousands" shows he is trying to sound generous, but it feels fake because he refused to help Eva earlier. The word "yes" adds a sense of panic, as if he is trying to convince others that he cares. However, the audience knows that he is more worried about his reputation than about what happened to Eva. Priestley uses this to show that Birling has not changed and still believes that money can fix everything, even though it cannot bring back a life or undo the harm he caused.

In conclusion, Mr Birling is used by Priestley to expose the greed, hypocrisy, and inhumanity of the capitalist elite. Through his words and actions, Priestley shows how figures like Birling prioritise profit, silence the vulnerable, and refuse to evolve. By presenting him as a man unchanged by tragedy, Priestley makes a powerful argument for a more compassionate and socially responsible society.

How does Priestley use Mr Birling in 'An Inspector Calls'? Grade 7-9

Priestley uses Mr Birling in 'An Inspector Calls as a symbol of capitalist self-interest and social irresponsibility, using his arrogance, ignorance, and lack of empathy to critique the attitudes of the Edwardian upper class and highlight the need for social change in line with his socialist agenda. By presenting Mr Birling as overconfident, dismissive, and ultimately unchanged, Priestley uses him as a vehicle for critique, urging the audience to reject capitalist individualism in favour of collective responsibility.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to criticise selfish capitalist attitudes that prioritise personal success over collective well-being. This is made explicit when Birling states, "A man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own." The phrase "mind his own business" reflects Birling's isolationist worldview, where individuals are encouraged to ignore the needs and struggles of others. The word "mind" suggests a narrow focus, a deliberate choice to stay within one's own limited sphere, avoiding broader social responsibilities. Furthermore, the phrase "his own" reinforces the possessiveness and exclusivity of Birling's thinking. It shows that his concern extends only to those he sees as part of his inner circle—primarily his immediate family and business interests—while the wider community is dismissed as irrelevant. This moment in the play is crucial because Priestley places immediately after the dramatic irony of Birling pontificating on the future (stating "the Germans don't want war" et al) which would already have prejudiced the audience to dismiss Birling's selfish comments here. Furthermore Priestley places it just before the Inspector's entrance, creating dramatic irony and a sharp thematic contrast. Birling's speech functions almost like a capitalist manifesto, promoting competition and self-interest. However, the Inspector's arrival signals the intrusion of a new, morally driven worldview. The audience in 1945, having just endured a second world war and begun the shift towards a welfare state, would likely reject Birling's outdated beliefs. Priestley uses this speech to establish Mr Birling as a figure of moral failure—someone whose blind allegiance to capitalism prevents him from recognising the importance of empathy and collective responsibility.

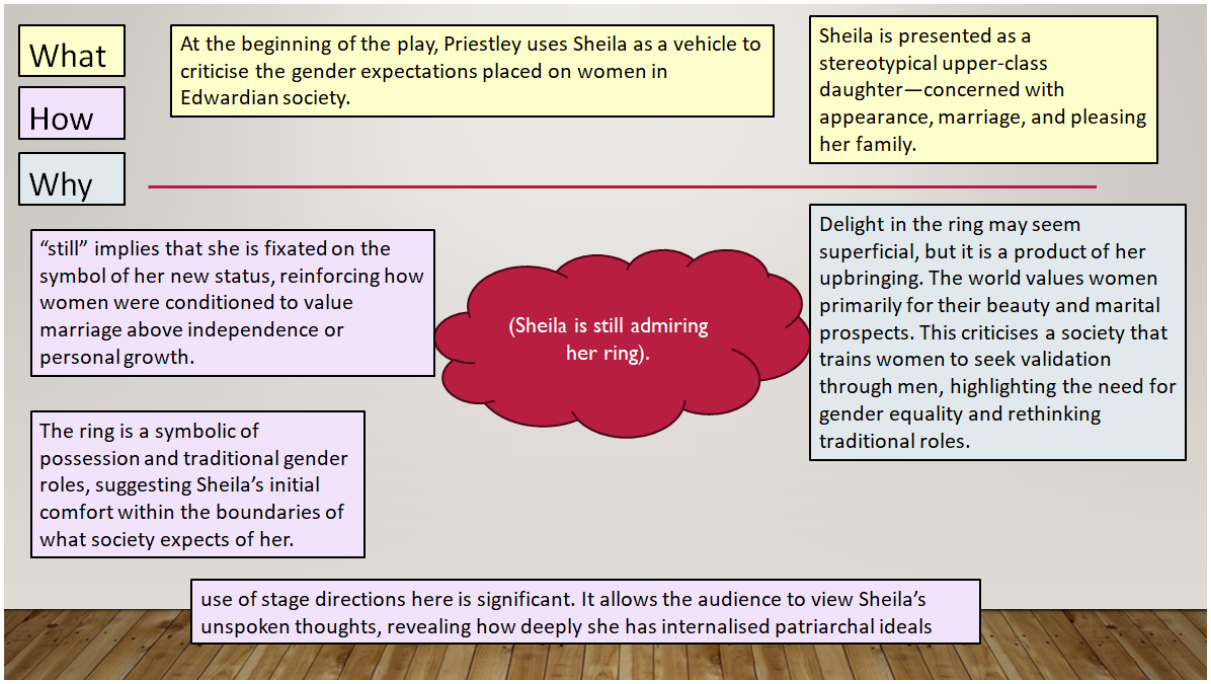
As the play develops, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to expose how the upper classes abuse their power and silence the working class. This is shown when Birling sacks Eva, stating that "she had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go." This is deeply revealing of Birling's attitudes towards social hierarchy and the place of the working class. The phrase "a lot to say" implies that Eva, a low-paid factory worker, dared to challenge her working conditions—most likely by voicing demands for fairer treatment or higher wages. Birling's dismissal of her as having "far too much" to say indicates that he views such assertiveness from a working-class woman as inappropriate, even dangerous. The repetition of "too much" emphasises his intolerance for dissent or challenge, especially from those he considers socially inferior. The phrase "she had to go" is blunt and ruthless. The word "had" suggests inevitability, as if Birling had no choice, when in reality he exercised his power to remove her because she threatened his authority. The tone is cold and authoritarian,

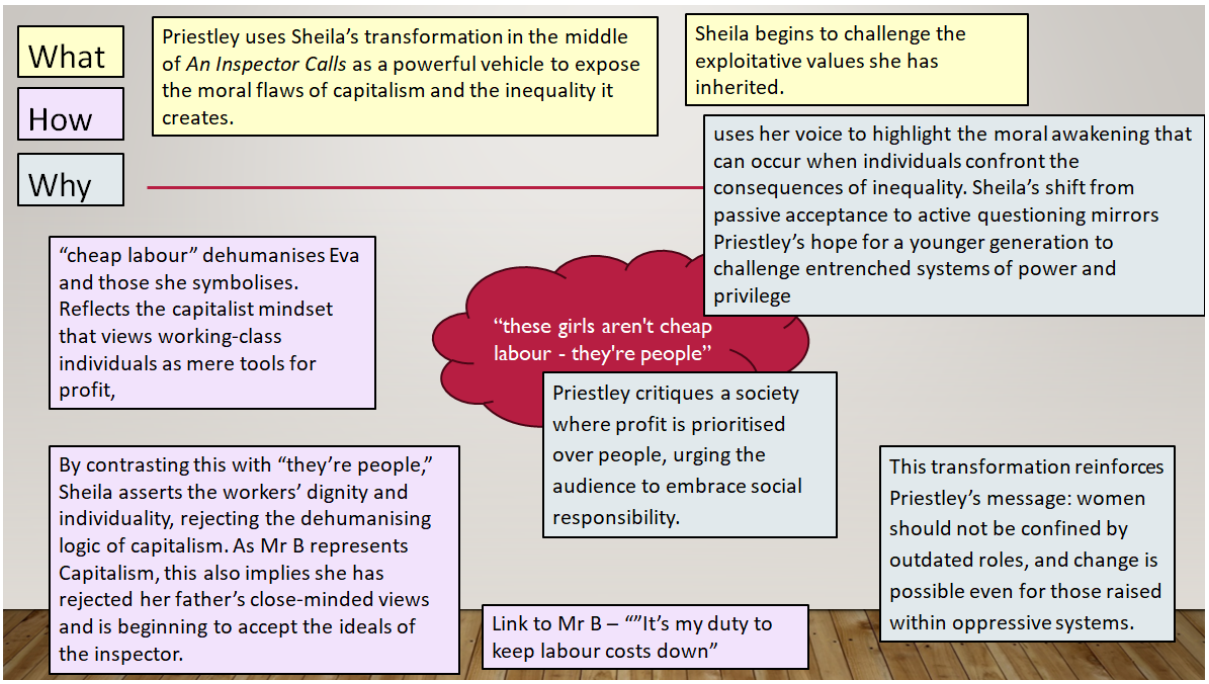
revealing how business owners like Birling maintained control by punishing any sign of rebellion. This moment captures the imbalance of power between employers and workers in Edwardian society and reflects Priestley's critique of a system that values profits over people. This is anchored further as the play develops when Priestley has Birling espouse that it's his "duty to keep labour costs down" – once again suggesting the characters fallacious perception that his "duty" is to the other wealthy business owners such as him, rather than those he employs for whom he should have a duty of care. Structurally, this moment marks the start of Eva's downfall—a chain reaction of mistreatment by the Birlings and Gerald. Priestley places Birling's action at the root of Eva's demise, symbolising how the carelessness and callousness of the powerful can set tragedies in motion. Eva is not treated as an individual with rights and feelings, but as a disruptive voice to be eliminated. Through this, Priestley presents Birling as a man who believes he is entitled to obedience and authority—an attitude the playwright clearly condemns. The 1945 audience, shaped by the hardships of war and increasingly in favour of social reform, would likely feel outrage at such injustice and be persuaded by Priestley's message.

By the end of the play, Priestley uses Mr Birling as a vehicle to show how the upper class resists both personal growth and broader social change. This is most evident when Birling says, "I'd give thousands – yes, thousands..." after learning of Eva Smith's death. On the surface, this quote appears to express regret, but a closer reading reveals its insincerity. The repetition of "thousands" and the inserted "yes" show Birling's desperation, as if he's trying to prove something, but the vagueness of the offer makes it feel performative rather than genuine. His willingness to offer large sums after the tragedy has occurred contrasts starkly with his earlier refusal to raise Eva's wages by a few shillings. The hyperbole in "thousands" highlights Birling's belief that money can solve moral problems or erase guilt. Priestley draws attention to the futility of this capitalist mindset—that financial compensation is an adequate substitute for moral responsibility or emotional growth. Additionally, this quote occurs after the Inspector has left and the Birlings begin to suspect the entire visit was a hoax. This context is crucial: Birling's offer of money is not rooted in guilt for what happened to Eva, but rather in his fear that the scandal will damage his reputation or social standing. Even when faced with evidence of the harm his actions have caused, Birling remains self-interested and unchanged. By portraying this stubbornness, Priestley warns against the dangers of leaving power in the hands of those unwilling to reflect or grow. The play becomes a call for moral accountability and progressive social change.

In conclusion, Mr Birling is used by Priestley to expose the greed, hypocrisy, and inhumanity of the capitalist elite. Through his words and actions, Priestley shows how figures like Birling prioritise profit, silence the vulnerable, and refuse to evolve. By presenting him as a man unchanged by tragedy, Priestley makes a powerful argument for a more compassionate and socially responsible society.

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Sheila 	Exploited her family's power as a valued customer of Milwards to have Eva sacked because she was jealous of her	Sheila grows up considerably after learning about her part in the chain of events which lead to Eva Smith's death. By the end of the play, her politics are very different to those of her parents.	She represents the younger generation of 1945 who have the power to break away from the actions of the older generation and the past. Her change also represents the increased political power women had by 1945	Priestley wanted his 1945 audience to learn from the mistakes of the past and move towards an equitable society (socialist) future. He wants them to change just like Sheila does

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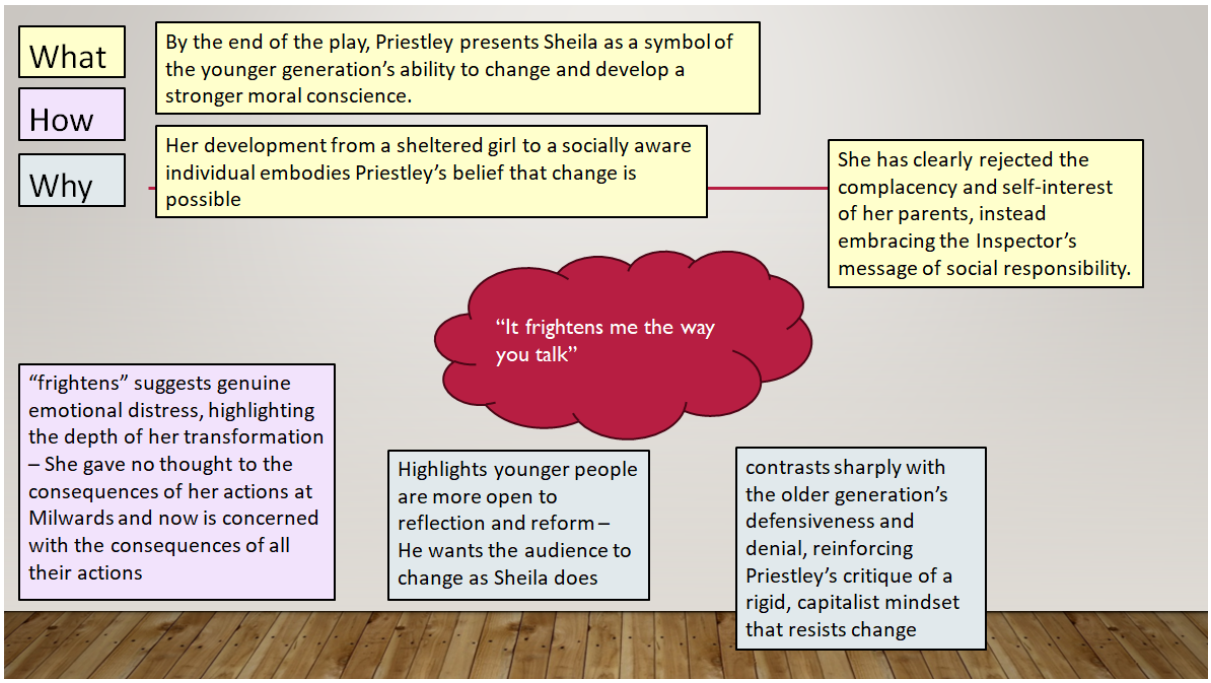
Priestley uses Sheila's transformation in the middle of *An Inspector Calls* as a powerful vehicle to expose the moral flaws of capitalism and the inequality it creates.
Sheila begins to challenge the exploitative values she has inherited.
uses her voice to highlight the moral awakening that can occur when individuals confront the consequences of inequality. Sheila's shift from passive acceptance to active questioning mirrors Priestley's hope for a younger generation to challenge entrenched systems of power and privilege
"cheap labour" dehumanises Eva and those she symbolises. Reflects the capitalist mindset that views working-class individuals as mere tools for profit,
"these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people"
Priestley critiques a society where profit is prioritised over people, urging the audience to embrace social responsibility.
By contrasting this with "they're people," Sheila asserts the workers' dignity and individuality, rejecting the dehumanising logic of capitalism. As Mr B represents Capitalism, this also implies she has rejected her father's close-minded views and is beginning to accept the ideals of the inspector.
Link to Mr B – ""It's my duty to keep labour costs down"
This transformation reinforces Priestley's message: women should not be confined by outdated roles, and change is possible even for those raised within oppressive systems.


What
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By the end of the play, Priestley presents Sheila as a symbol of the younger generation's ability to change and develop a stronger moral conscience.
Her development from a sheltered girl to a socially aware individual embodies Priestley's belief that change is possible
She has clearly rejected the complacency and self-interest of her parents, instead embracing the Inspector's message of social responsibility.
"It frightens me the way you talk"
"frightens" suggests genuine emotional distress, highlighting the depth of her transformation – She gave no thought to the consequences of her actions at Milwards and now is concerned with the consequences of all their actions
Highlights younger people are more open to reflection and reform – He wants the audience to change as Sheila does
contrasts sharply with the older generation's defensiveness and denial, reinforcing Priestley's critique of a rigid, capitalist mindset that resists change

How does Priestley present Sheila? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Sheila as a character who transforms from a naive and sheltered young woman into a morally aware and socially responsible individual. At first, she seems immature and focused on her engagement, but by the end of the play, she becomes thoughtful and critical of her family's actions. Priestley uses Sheila to show that the younger generation can learn from their mistakes and help build a fairer society.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Sheila as a vehicle to criticise the gender expectations placed on women in Edwardian society. This is shown when the stage direction says, "Sheila is still admiring her ring." The word "still" suggests she is focused on her engagement and not paying attention to anything else, showing how women were expected to care about marriage more than independence. The word "admiring" shows she sees the ring as something valuable, not just emotionally but socially, as it represents her status. Priestley uses this moment to show how women were taught to find success through marriage rather than through their own achievements. He wants the audience to question these old-fashioned ideas and think about how women should be treated equally.

As the play develops, Priestley uses Sheila as a vehicle to show how jealousy and insecurity can lead to the mistreatment of others, especially within an unequal class system. Sheila says, "She looked as if she could take care of herself," when talking about Eva. The phrase "looked as if" shows that Sheila made a judgement based only on appearance, which was a mistake. The word "care" suggests that Sheila thought Eva didn't need help, even though she was in a vulnerable position. Priestley uses this to show how people in power can make unfair decisions based on emotion and assumption. Sheila's jealousy caused her to get Eva fired, but unlike her parents, she feels guilty and learns from it. Priestley wants the audience to see that admitting when you're wrong is important, and that people should treat others with kindness, no matter their class.

By the end of the play, Priestley uses Sheila as a vehicle to show that the younger generation is capable of change and moral growth, positioning her as a beacon of hope for the future. This is clear when she says, "You don't seem to have learnt anything." The word "you" shows she is directly challenging her parents, and the phrase "don't seem" shows she is disappointed but still hopeful they might change. The word "learnt" is important because it shows that Sheila believes people should grow and improve after making mistakes. Priestley uses this moment to show the difference between the older and younger generations. Sheila has changed, but her parents haven't. He wants the audience to understand that progress comes from people who are willing to reflect and take responsibility.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Sheila as a dynamic character who sheds the limiting expectations of her class, acknowledges the consequences of her actions, and embraces the Inspector's message. Through her development, Priestley shows that change is possible and that the younger generation can lead the way to a more caring and equal society.

How does Priestley use the character of Sheila? Grade 7-9

Priestley uses Sheila as a character who develops self-awareness and empathy, using her transformation from naïve complicity to genuine remorse to represent hope for a more socially responsible younger generation in the hopes of seeing this change replicated in his audience.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Sheila as a vehicle to criticise the gender expectations placed on women in Edwardian society. Early in the play, Sheila is presented as a stereotypical upper-class daughter—concerned with appearance, marriage, and pleasing her family. This is evident when the stage direction states that "Sheila is still admiring her ring," shortly after Gerald gives her the engagement ring. The word "still" implies that she is fixated on the symbol of her new status, reinforcing how women were conditioned to value marriage above independence or personal growth. The ring itself as a prop is a symbol of possession and traditional gender roles, suggesting Sheila's initial comfort within the boundaries of what society expects of her. Her admiration reflects the way women were taught to view engagement as the pinnacle of success, rather than education, career, or autonomy. Priestley's use of stage directions here is significant. It allows the audience to view Sheila's unspoken thoughts, revealing how deeply she has internalised patriarchal ideals. Her delight in the ring may seem superficial, but it is a product of her upbringing in a world that values women primarily for their beauty and marital prospects. Through this, Priestley criticises a society that trains women to seek validation through men, highlighting the need for gender equality and rethinking traditional roles. As the play progresses, Sheila gradually breaks away from these expectations, challenging both Gerald and her father, and asserting her own voice. This transformation reinforces Priestley's message: women should not be confined by outdated roles, and change is possible even for those raised within oppressive systems.

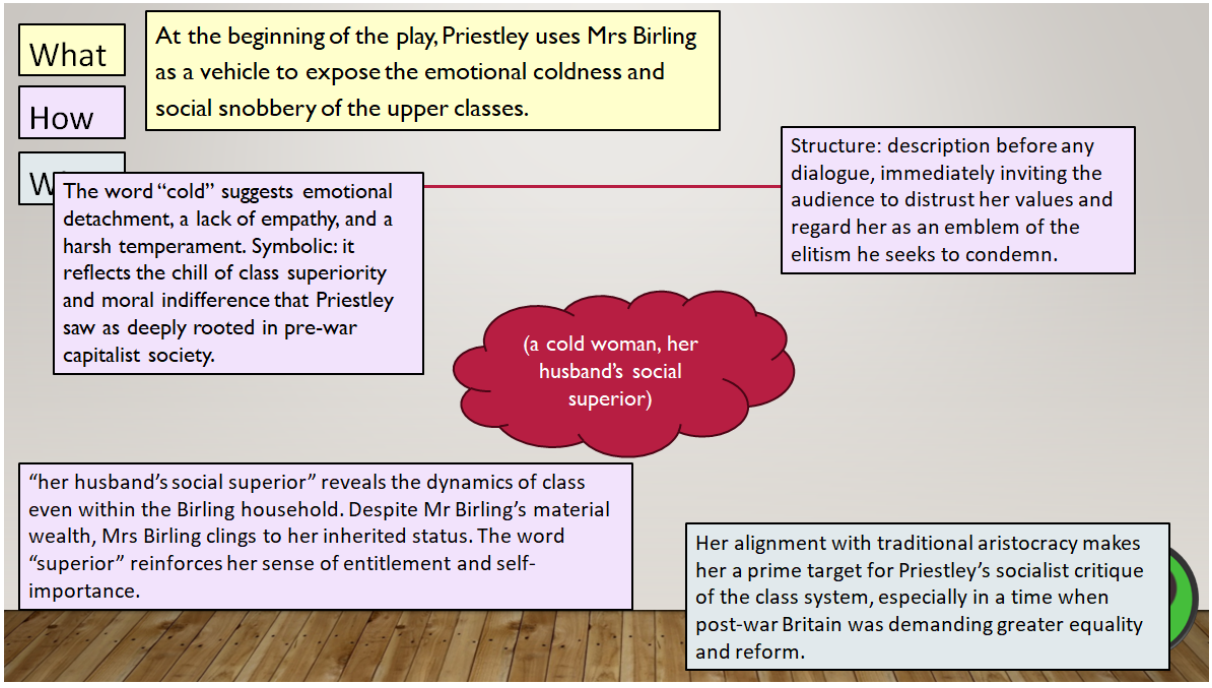
Priestley uses Sheila's transformation in the middle of *An Inspector Calls* as a powerful vehicle to expose the moral flaws of capitalism and the inequality it creates. Initially portrayed as naïve and complicit in her privileged lifestyle, Sheila begins to challenge the exploitative values she has inherited. Her protest — "*these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people*" — marks a turning point in her character and signals Priestley's socialist message. The phrase "cheap labour" reflects the capitalist mindset that views working-class individuals as mere tools for profit, stripped of humanity. By contrasting this with "they're people," Sheila asserts the workers' dignity and individuality, rejecting the dehumanising logic of capitalism. Furthermore, as Mr Birling is thought to embody the ideals of capitalism in the play, by directly rejecting his viewpoint that Eva, and those she symbolises, are, as Mr Birling asserts, just "labour costs", she implicitly rejects the idea of capitalism itself. Priestley uses her voice to highlight the moral awakening that can occur when individuals confront the consequences of inequality. Sheila's shift from passive acceptance to active questioning mirrors Priestley's hope for a younger generation to challenge entrenched systems of power and privilege. Through her, Priestley critiques a society where profit is prioritised over people, urging the audience to embrace social responsibility.

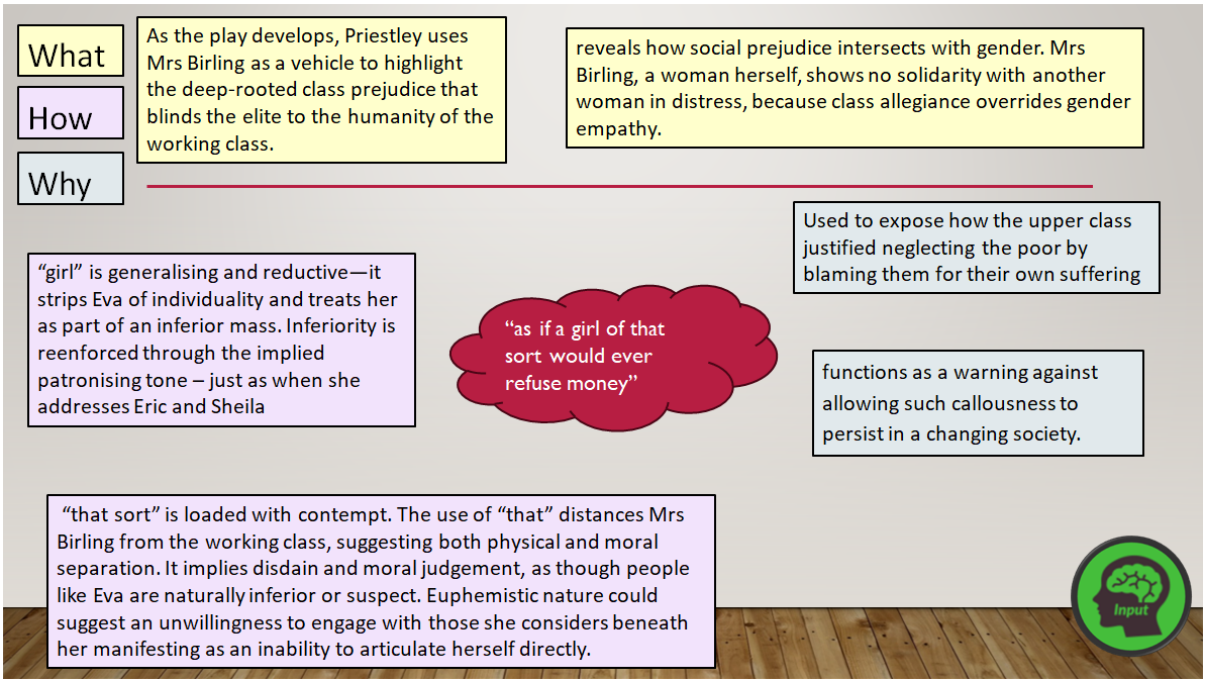
Priestley presents Sheila as a symbol of the younger generation's ability to change and develop a stronger moral conscience. By the end of the play, Sheila has clearly rejected the complacency and self-interest of her parents, instead embracing the Inspector's message of social responsibility. Her line, "*It frightens me the way you talk*," directed at her parents, reveals her horror at their refusal to learn from the evening's events. The choice of "frightens" suggests genuine emotional distress,

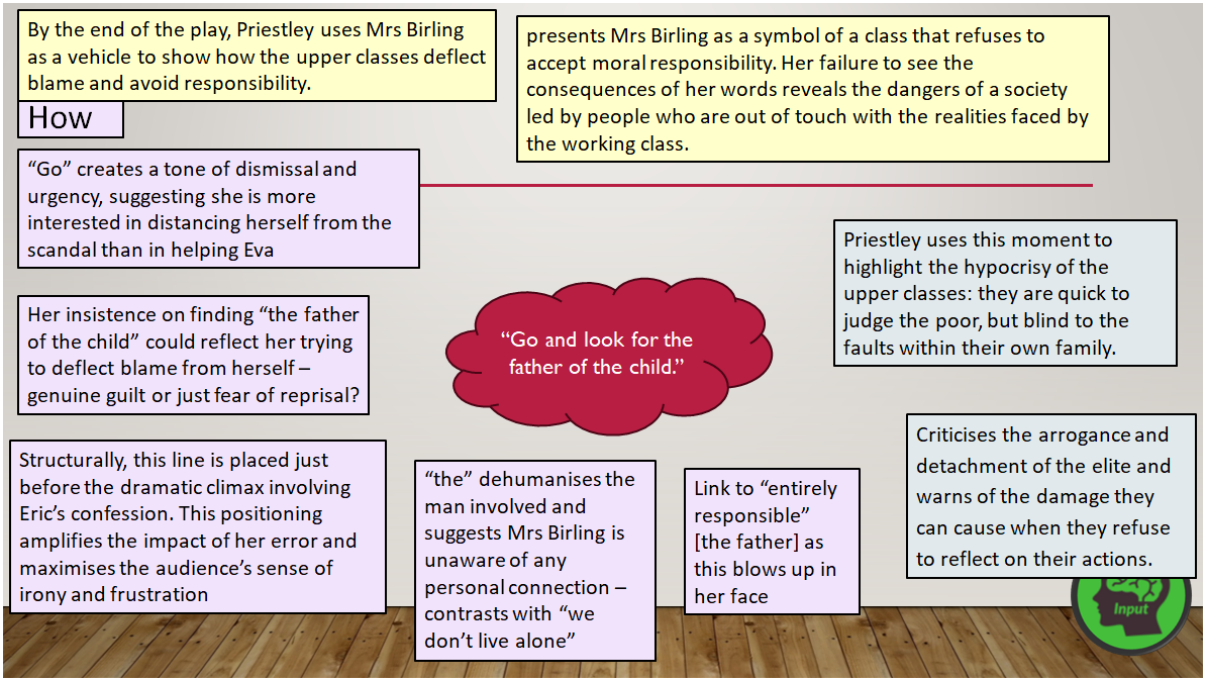
highlighting the depth of her transformation and her awareness of the consequences of ignoring others' suffering. Sheila's reaction contrasts sharply with the older generation's defensiveness and denial, reinforcing Priestley's critique of a rigid, capitalist mindset that resists change. Through Sheila, Priestley champions the idea that younger people are more open to reflection and reform, and he uses her moral growth to inspire hope for a fairer, more compassionate society. Her development from a sheltered girl to a socially aware individual embodies Priestley's belief that change is possible — but only if people are willing to confront uncomfortable truths.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Sheila as a dynamic character who sheds the limiting expectations of her class, acknowledges the consequences of her actions, and embraces the Inspector's message. Through her early focus on marriage, her mistreatment of Eva, and ultimately her moral growth, Sheila reflects the flaws of Edwardian society and the potential for a better future. Priestley uses her as a vehicle for hope, demonstrating that self-reflection and change are not only possible, but essential for progress.

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Mrs Birling 	The chair of a charity committee who refused Eva Smith help. Eva used a fake name (Mrs Birling) which prejudiced the real Mrs B against her	Her actions were the final link in the chain which lead to Eva's suicide	She represents the classist establishment who had power in 1912. She also represents the self-destructive nature of prejudice	She shows that it is wrong to have an 'us and them' attitude towards the classes as Priestley wanted an Equitable society




What
As the play develops, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to highlight the deep-rooted class prejudice that blinds the elite to the humanity of the working class.
How
reveals how social prejudice intersects with gender. Mrs Birling, a woman herself, shows no solidarity with another woman in distress, because class allegiance overrides gender empathy.
Why
Used to expose how the upper class justified neglecting the poor by blaming them for their own suffering
"girl" is generalising and reductive—it strips Eva of individuality and treats her as part of an inferior mass. Inferiority is reenforced through the implied patronising tone – just as when she addresses Eric and Sheila
"as if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money"
functions as a warning against allowing such callousness to persist in a changing society.
"that sort" is loaded with contempt. The use of "that" distances Mrs Birling from the working class, suggesting both physical and moral separation. It implies disdain and moral judgement, as though people like Eva are naturally inferior or suspect. Euphemistic nature could suggest an unwillingness to engage with those she considers beneath her manifesting as an inability to articulate herself directly.
Input


By the end of the play, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to show how the upper classes deflect blame and avoid responsibility.
presents Mrs Birling as a symbol of a class that refuses to accept moral responsibility. Her failure to see the consequences of her words reveals the dangers of a society led by people who are out of touch with the realities faced by the working class.
How
"Go" creates a tone of dismissal and urgency, suggesting she is more interested in distancing herself from the scandal than in helping Eva
Priestley uses this moment to highlight the hypocrisy of the upper classes: they are quick to judge the poor, but blind to the faults within their own family.
Her insistence on finding "the father of the child" could reflect her trying to deflect blame from herself – genuine guilt or just fear of reprisal?
"Go and look for the father of the child."
Criticises the arrogance and detachment of the elite and warns of the damage they can cause when they refuse to reflect on their actions.
Structurally, this line is placed just before the dramatic climax involving Eric's confession. This positioning amplifies the impact of her error and maximises the audience's sense of irony and frustration
"the" dehumanises the man involved and suggests Mrs Birling is unaware of any personal connection – contrasts with "we don't live alone"
Link to "entirely responsible" [the father] as this blows up in her face
Input

How does Priestley present Mrs Birling? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Mrs Birling as a representation of the cold, hypocritical, and prejudiced upper class. She is shown as someone who looks down on others and refuses to accept responsibility for her actions. Through Mrs Birling, Priestley criticises social inequality and shows the dangers of lacking compassion and understanding.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to expose the emotional coldness and social snobbery of the upper classes. In the stage directions, she is described as "a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior." The word "cold" suggests she is unfriendly and does not care about other people's feelings. The word "superior" shows that she thinks she is better than others, even her own husband. Priestley uses these words to show that Mrs Birling is distant and proud, and that she values her social status above kindness. The audience is meant to see her as a symbol of the problems with the upper class, who care more about their position than about helping others.

As the play develops, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to highlight the deep-rooted class prejudice that blinds the elite to the humanity of the working class. This is clear when she says "girls of that class." The word "girls" is general and dismissive, showing she does not see Eva as an individual. The phrase "that class" shows she looks down on people who are poorer than her. Priestley uses this language to show how the upper class often judge and blame the poor for their own problems. Mrs Birling's attitude shows she has no sympathy for Eva, and Priestley wants the audience to see how unfair and cruel this is.

By the end of the play, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to show how the upper classes deflect blame and avoid responsibility. This is shown when she says, "Go and look for the father of the child." The word "Go" is a command, showing she wants to push the problem onto someone else. The phrase "the father of the child" is cold and distant, as if she does not care who he is or what happened. Priestley uses this moment to show that Mrs Birling is quick to judge others but does not see her own faults. The dramatic irony is that she is blaming her own son, which makes the audience see how blind and hypocritical she is.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Mrs Birling as a powerful symbol of the cold-heartedness, prejudice, and hypocrisy of the upper class. Through her words and actions, she is shown to be uncaring and unwilling to change. Priestley uses her character to warn the audience about the dangers of ignoring social responsibility and the need for more empathy in society.

How does Priestley use Mrs Birling? Grade 7-9

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Mrs Birling as a representation of the cold, hypocritical, and prejudiced upper class. Through her language, behaviour, and beliefs, she becomes a symbol of the emotional detachment and moral failure of Edwardian aristocracy. Priestley uses her to critique social inequality and to highlight the urgent need for compassion and social responsibility in a post-war society.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to expose the emotional coldness and social snobbery of the upper classes. This is established immediately in the stage directions, which describe her as "a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior." The word "cold" suggests emotional detachment, a lack of empathy, and a harsh temperament—qualities that define her responses throughout the play. She is not only distant from others emotionally, but also sees human suffering as an inconvenience rather than a call for compassion. This "coldness" is not incidental but symbolic: it reflects the chill of class superiority and moral indifference that Priestley saw as deeply rooted in pre-war capitalist society. Additionally, the phrase "her husband's social superior" reveals the dynamics of class even within the Birling household. Despite Mr Birling's material wealth, Mrs Birling clings to her inherited status. The word "superior" reinforces her sense of entitlement and self-importance. Her constant reminders of class distinctions—whether in how she treats the Inspector or speaks of Eva—stem from this perceived superiority. Structurally, Priestley introduces this description before any dialogue, immediately inviting the audience to distrust her values and regard her as an emblem of the elitism he seeks to condemn. Her alignment with traditional aristocracy makes her a prime target for Priestley's socialist critique, especially in a time when post-war Britain was demanding greater equality and reform.

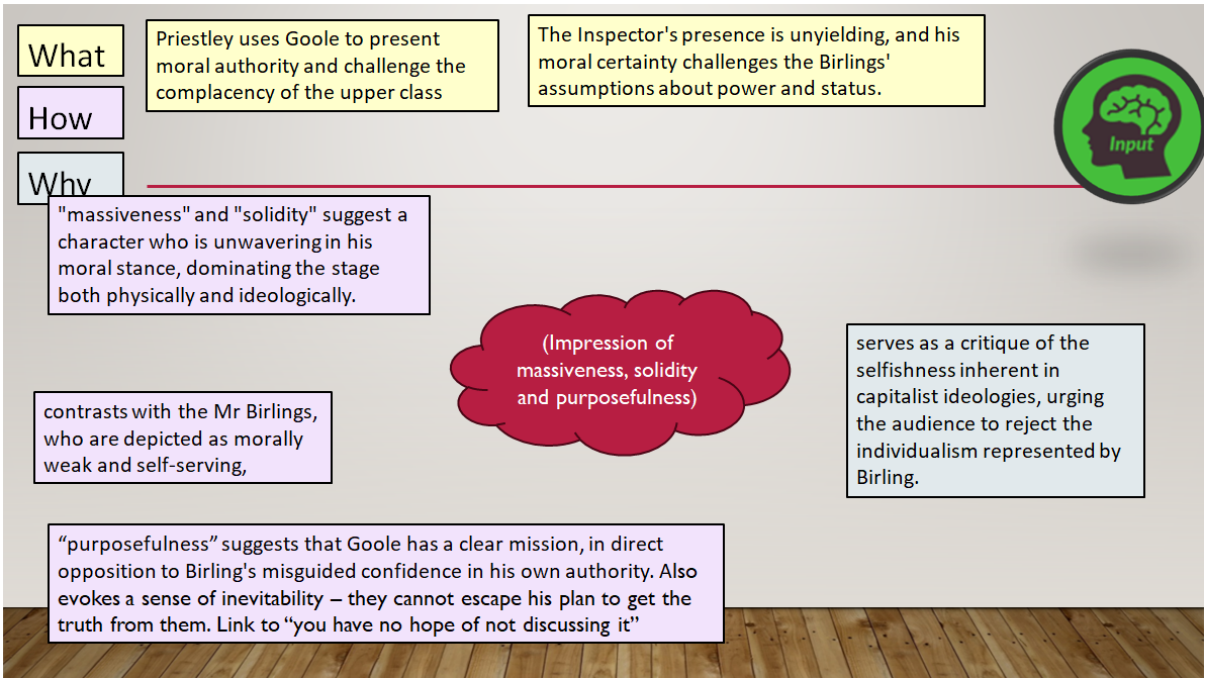
As the play develops, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to highlight the deep-rooted class prejudice that blinds the elite to the humanity of the working class. This is clearest when she dismisses Eva Smith with the phrase "as if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money." The word "girl" is generalising and reductive—it strips Eva of individuality and treats her as part of an indistinguishable, inferior mass. By referring to Eva not by name but by social category, Mrs Birling dehumanises her, reinforcing the idea that the poor are not worthy of attention or compassion. The euphemistic phrase "that sort" is loaded with contempt. The use of "that" distances Mrs Birling from the working class, suggesting both physical and moral separation. It implies disdain and moral judgement, as though people like Eva are naturally inferior or suspect. This is anchored through the choice of euphemism here which could reflect the character being unable or unwilling to engage with those she considers her inferiors, resulting in her being unable to articulate herself in a direct manner. Priestley uses this language to expose how the upper class justified neglecting the poor by blaming them for their own suffering. This moment also reveals how social prejudice intersects with gender. Mrs Birling, a woman herself, shows no solidarity with another woman in distress, because class allegiance overrides gender empathy. Her refusal to help Eva is not just personal cruelty—it is ideological, rooted in a belief that the poor are undeserving of assistance. This callousness would likely position the audience in opposition to Mrs Birling and a contemporary audience, having lived through shared national hardship, would likely reject her ideology, aligning instead with the Inspector's message of collective care. Thus, Mrs Birling's attitudes function as a warning against allowing such callousness to persist in a changing society.

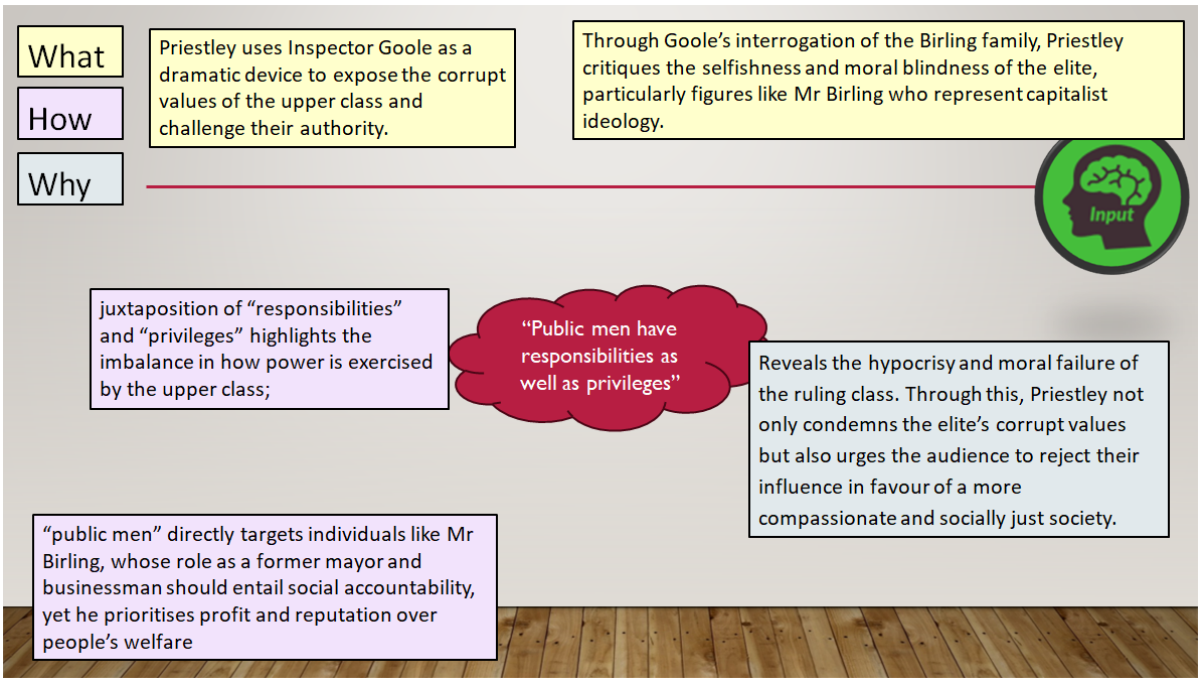
By the end of the play, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a vehicle to show how the upper classes deflect blame and avoid responsibility. This is most powerfully shown when she coldly declares, "Go and

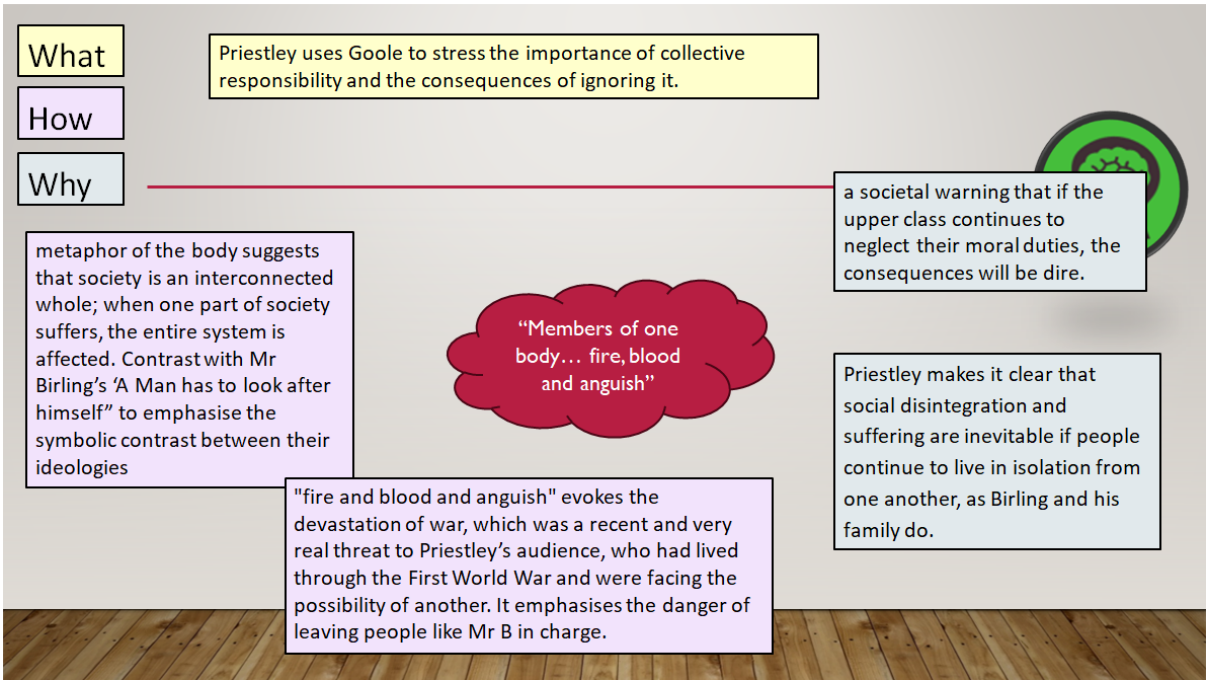
look for the father of the child." At this point in the play, Mrs Birling is eager to shift responsibility for Eva Smith's pregnancy away from herself and onto an unknown man. The imperative "Go" creates a tone of dismissal and urgency, suggesting she is more interested in distancing herself from the scandal than in helping Eva. By instructing others to pursue "the father of the child", she redirects attention away from her own role in refusing aid to a desperate woman. The word "the" dehumanises the man involved and suggests Mrs Birling is unaware of—or is wilfully ignoring—any personal connection. Dramatic irony plays a significant role here. The audience, and later the characters, come to realise that the father Mrs Birling so confidently condemns is in fact her own son, Eric. This revelation undermines her authority and exposes the fragility of her moral certainty whilst emphasising Priestley's message that we are all part of "one body" – in this case actively confirming the connection of Mrs Birling to Eva. Her earlier judgemental attitude is shown to be based on ignorance and pride. Priestley uses this moment to highlight the hypocrisy of the upper classes: they are quick to judge the poor, but blind to the faults within their own family. Mrs Birling's insistence that the father is "entirely responsible" backfires, showing her eagerness to blame others rather than accept shared guilt. Structurally, this line is placed just before the dramatic climax involving Eric's confession. This positioning amplifies the impact of her error and maximises the audience's sense of irony and frustration. Through this, Priestley presents Mrs Birling as a symbol of a class that refuses to accept moral responsibility. Her failure to see the consequences of her words until it is too late reveals the dangers of a society led by people who are out of touch with the realities faced by the working class. By using Mrs Birling in this way, Priestley critiques the arrogance and detachment of the elite and warns of the damage they can cause when they refuse to reflect on their actions.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Mrs Birling as a powerful symbol of the cold-heartedness, prejudice, and hypocrisy of the upper class. Through her stage directions, dialogue, and actions, she is exposed as someone whose social values are rigid and morally bankrupt. Her refusal to accept blame, her disdain for the working class, and her ironic condemnation of her own son all contribute to Priestley's larger message: that without empathy and collective responsibility, society is doomed to repeat its injustices.

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Inspector Goole 	He is investigating her death and trying to make people take responsibility for their part in it	The Inspector's investigation forms the framework for the entire play	He could represent the play write himself, and is a way of Priestley living out his desire to go back in time and talk to the Capitalists of the past, to try and avoid the consequences of their actions.	He delivers the social message.




What
How
Why
Priestley uses Inspector Goole as a dramatic device to expose the corrupt values of the upper class and challenge their authority.
Through Goole's interrogation of the Birling family, Priestley critiques the selfishness and moral blindness of the elite, particularly figures like Mr Birling who represent capitalist ideology.
Input
juxtaposition of "responsibilities" and "privileges" highlights the imbalance in how power is exercised by the upper class;
"Public men have responsibilities as well as privileges"
Reveals the hypocrisy and moral failure of the ruling class. Through this, Priestley not only condemns the elite's corrupt values but also urges the audience to reject their influence in favour of a more compassionate and socially just society.
"public men" directly targets individuals like Mr Birling, whose role as a former mayor and businessman should entail social accountability, yet he prioritises profit and reputation over people's welfare


What
How
Why
Priestley uses Goole to stress the importance of collective responsibility and the consequences of ignoring it.
a societal warning that if the upper class continues to neglect their moral duties, the consequences will be dire.
metaphor of the body suggests that society is an interconnected whole; when one part of society suffers, the entire system is affected. Contrast with Mr Birling's 'A Man has to look after himself" to emphasise the symbolic contrast between their ideologies
"Members of one body… fire, blood and anguish"
Priestley makes it clear that social disintegration and suffering are inevitable if people continue to live in isolation from one another, as Birling and his family do.
"fire and blood and anguish" evokes the devastation of war, which was a recent and very real threat to Priestley's audience, who had lived through the First World War and were facing the possibility of another. It emphasises the danger of leaving people like Mr B in charge.

How does Priestley present Goole? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Inspector Goole as a figure who stands for moral authority and social responsibility. Goole is used to challenge the selfishness of the upper class and to show the importance of caring for others. Through his strong presence and clear beliefs, Priestley uses Goole to deliver his message about the need for social change.

Priestley uses Goole to present moral authority and challenge the complacency of the upper class. Goole is described as having an "impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness." The word "massiveness" suggests that Goole is powerful and cannot be ignored. The word "solidity" shows that he is firm in his beliefs and not easily shaken. Priestley uses these words to make Goole seem different from the Birlings, who are shown as weak and selfish. Goole's "purposefulness" means he has a clear goal, which is to make the family face up to what they have done. Priestley wants the audience to see Goole as a strong force for good, who stands up to the upper class and makes them think about their actions.

Moreover, Priestley uses Goole to expose the corrupt values of the elite and reject their influence. When Goole says, "I don't play golf," he is showing that he does not care about the things that are important to people like Mr Birling. The word "golf" is a symbol of wealth and status, and by saying he does not play, Goole is rejecting the idea that social class matters. Priestley uses this to show that Goole's authority comes from his morals, not from money or position. The audience is meant to trust Goole more than the Birlings, because he is honest and fair.

Finally, Priestley uses Goole to stress the importance of collective responsibility and the consequences of ignoring it. Goole says, "We are members of one body," and warns of "fire and blood and anguish" if people do not learn to care for each other. The word "body" is a metaphor for society, showing that everyone is connected. The phrase "fire and blood and anguish" is dramatic and warns of terrible things happening if people stay selfish. Priestley uses Goole to make the audience think about the results of ignoring the poor and vulnerable. Goole's warning is a message that society must change and become more caring.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Goole as a powerful symbol of moral authority and social responsibility. Through his words and actions, Goole challenges the upper class and shows the need for change. Priestley uses him to teach the audience that everyone must look after each other for society to be fair and safe.

How does Priestley present Goole? Grade 7-9

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Inspector Goole as a figure embodying the moral authority that challenges the complacency of the capitalist class and promotes social responsibility. Goole's character is a vehicle for the playwright's critique of individualism and the selfishness inherent in the social system of the early 20th century. Through Goole's commanding presence, rejection of elitist values, and call for collective responsibility, Priestley emphasises the need for social change and unity.

Priestley uses Goole to present moral authority and challenge the complacency of the upper class. Goole is described as having an "impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness." The adjectives "massiveness" and "solidity" suggest a character who is unwavering in his moral stance, dominating the stage both physically and ideologically. This description contrasts sharply with the characters of Mr Birling and the other members of the family, who are depicted as morally weak, self-serving, and complacent. The use of "purposefulness" suggests that Goole has a clear mission, in direct opposition to Birling's misguided confidence in his own success and authority. The Inspector's presence is unyielding, and his moral certainty challenges the Birlings' assumptions about power and status. Goole's size and "purposefulness" also evoke a sense of inevitability, as if he is a force determined to expose the truths the family tries to conceal. This portrayal of Goole as an unshakable moral figure serves as a critique of the selfishness inherent in capitalist ideologies, urging the audience to reject the individualism represented by Birling.

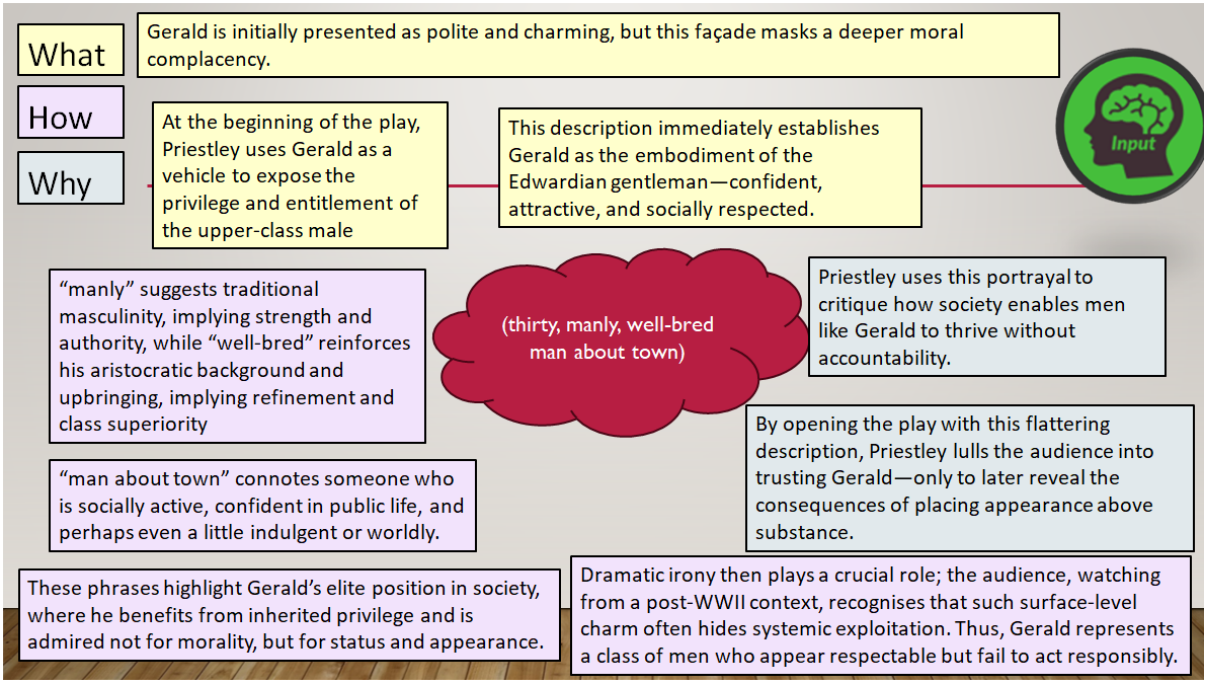
As *An Inspector Calls* progresses, Priestley increasingly uses Inspector Goole as a dramatic device to expose the corrupt values of the upper class and challenge their authority. Through Goole's interrogation of the Birling family, Priestley critiques the selfishness and moral blindness of the elite, particularly figures like Mr Birling who represent capitalist ideology. This is powerfully conveyed when Goole declares, **"Public men have responsibilities as well as privileges."** The juxtaposition of "responsibilities" and "privileges" highlights the imbalance in how power is exercised by the upper class; while they enjoy status and influence, they often neglect the moral duty that should accompany it. The phrase "public men" directly targets individuals like Mr Birling, whose role as a former mayor and businessman should entail social accountability, yet he prioritises profit and reputation over people's welfare. Priestley uses Goole

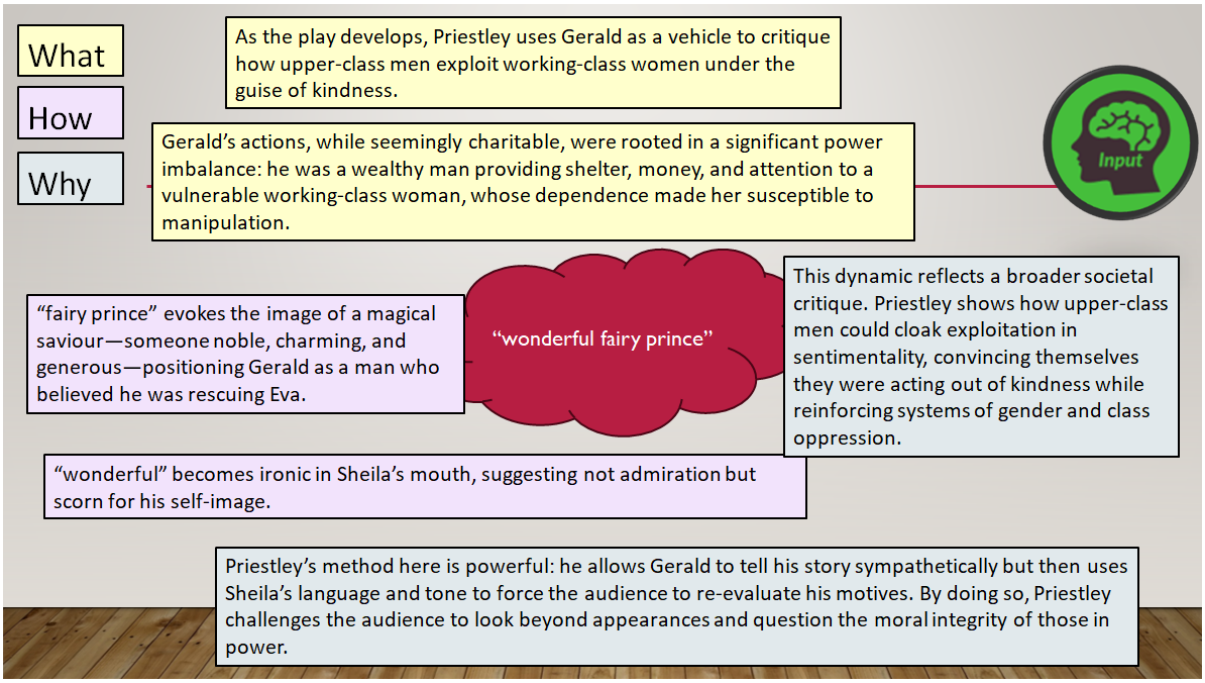
to voice socialist ideals, suggesting that leadership must be rooted in collective responsibility rather than self-interest. As the play unfolds, Goole's relentless questioning dismantles the façade of respectability upheld by the Birlings, revealing the hypocrisy and moral failure of the ruling class. Through this, Priestley not only condemns the elite's corrupt values but also urges the audience to reject their influence in favour of a more compassionate and socially just society.

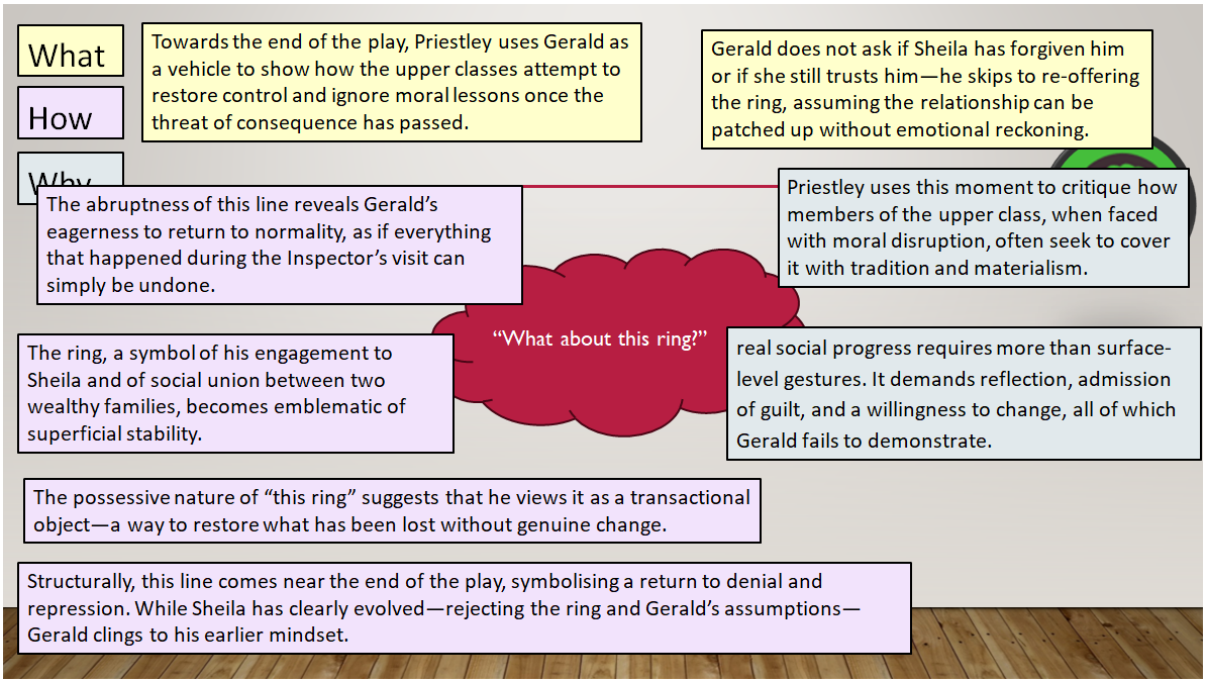
Finally, Priestley uses Goole to stress the importance of collective responsibility and the consequences of ignoring it. Goole's statement, "We are members of one body," followed by his warning of "fire and blood and anguish," directly conveys Priestley's socialist message. The metaphor of the body suggests that society is an interconnected whole; when one part of society suffers, the entire system is affected. This call for unity stands in stark contrast to Mr Birling's individualistic worldview, where each person is solely responsible for their own success or failure. The phrase "fire and blood and anguish" evokes the devastation of war, which was a recent and very real threat to Priestley's audience, who had lived through the First World War and were facing the possibility of another. The tricolon "fire and blood and anguish" highlights the catastrophic impact of failing to recognise the interdependence of society. Goole's warning serves as a direct critique of the Birlings' refusal to accept any responsibility for the plight of the working class, symbolised in the death of Eva Smith. His vision of "fire and blood" is not just a personal threat but a societal warning that if the upper class continues to neglect their moral duties, the consequences will be dire. Through Goole, Priestley makes it clear that social disintegration and suffering are inevitable if people continue to live in isolation from one another, as Birling and his family do.

Through Goole's character, Priestley powerfully conveys the need for social responsibility, highlighting the dangers of unchecked individualism and class-based arrogance. Goole's moral authority, rejection of elitist values, and call for collective responsibility form the backbone of the play's critique of early 20th-century society. Priestley uses Goole to urge the audience to reflect on the interconnectedness of society and the consequences of ignoring the needs of the vulnerable.

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Gerald 	Gerald had an affair with Daisy Renton. He was exploiting her poor position in society. He did not love her, as she loved him, but he enjoyed the feeling of someone being dependent on him. He ended the affair.	Gerald starts to change towards a more socialist viewpoint, but when he learns Goole wasn't a real inspector and there have been no consequences to his actions, he changes back	Represents how the upper classes exploited the lower classes. How it was socially acceptable for a man to have a mistress. Shows fickle nature of upper classes.	When he changes back to be like Mr and Mrs B he is shown to be in the wrong. Labour (socialists) were voted into power in 1945. The change Priestley wanted to see in society was happening, but he wanted change to continue (like Eric and Sheila), not change back, like Gerald. Like Mrs Birling, he is used as a tool to criticise the class system which Priestley viewed as inequitable




What
How
Why
As the play develops, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to critique how upper-class men exploit working-class women under the guise of kindness.
Gerald's actions, while seemingly charitable, were rooted in a significant power imbalance: he was a wealthy man providing shelter, money, and attention to a vulnerable working-class woman, whose dependence made her susceptible to manipulation.
Input
"wonderful fairy prince"
"fairy prince" evokes the image of a magical saviour—someone noble, charming, and generous—positioning Gerald as a man who believed he was rescuing Eva.
This dynamic reflects a broader societal critique. Priestley shows how upper-class men could cloak exploitation in sentimentality, convincing themselves they were acting out of kindness while reinforcing systems of gender and class oppression.
"wonderful" becomes ironic in Sheila's mouth, suggesting not admiration but scorn for his self-image.
Priestley's method here is powerful: he allows Gerald to tell his story sympathetically but then uses Sheila's language and tone to force the audience to re-evaluate his motives. By doing so, Priestley challenges the audience to look beyond appearances and question the moral integrity of those in power.


What
How
Towards the end of the play, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to show how the upper classes attempt to restore control and ignore moral lessons once the threat of consequence has passed.
Gerald does not ask if Sheila has forgiven him or if she still trusts him—he skips to re-offering the ring, assuming the relationship can be patched up without emotional reckoning.
The abruptness of this line reveals Gerald's eagerness to return to normality, as if everything that happened during the Inspector's visit can simply be undone.
Priestley uses this moment to critique how members of the upper class, when faced with moral disruption, often seek to cover it with tradition and materialism.
"What about this ring?"
The ring, a symbol of his engagement to Sheila and of social union between two wealthy families, becomes emblematic of superficial stability.
real social progress requires more than surface-level gestures. It demands reflection, admission of guilt, and a willingness to change, all of which Gerald fails to demonstrate.
The possessive nature of "this ring" suggests that he views it as a transactional object—a way to restore what has been lost without genuine change.
Structurally, this line comes near the end of the play, symbolising a return to denial and repression. While Sheila has clearly evolved—rejecting the ring and Gerald's assumptions—Gerald clings to his earlier mindset.

How does Priestley present Gerald? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Gerald Croft as a complex symbol of the privileged upper-class male, whose charm hides deeper moral problems. At first, Gerald seems polite and respectable, but as the play goes on, his actions show that he is not as good as he appears. Priestley uses Gerald to show the problems with class and gender in Edwardian England, and to warn the audience about the dangers of ignoring social responsibility.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to expose the privilege and entitlement of the upper-class male. In the stage directions, Gerald is described as "thirty, manly, well-bred man about town." The word "manly" suggests that Gerald is strong and confident, fitting the idea of a traditional man. The phrase "well-bred" shows that he comes from a rich and respected family, which gives him advantages in life. The phrase "man about town" means he is popular and enjoys social life, showing he is comfortable in high society. Priestley uses these words to show that Gerald has a lot of status and is used to getting what he wants. The audience is meant to see how society lets men like Gerald succeed because of their background, not because of their morals.

As the play develops, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to critique how upper-class men exploit working-class women under the guise of kindness. This is shown when Sheila calls him the "wonderful fairy prince." The word "wonderful" is used sarcastically by Sheila, showing she does not really believe Gerald was a hero. The phrase "fairy prince" makes Gerald sound like a magical rescuer, but Priestley wants the audience to see that Gerald's actions were not truly good. He helped Eva Smith, but he also took advantage of her because she was poor and needed help. Priestley uses this to show that people in power can pretend to be kind while actually using their position for their own benefit. Gerald's story makes the audience question whether good deeds are really good if they come from a place of power and control.

Towards the end of the play, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to show how the upper classes attempt to restore control and ignore moral lessons once the threat of consequence has passed. This is seen when Gerald says, "What about this ring?" after the Inspector leaves. The word "this" shows that Gerald sees the ring as something he can just give back to fix things. The phrase "what about" makes it sound like he wants to move on quickly and forget what happened. Priestley uses this moment to show that Gerald has not really changed—he wants to go back to how things were before, without thinking about what he did wrong. The audience is meant to see that real change means admitting mistakes and trying to be better, not just pretending nothing happened.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Gerald as a privileged man who hides his faults behind charm and status. Through Gerald's actions and words, Priestley shows how the upper class can avoid responsibility and fail to change. Gerald's character is a warning to the audience about the need for real honesty and social responsibility.

How does Priestley use Gerald? Grade 7-9

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Gerald Croft as a complex symbol of the privileged upper-class male, whose charm conceals a deeper moral failure. Through Gerald, Priestley critiques the gender and class hierarchies of Edwardian England and highlights the dangers of ignoring social responsibility when it threatens comfort or status.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to expose the privilege and entitlement of the upper-class male. In the stage directions, Gerald is described as "thirty, manly, well-bred man about town." This description immediately establishes Gerald as the embodiment of the Edwardian gentleman—confident, attractive, and socially respected. The word "manly" suggests traditional masculinity, implying strength and authority, while "well-bred" reinforces his aristocratic background and upbringing, implying refinement and class superiority. The phrase "man about town" connotes someone who is socially active, confident in public life, and perhaps even a little indulgent or worldly. These phrases highlight Gerald's elite position in society, where he benefits from inherited privilege and is admired not for morality, but for status and appearance. Priestley uses this portrayal to critique how society enables men like Gerald to thrive without accountability. Gerald is initially presented as polite and charming, but this façade masks a deeper moral complacency. By opening the play with this flattering description, Priestley lulls the audience into trusting Gerald—only to later reveal the consequences of placing appearance above substance. Dramatic irony then plays a crucial role; the audience, watching from a post-WWII context, recognises that such surface-level charm often hides systemic exploitation. Thus, Gerald represents a class of men who appear respectable but fail to act responsibly.

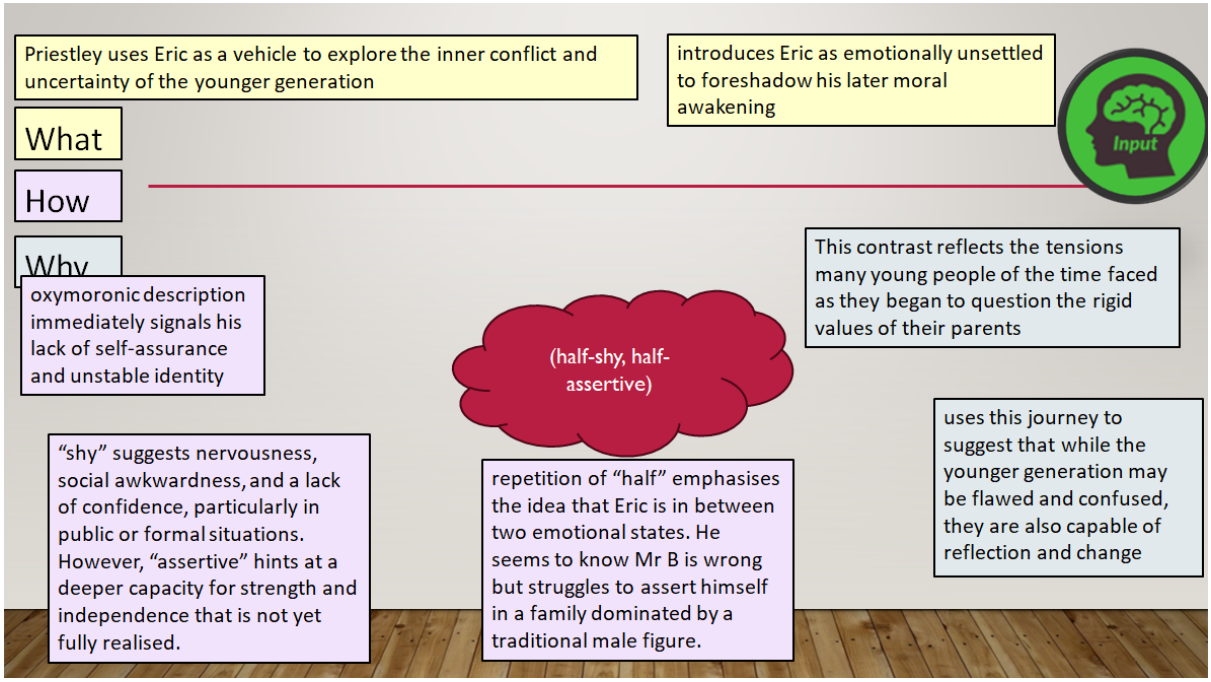
As the play develops, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to critique how upper-class men exploit working-class women under the guise of kindness. This is exposed when Sheila sarcastically calls him the "wonderful fairy prince," mocking his romanticised account of his affair with Eva Smith, also known as Daisy Renton. The phrase "fairy prince" evokes the image of a magical saviour—someone noble, charming, and generous—positioning Gerald as a man who believed he was rescuing Eva. However, Priestley deliberately undercuts this fantasy. The adjective "wonderful" becomes ironic in Sheila's mouth, suggesting not admiration but scorn for his self-image. Gerald's actions, while seemingly charitable, were rooted in a significant power imbalance: he was a wealthy man providing shelter, money, and attention to a vulnerable working-class woman, whose dependence made her susceptible to manipulation. Priestley anchors this through Gerald's choice of dialogue when he protests he didn't "install" Daisy in Morgan Terrace "to make love to her". The choice of "install" seems to for objectify her by referring to her in terms one might use for an appliance, further suggesting how Gerald saw Eva as a device to use for his own benefit. This dynamic reflects a broader societal critique. Priestley shows how upper-class men could cloak exploitation in sentimentality, convincing themselves they were acting out of kindness while reinforcing systems of gender and class oppression. Gerald did not see Eva as an equal—he made decisions for her, ended the relationship when it no longer suited him, and moved on without consequence. Priestley's method here is powerful: he allows Gerald to tell his story sympathetically but then uses Sheila's language and tone to force the audience to re-evaluate his motives. By doing so, Priestley challenges the audience to look beyond appearances and question the moral integrity of those in power.

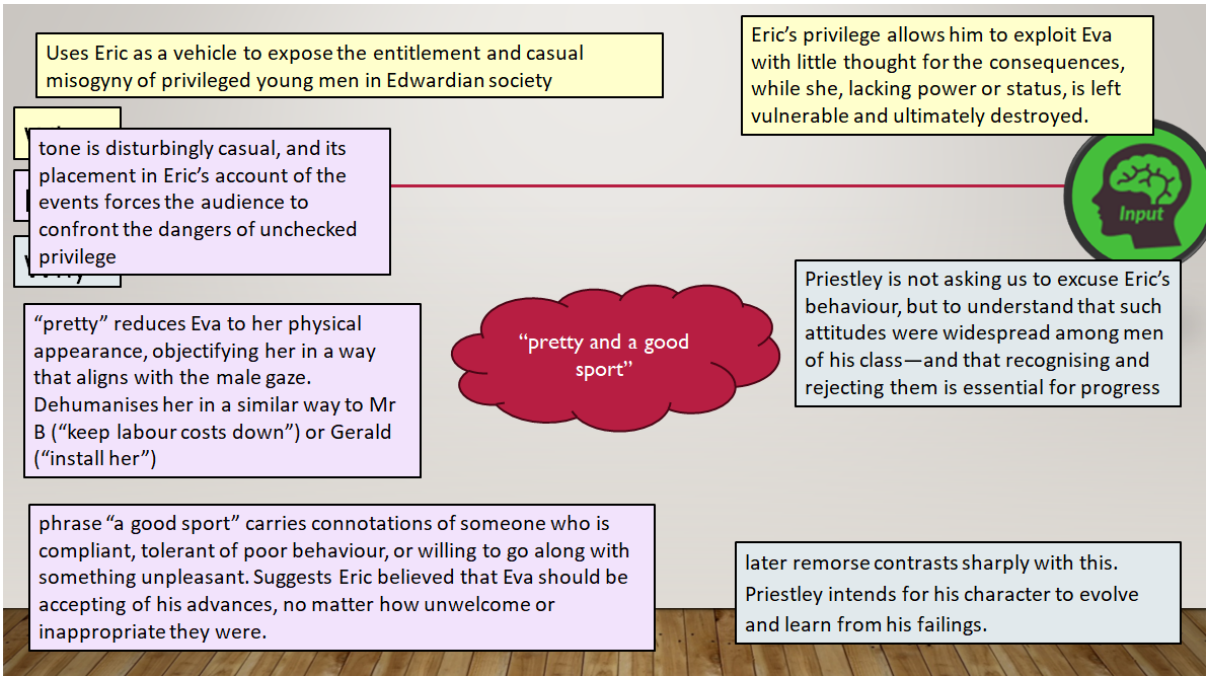
Towards the end of the play, Priestley uses Gerald as a vehicle to show how the upper classes attempt to restore control and ignore moral lessons once the threat of consequence has passed. This is most clearly seen when Gerald says, "What about this ring?" after the Inspector's legitimacy is cast into doubt. The abruptness of this line reveals Gerald's eagerness to return to normality, as if everything that happened during the Inspector's visit can simply be undone. The ring, a symbol of his engagement to Sheila and of social union between two wealthy families, becomes emblematic of superficial stability. Gerald does not ask if Sheila has forgiven him or if she still trusts him—he skips to re-offering the ring, assuming the relationship can be patched up without emotional reckoning. The possessive nature of "this ring" suggests that he views it as a transactional object—a way to restore what has been lost without genuine change. Priestley uses this moment

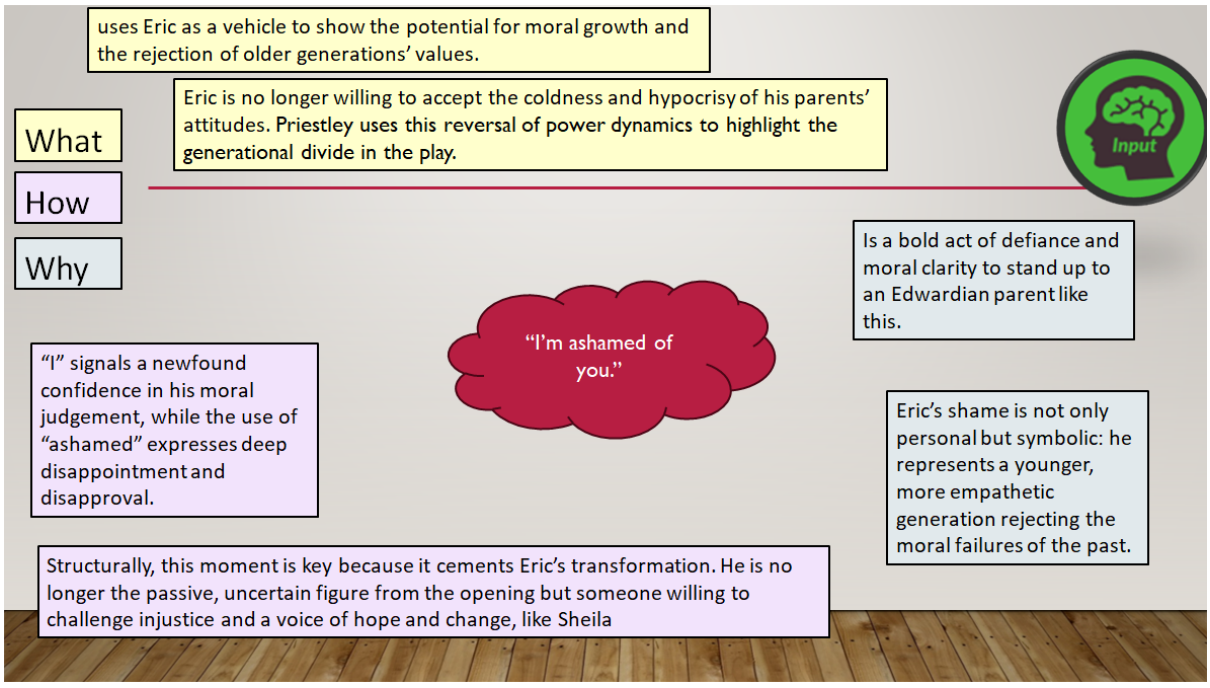
to critique how members of the upper class, when faced with moral disruption, often seek to cover it with tradition and materialism. Structurally, this line comes near the end of the play, symbolising a return to denial and repression. While Sheila has clearly evolved—rejecting the ring and Gerald's assumptions—Gerald clings to his earlier mindset. This contrast underlines Priestley's broader message: that real social progress requires more than surface-level gestures. It demands reflection, admission of guilt, and a willingness to change, all of which Gerald fails to demonstrate.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Gerald as a socially privileged figure whose actions reflect the failures of the upper class to take moral responsibility. Through the initial flattering stage directions, Gerald represents the deceptive allure of status and charm. Through the "fairy prince" metaphor, Priestley exposes how men in power justify exploiting women under the illusion of benevolence. And through Gerald's casual offer of "this ring," Priestley shows how easily the privileged can dismiss uncomfortable truths to protect their comfort. Ultimately, Gerald is a symbol of those who, despite brief moments of reflection, choose to forget rather than change—a warning to audiences about the danger of complacency and the need for lasting social reform.

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Eric 	Used his position as a wealthy man to force himself upon Eva. Got her pregnant and stole money to try and support her	Eva's child by Eric makes her suffering more personal to the Birlings and suggests that we are all more connected than they thought - working against the "us and them" mentality	A typical 1912 young man at start of play (parents have no idea what he's doing). By the end represents the younger generation of 1945 who have the power to break away from the actions of the older generation and the past.	Priestley wanted his 1945 audience to learn from the mistakes of the past and move towards an equitable society (socialist) future. He wants them to stand up to the outdated views of the older generation just like Eric does.




Uses Eric as a vehicle to expose the entitlement and casual misogyny of privileged young men in Edwardian society
Eric's privilege allows him to exploit Eva with little thought for the consequences, while she, lacking power or status, is left vulnerable and ultimately destroyed.
tone is disturbingly casual, and its placement in Eric's account of the events forces the audience to confront the dangers of unchecked privilege
Input
Priestley is not asking us to excuse Eric's behaviour, but to understand that such attitudes were widespread among men of his class—and that recognising and rejecting them is essential for progress
"pretty and a good sport"
"pretty" reduces Eva to her physical appearance, objectifying her in a way that aligns with the male gaze. Dehumanises her in a similar way to Mr B ("keep labour costs down") or Gerald ("install her")
phrase "a good sport" carries connotations of someone who is compliant, tolerant of poor behaviour, or willing to go along with something unpleasant. Suggests Eric believed that Eva should be accepting of his advances, no matter how unwelcome or inappropriate they were.
later remorse contrasts sharply with this. Priestley intends for his character to evolve and learn from his failings.


uses Eric as a vehicle to show the potential for moral growth and the rejection of older generations' values.
Eric is no longer willing to accept the coldness and hypocrisy of his parents' attitudes. Priestley uses this reversal of power dynamics to highlight the generational divide in the play.
What
How
Why
Input
Is a bold act of defiance and moral clarity to stand up to an Edwardian parent like this.
"I'm ashamed of you."
"I" signals a newfound confidence in his moral judgement, while the use of "ashamed" expresses deep disappointment and disapproval.
Eric's shame is not only personal but symbolic: he represents a younger, more empathetic generation rejecting the moral failures of the past.
Structurally, this moment is key because it cements Eric's transformation. He is no longer the passive, uncertain figure from the opening but someone willing to challenge injustice and a voice of hope and change, like Sheila

How does Priestley present Eric? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Eric Birling as a complex and evolving character who represents the struggles and hopes of the younger generation. At first, Eric seems awkward and unsure of himself, but by the end of the play, he becomes more honest and willing to take responsibility. Priestley uses Eric to show that young people can change and learn from their mistakes, which is important for a better society.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Eric as a vehicle to explore the inner conflict and uncertainty of the younger generation. In the stage directions, Eric is described as "half-shy, half-assertive." The word "shy" shows that Eric is nervous and not very confident, especially around his family. The word "assertive" suggests that he has the ability to stand up for himself, but he is not sure how to do it yet. Priestley uses the repetition of "half" to show that Eric is stuck between two sides of himself, not fully grown up or sure of what he believes. This makes Eric seem confused, but also shows that he has the potential to change as the play goes on.

Priestley also uses Eric as a vehicle to expose the entitlement and casual misogyny of privileged young men in Edwardian society. When Eric talks about Eva Smith, he says she was "pretty and a good sport." The word "pretty" shows that Eric is focused on Eva's looks, not her personality or feelings. The phrase "a good sport" suggests that Eric thought Eva should just go along with what he wanted, even if it was unfair. Priestley uses this to show how young men like Eric could take advantage of women who had less power. Eric's behaviour is wrong, but Priestley also shows that he feels guilty about it later, which is important for his character's development.

Finally, Priestley uses Eric as a vehicle to show the potential for moral growth and the rejection of older generations' values. When Eric says to his mother, "I'm ashamed of you," it is a big moment in the play. The word "ashamed" shows that Eric is disappointed and upset with his mother's actions. The pronoun "I" shows that Eric is now confident enough to speak out, even against his own family. Priestley uses this to show that Eric has changed—he is no longer just following what his parents say, but is thinking for himself and standing up for what is right.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Eric as a character who starts off unsure and makes mistakes, but who learns and grows by the end of the play. Through Eric's journey, Priestley shows that the younger generation can be honest, take responsibility, and help create a fairer society.

How does Priestley present Eric? Grade 7-9

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Eric Birling as a complex and evolving character who represents the moral struggles and potential of the younger generation. Through Eric's inner conflict, careless behaviour, and eventual remorse, Priestley uses him as a vehicle to critique Edwardian masculinity, class privilege, and the need for social responsibility.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Eric as a vehicle to explore the inner conflict and uncertainty of the younger generation. In the stage directions at the beginning of the play, Eric is described as "half-shy, half-assertive." This oxymoronic description immediately signals his lack of self-assurance and unstable identity. The repetition of "half" emphasises the idea that Eric is in between two emotional states—unsure of how to behave and struggling to assert himself in a household dominated by traditional authority figures like Mr Birling. The word "shy" suggests nervousness, social awkwardness, and a lack of confidence, particularly in public or formal situations. However, "assertive" hints at a deeper capacity for strength and independence that is not yet fully realised.

This contrast reflects the tensions many young people of the time faced as they began to question the rigid values of their parents. Priestley deliberately introduces Eric as emotionally unsettled to foreshadow his later moral awakening. Structurally, this ambiguous characterisation allows for development across the play. By the end, Eric becomes one of the most self-aware and morally engaged characters. His initial uncertainty becomes a foundation for growth. Priestley uses this journey to suggest that while the younger generation may be flawed and confused, they are also capable of reflection and change—qualities that are vital for a more socially responsible future.

Priestley also uses Eric as a vehicle to expose the entitlement and casual misogyny of privileged young men in Edwardian society. When describing Eva Smith, Eric callously says she was "pretty and a good sport." This seemingly casual remark reveals a lot about his attitudes at the time of their encounter. The word "pretty" reduces Eva to her physical appearance, objectifying her in a way that aligns with the male gaze and highlights how upper-class men often viewed working-class women as sources of entertainment or pleasure rather than as individuals with autonomy. The phrase "a good sport" is particularly loaded; it carries connotations of someone who is compliant, tolerant of poor behaviour, or willing to go along with something unpleasant. This suggests Eric believed that Eva should be flattered or accepting of his advances, no matter how unwelcome or inappropriate they were.

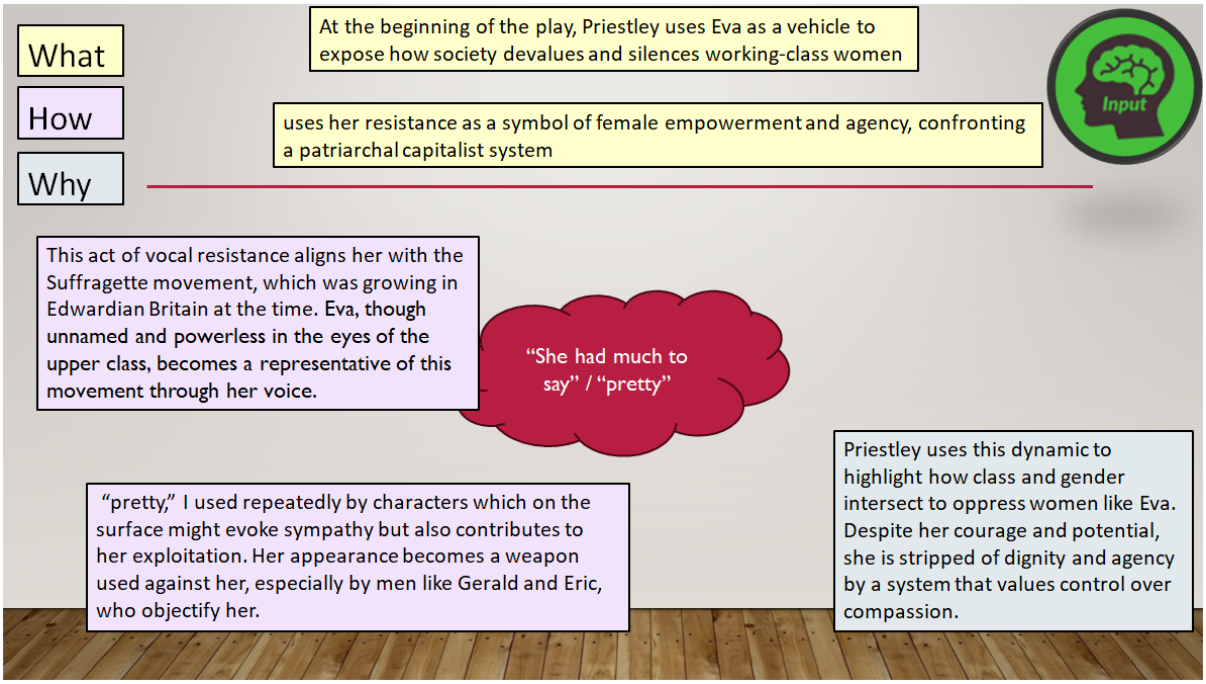
Priestley includes this line to demonstrate how social and gender inequalities intersect. Eric's privilege allows him to exploit Eva with little thought for the consequences, while she, lacking power or status, is left vulnerable and ultimately destroyed. The tone of this quote is disturbingly casual, and its placement in Eric's account of the events forces the audience to confront the dangers of unchecked privilege. Priestley is not asking us to excuse Eric's behaviour, but to understand that such attitudes were widespread among men of his class—and that recognising and rejecting them is essential for progress. Eric's later remorse contrasts sharply with the flippancy of this remark, showing that Priestley intends for his character to evolve and learn from his failings.

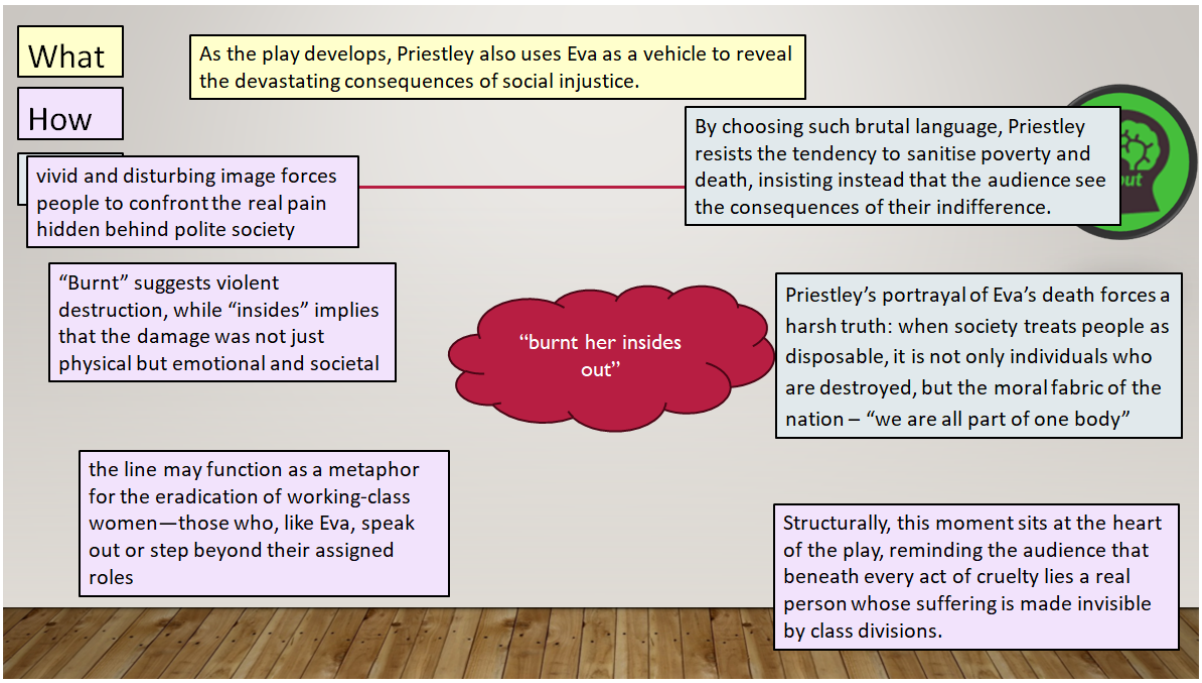
Finally, Priestley uses Eric as a vehicle to show the potential for moral growth and the rejection of older generations' values. In a powerful moment of confrontation, Eric tells his mother, "I'm ashamed of you." This brief but emotionally charged statement marks a significant turning point in Eric's character. The personal pronoun "I" signals a newfound confidence in his moral judgement, while the use of "ashamed" expresses deep disappointment and disapproval. For a son to say this to

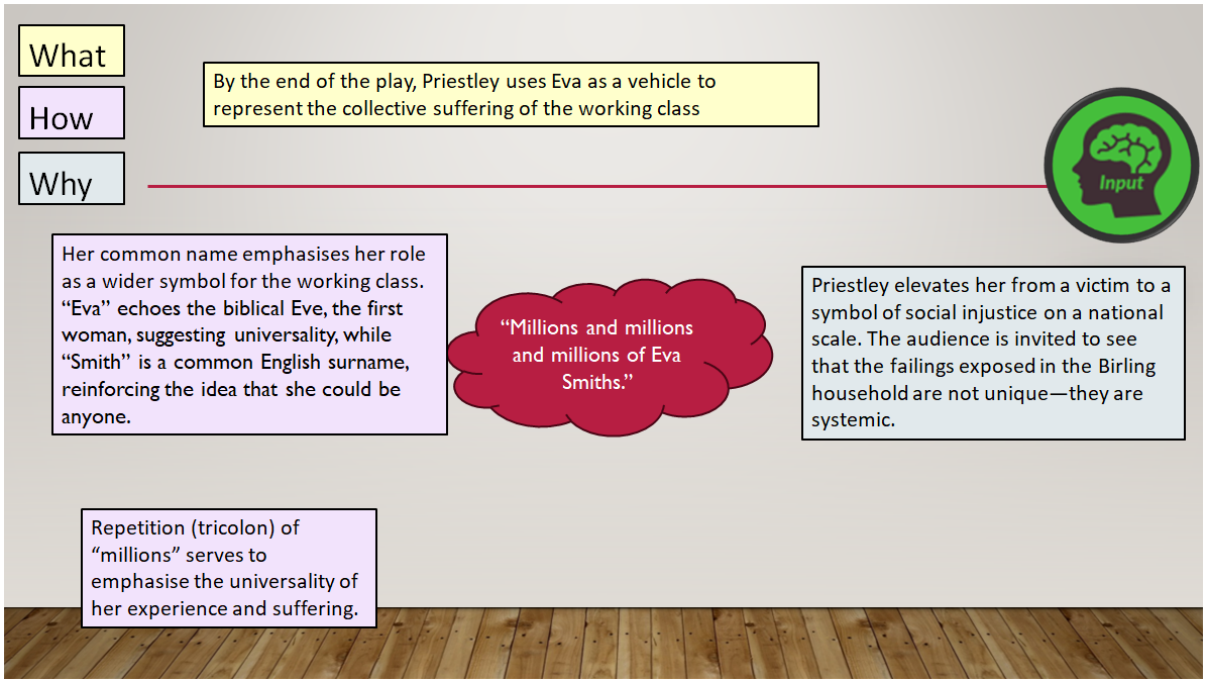
his mother in Edwardian society—where respect for authority and parental control were paramount—is a bold act of defiance and moral clarity. This line reveals that Eric is no longer willing to accept the coldness and hypocrisy of his parents' attitudes. Mrs Birling, who had earlier refused help to Eva, is now being held to account by her own son. Priestley uses this reversal of power dynamics to highlight the generational divide in the play. Eric's shame is not only personal but symbolic: he represents a younger, more empathetic generation rejecting the moral failures of the past. Structurally, this moment is key because it cements Eric's transformation. He is no longer the passive, uncertain figure from the opening but someone willing to challenge injustice—even within his own family. Priestley positions Eric alongside Sheila as a voice of hope, capable of learning, change, and compassion.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Eric as a morally conflicted but ultimately redeemable character. Through his early insecurity, his misuse of privilege, and his eventual moral awakening, Eric embodies the potential for social change that Priestley wished to see in post-war Britain. His journey from complicity to conscience allows Priestley to expose the dangers of class, gender inequality, and generational arrogance, while offering the possibility of a more just and responsible future.

Character	How are they connected to Eva smith/ Daisy Renton	Why are they important to the story?	What do they represent?	How are they connected to Priestley's message?
Eva Smith 	She is Eva Smith	She links to every other character, suggesting we are all connected (in the same way the inspector does)	Eva Smith represents all of the exploited working classes of 1912.	Priestley wanted an equitable society where people could not act the way the Birlings/Gerald did towards Eva. Her death could be a personification the disasters of the 1912-1945 (Wars etc), and the Birlings actions being metaphors for the mistakes of the Capitalists of the past




What
As the play develops, Priestley also uses Eva as a vehicle to reveal the devastating consequences of social injustice.
How
By choosing such brutal language, Priestley resists the tendency to sanitise poverty and death, insisting instead that the audience see the consequences of their indifference.
vivid and disturbing image forces people to confront the real pain hidden behind polite society
"Burnt" suggests violent destruction, while "insides" implies that the damage was not just physical but emotional and societal
"burnt her insides out"
Priestley's portrayal of Eva's death forces a harsh truth: when society treats people as disposable, it is not only individuals who are destroyed, but the moral fabric of the nation – "we are all part of one body"
the line may function as a metaphor for the eradication of working-class women—those who, like Eva, speak out or step beyond their assigned roles
Structurally, this moment sits at the heart of the play, reminding the audience that beneath every act of cruelty lies a real person whose suffering is made invisible by class divisions.


What
By the end of the play, Priestley uses Eva as a vehicle to represent the collective suffering of the working class
How
Why
Input
Her common name emphasises her role as a wider symbol for the working class. "Eva" echoes the biblical Eve, the first woman, suggesting universality, while "Smith" is a common English surname, reinforcing the idea that she could be anyone.
"Millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths."
Priestley elevates her from a victim to a symbol of social injustice on a national scale. The audience is invited to see that the failings exposed in the Birling household are not unique—they are systemic.
Repetition (tricolon) of "millions" serves to emphasise the universality of her experience and suffering.

How does Priestley present Eva? Grade 5

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Eva Smith as a symbol of the suffering and injustice faced by the working class, especially women. Even though Eva never appears on stage, her story is very important to the play's message. Priestley uses Eva to show how unfair society can be and to make the audience think about the need for kindness and responsibility.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Eva as a vehicle to expose how society devalues and silences working-class women. Mr Birling says Eva "had much to say," which shows she was brave enough to speak up for herself. The word "much" suggests that Eva was not afraid to challenge unfair treatment, while "say" shows she tried to use her voice, even though she had little power. Priestley uses Eva's actions to show that women like her wanted better lives, but society punished them for speaking out. Eva is also described as "pretty," which makes people notice her but also makes her more vulnerable to being used by men like Gerald and Eric. Priestley uses this to show how women were judged by their looks and often treated badly because of it.

As the play develops, Priestley also uses Eva as a vehicle to reveal the devastating consequences of social injustice. The Inspector says she "burnt her insides out," which is a shocking and painful image. The word "burnt" shows how much Eva suffered, and "insides" suggests that the pain was not just physical but also emotional. Priestley uses this description to make the audience feel sorry for Eva and to realise how serious the effects of cruelty and neglect can be. Eva's death is not just her own tragedy—it is a result of how people like the Birlings treated her. Priestley wants the audience to see that ignoring the poor and vulnerable can have terrible consequences.

By the end of the play, Priestley uses Eva as a vehicle to represent the collective suffering of the working class. The Inspector says that Eva is not just one person, but a symbol for many people who are treated badly. Her name, "Eva Smith," is very common, which shows that she could be anyone. Priestley uses this to make the audience think about all the people who are ignored or mistreated in society. Eva's story is a warning that if people do not care for each other, more suffering will happen.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Eva Smith as a powerful symbol of the problems in society. Through her story, Priestley shows the need for empathy and social responsibility. Eva's suffering is meant to make the audience think about how they treat others and to encourage them to help create a fairer world.

How does Priestley Use Eva? Grade 7-9

In *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Eva Smith as a symbolic victim of a class system that devalues working-class lives and offers little protection to women. Although she never appears on stage, Eva's story is central to the play's moral and political message. Priestley uses her to expose the cruelty of capitalism, the invisibility of the poor, and the urgent need for collective social responsibility.

At the beginning of the play, Priestley uses Eva as a vehicle to expose how society devalues and silences working-class women. When Mr Birling dismisses her for demanding better wages, he notes that she "had much to say," suggesting she spoke up with confidence and challenged her exploitation. This act of vocal resistance aligns her with the Suffragette movement, which was growing in Edwardian Britain at the time. Women were beginning to demand not only political rights, but also workplace rights and social recognition. Eva, though unnamed and powerless in the eyes of the upper class, becomes a representative of this movement through her voice. Priestley uses her resistance as a symbol of female empowerment and agency, confronting a patriarchal capitalist system that punishes such defiance. At the same time, she is described repeatedly as "pretty," which on the surface might evoke sympathy but also contributes to her exploitation. Her appearance becomes a weapon used against her, especially by men like Gerald and Eric, who view her not as a person but as something to possess. This objectification reflects toxic masculinity—where a woman's value is determined by her looks and her vulnerability is manipulated by men in power. Priestley uses this dynamic to highlight how class and gender intersect to oppress women like Eva. Despite her courage and potential, she is stripped of dignity and agency by a system that values control over compassion.

As the play develops, Priestley also uses Eva as a vehicle to reveal the devastating consequences of social injustice. The Inspector's graphic description of her suicide—saying she "burnt her insides out"—is designed to shock both the characters and the audience. This vivid and disturbing image forces people to confront the real pain hidden behind polite society. On a deeper level, the line may function as a metaphor for the eradication of working-class women—those who, like Eva, speak out or step beyond their assigned roles. "Burnt" suggests violent destruction, while "insides" implies that the damage was not just physical but emotional and societal. By choosing

such brutal language, Priestley resists the tendency to sanitise poverty and death, insisting instead that the audience see the consequences of their indifference. Eva's death is not an isolated tragedy—it is a direct result of systemic oppression and repeated humiliation at the hands of people who refused to recognise her humanity. Structurally, this moment sits at the heart of the play, reminding the audience that beneath every act of cruelty lies a real person whose suffering is made invisible by class divisions. Priestley's portrayal of Eva's death forces a moral reckoning: when society treats people as disposable, it is not only individuals who are destroyed, but the moral fabric of the nation.

By the end of the play, Priestley uses Eva as a vehicle to represent the collective suffering of the working class. By the end of the play, the Inspector makes clear that Eva is not just one girl but a symbol for many. Her story, though personal, is part of a much broader pattern of exploitation and neglect. Her common name—Eva Smith—emphasises this. "Eva" echoes the biblical Eve, the first woman, suggesting universality, while "Smith" is a common English surname, reinforcing the idea that she could be anyone. In this way, Priestley elevates her from a victim to a symbol of social injustice on a national scale. The audience is invited to see that the failings exposed in the Birling household are not unique—they are systemic. Through Eva's absence, Priestley ironically makes her the most present and powerful figure in the play. She embodies the moral consequences of selfishness, hypocrisy, and inequality. Unlike the Birlings, who use wealth and status to shield themselves from responsibility, Eva has no such defences. Her death becomes a call to action—a demand that those in power recognise the value of every human life, not just those who belong to their class.

In conclusion, Priestley presents Eva Smith not simply as a character but as a powerful moral symbol. Her voice, her suffering, and her anonymity all serve to highlight the injustices of a class-bound society. Through her, Priestley demands empathy, accountability, and social change, challenging his audience to build a world where no one is left unheard, unseen, or unprotected.

Essay advice

You should spend 45 minutes on this section.

You are given a choice of 2 different questions. One will be on theme, and one on character but examiners expect to see knowledge of themes and characters in any response. Students should plan responses to essay questions on any theme or main character.

What the examiner wants to see:

'A candidate's response is likely to be a critical, exploratory, well-structured argument. It takes a conceptualised approach to the full task supported by a range of judicious references. There will be a fine-grained and insightful analysis of language and form and structure supported by judicious use of subject terminology. Convincing exploration of one or more ideas/perspectives/contextual factors/interpretations.'

•There is an assured personal response, showing a high level of engagement with the text and discerning choice of references to the text.

• A critical style is developed with maturity, perceptive understanding and interpretation with discerning choice of references to the text.

• The understanding of relevant contexts is excellent.

• Understanding of the relationship between text and context is integrated convincingly into the response.

• Analysis of the writers' methods and language used

Your response should begin with a thesis statement then have 3 detailed paragraphs which cover **what, how** and **why**. It is best to structure your essay by looking at the beginning of the play, the middle and then the end.

Subject terminology to use for AO2:

- **Foreshadowing** – warning, hinting at events to come later in the play
- **Antithesis** – a person or thing that is the direct opposite of someone or something else.
- **Rhetorical question** – asking a question designed to encourage thinking.
- **Characterisation –** The way a character is presented to us
- **Stage Directions**

- **Dramatic Irony –** When the audience is aware of something the characters are not
- **Language choices –** What vocabulary does Priestley choose to use?
- **Dialogue –** Words spoken by the characters. How do they respond and react to each other?

These questions alternate between character questions and theme questions (as they do in the exam)

EITHER

01 How important is the character of Eric in demonstrating Priestley's ideas?

Write about:

- How Eric responds to his family and the Inspector
- How Priestley presents Eric's actions

OR:

02 How successfully is the idea of collective responsibility explored in this play, through the use of the Inspector?

Write about:

- Priestley's ideas about collective responsibility in *An Inspector Calls*
- How Priestley uses the Inspector to present these views

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

EITHER

01 How does Priestley use Gerald Croft's status to show his ideas about society?

Write about:

- How the Birling family react to Gerald Croft
- How Priestley presents Gerald Croft

OR:

02 How successfully does Priestley present the different attitudes between the older and younger generations in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- How Priestley presents the older generation and the younger generation
- How Priestley shows his and their attitudes in the way he writes

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

EITHER

01 Why did Priestley create the Birling family as the central characters in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- How Priestley presents the Birlings
- What the Birling family represent and how they demonstrate Priestley's views

OR:

02 How does Priestley explore guilt in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- How Priestley presents guilt by the way he writes
- How Priestley presents different characters' reactions to guilt

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

EITHER

01 How does Priestley use Mr Birling to present his ideas about employers' responsibility?

Write about:

- Priestley's ideas about employers
- How Priestley presents Mr Birling

OR:

02 How does Priestley present his ideas about social class in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- Priestley's ideas about social class
- How Priestley presents these ideas through his characters and the way he writes

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

These questions alternate between character questions and theme questions (as they do in the exam)

EITHER

01 Why does Priestley present Eva Smith without the audience ever getting to see her or hear her in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- How Priestley presents Eva Smith
- What Eva Smith represents and how this shows Priestley's views

OR:

02 How does Priestley show his ideas about gender inequality in *An Inspector Calls*??

Write about:

- Priestley's views on gender inequality
- How Priestley presents gender inequality

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

EITHER

01 How does Priestley use Sheila's change throughout the play to present his ideas??

Write about:

- How Sheila responds to her family and to the Inspector
- How Priestley presents the change in Sheila by the way he writes

OR:

02 What is important about the period of time in which Priestley set *An Inspector Calls*, and why did he do this?

Write about:

- The importance of the period of time in which the play was set
- How Priestley uses this period of time to present his ideas to the audience

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]