

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

CHARACTERS

Mr Arthur Birling: A wealthy factory owner – arrogant, hubristic and capitalist
'a hard-headed, practical man of business'

Mrs Sybil Birling: Cold, prejudiced, hypocritical, concerned with reputation
'I've done nothing wrong'

Eric Birling: Son of Mr and Mrs B – awkward, secretive, drinks heavily, feels guilty
'I was in that state where a chap easily turns nasty'

Sheila Birling: Daughter of Mr and Mrs B – initially naïve and superficial, becomes socially aware, regrets actions
'I know I'm to blame' - and I'm desperately sorry'

Gerald Croft: Engaged to Sheila, aristocratic, privileged
'We're respectable citizens, not criminals'

Eva Smith: working class young woman, exploited or mistreated by the Birlings and Gerald. Dies by suicide
'She died in misery and agony – hating life'

Inspector Goole: mysterious, imposing, Priestley's mouthpiece, aims to make the Birlings change
'We are all responsible for each other'

THEMES

Social Responsibility

Class

Gender

Generation Divide

Power

Inequality

CONTEXT

- Set in 1912: before WW1 and the sinking of the Titanic
- Written in 1945, after WWII, as a warning against returning to the rigid, hierarchical, unfair society of the Edwardian era
- There was a rigid class system in the Edwardian era
- Edwardian society was largely patriarchal
- Capitalism vs. Socialism
- Priestley was a staunch socialist and uses the play to present his views

QUOTES FOR ANY ESSAY

Mr B: The Titanic is 'unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable'

Inspector Goole: 'There are millions and millions and millions of John Smiths and Eva Smiths'

Eric: 'We all helped to kill her – and that's what matters'