

Themes

What are the main themes?

Generational Divide



Poverty



Change



Politics



Responsibility



Gender



Author's Intent

Why did Priestley write the play?

To encourage the middle and upper classes to take more responsibility for the lower class

To promote socialist views and challenge the capitalist way of life in Britain

To raise awareness about the mistreatment of working class employees by employers

To remind people that there is always an opportunity to change if you are willing

Characters in *An Inspector Calls*

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

Mr Birling

Capitalist
Patriarch
Avaricious
Ignorant
Ostentatious

Mrs Birling

Aloof
Supercilious
Prejudiced
Aristocratic
Covetous

Sheila

Naive
Remorseful
Altruistic
Socially-Conscious

Gerald

Aristocrat
Self-serving
Cunning
Capitalist

Eric

Irresponsible
Remorseful
Reticent
Childish
Socially inept

Inspector

Conduit
Socialist
Authoritative
Methodical

'Fire and blood and anguish'
Inspector

"Community and all that nonsense"
Birling

Key Quotes

What are some useful quotations to know for AIC?

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

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

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

'Girls of that class'
Mrs Birling

'Not just cheap labour, they're people' - Sheila

'Silly little war scares' - Mr Birling

Plot Summary

What happens in 'An Inspector Calls'?



ACT 1

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

ACT 2

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

ACT 3

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

Techniques

What techniques does Priestley use?

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

Stage Directions - helps the actors maintain the tone as Priestley intended

Interruptions - various characters are interrupted to show power imbalances & build tension

Setting - their household reflects their growing affluency and Mr Birling's desire to progress further

Context

What was going on in society at the time?

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

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

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

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