

‘An Inspector Calls’ – Knowledge Organiser

Context			Key Things to Remember
<p>Priestley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John Boynton Priestley was born 13th September 1894 and died 14th August 1984. ▪ He was born in an extremely respectable suburb of Bradford and went to Belle Vue Grammar School. ▪ He lived a life much like the Birlings in ‘Inspector Calls’. ▪ At 16, he left school to work as a clerk in a wool firm (Helm and Co). This made him aware of what life was like for the working-class. ▪ Priestley also served during the First World War, making him exposed to the horrors of war. He was also a radio broadcaster in WW2. ▪ By 1930-1940, Priestley became concerned about the consequences of social inequality. ▪ During 1942, he and others set up a new socialist political party, the Common Wealth Party, which merged with the Labour Party in 1945. ▪ Priestley was influential in developing the idea of the Welfare State. ▪ Capitalism is a profit driven society where people are concerned for themselves and the government promotes self prosperity. ▪ Socialism is a society that is less about the self but more about the community. The government puts mechanisms in place to support society. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The play is set in a fictional Midlands town called Brumley. ▪ It is set in 1912 but the play was written in 1945. ▪ The purpose of a play is to be seen / heard by a live audience. ▪ Through his play, ‘An Inspector Calls’, he encourages people to seize the opportunity given to them by the end of the war, to build a better, more caring society. ▪ Eva Smith and Daisy Renton are the same person. ▪ Order of interrogation – Mr Birling, Sheila, Gerald, Mrs Birling, Eric (MSGME) ▪ Chain of events – Mr Birling, Sheila, Gerald, Eric, Mrs Birling. ▪ Eva Smith worked at Birling & Co then Milwards. It is implied that she worked as a prostitute when she was out of work (at the Palace Bar). ▪ Prostitutes were more commonly referred to as ‘women of the town’. ▪ The photograph is only shown to Mr Birling, Sheila and Mrs Birling. It is never made clear whether it is the same photograph shown to each of these characters. ▪ It is implied that Eric ‘forces himself on Eva’ / there is a lack of consent – he uses his social position to get what he wants. ▪ Eva uses Mrs Birling’s name at the women’s charity because she thinks that she is more likely to get assistance if she appears to be a deserted wife. ▪ The NHS, welfare system and trade unions did not exist in the 1910s (Edwardian period).
1910s	Area of Focus	1940s	<p>Setting</p> <p>The play is a three-act drama which takes place on a single night in April 1912, focusing on the prosperous upper middle-class Birling family, who live in a comfortable home in the fictional town of Brumley, "an industrial city in the north Midlands".</p>
Very rigid structure. The upper, middle and working classes were clearly divided.	Class System	A less rigid structure. The class system was unimportant during the war as people had to pull together.	<p>Eva’s timeline</p> <div style="border-left: 2px solid blue; padding-left: 10px; margin-left: 20px;"> <p>Eva sacked by Birling and Co. in September 1910.</p> <p>Eva employed by Milward’s.</p> <p>Sheila complains and has Eva sacked from Milward’s.</p> <p>Eva (calling herself Daisy Renton) becomes Gerald’s mistress.</p> <p>Gerald breaks off the affair in September 1911.</p> <p>Eric meets Eva and forces himself into her lodgings to sleep with her.</p> <p>After meeting Eric several times, Eva finds she is pregnant.</p> <p>Mrs Birling turns down Eva’s application for help.</p> <p>Eva’s suicide/the Inspector calls.</p> </div>
Due to industrialisation (rapid development of cities and industry), more people were moving into cities and forced to live and work in horrible conditions. There was an increase in strikes.	Working Conditions for the Poor	Since the working class suffered so much in factories, they established many trade unions and became heavily involved in politics. Working conditions improved drastically.	
Women had fewer rights than men. They had to listen to their husbands, tend to household work. Life for lower-class women was worse as they could be seen as cheap labour.	Women’s Rights	WWI and WWII proved to be the turning point for women’s rights. As men went to war, women became valuable in fields and factories at home. By 1928, through the suffragette movement, women were allowed to vote. They also became more independent and respected.	
There was no welfare system to help the working-class.	Welfare System	After they were elected in 1945, the Labour government established a ‘cradle-to-grave’ program to support people, including a tax-funded National Health Service in 1948.	
Due to industrialisation, people were earning more money and becoming more selfish as a result. It was a capitalist society.	UK’s Political Culture	Due to the hardships experienced during the 1930s (Great Depression) and 1940s (WWII), people were eager to change their government policies. Socialism was on the rise.	

Act One	Act Two	Act Three
Plot		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Birling family are celebrating Sheila and Gerald’s recent engagement in 1912. ▪ When the ladies leave the room, Birling lectures his son and Gerald. He tells them that a ‘man must look after himself’. ▪ Inspector Goole arrives, investigating the death of a young woman, Eva Smith. ▪ Birling is shown a picture and remembers that he sacked her in 1910 for leading a workers’ strike. He feels justified in this. ▪ The Inspector shows Sheila a photograph and also discovers that Sheila also had Eva sacked from her next job in a department store. Sheila regrets this. ▪ The Inspector reveals that Eva changed her name to ‘Daisy Renton’. Gerald acts guilty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gerald explains that he had an affair with Eva, but has not seen her since Autumn 1911. ▪ Sheila gives the engagement ring back to Gerald. ▪ The Inspector turns his attention to Mrs Sybil Birling – who confesses, after seeing a photograph that she also had contact with Eva (although under a different name). ▪ Eva, pregnant and desperate, approached a charity for help. Sybil refused to help her because Eva listed her name as “Mrs Birling”. ▪ Mrs Birling does not regret anything and believes that the child’s father should be held responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eric is revealed as the father of the child. He slept with Eva several times although the exact nature of the relationship is unclear. ▪ He has stolen money from Birling’s office to help Eva and turns on his mother when he learns that she was uncharitable. ▪ The Inspector tells them that they are all partly to blame for Eva’s death and warns them of the consequences of not being responsible for each other. ▪ After he leaves, the family begin to question what happened, and whether the Inspector was a ‘real’. Two phone calls confirm that he is unknown at the police station and that no suicide case has been brought in today. ▪ Arthur, Sybil and Gerald celebrate and congratulate themselves. Eric and Sheila are upset. ▪ A phone rings. A girl has died. A police officer is coming.
Quotations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Give us the port Edna? That’s right” Mr Birling ▪ “When you’re married you’ll realise that men ... sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on business” Mrs Birling to Sheila ▪ “Your father and I have been friendly rivals in business for some time now - though Crofts limited are both older and bigger” Mr Birling ▪ “for lower costs and higher prices” Mr Birling ▪ “I speak as a hard-headed business man” Mr Birling ▪ “In twenty or thirty years time - let’s say, in 1940... There’ll be peace and prosperity” Mr Birling ▪ “a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself” Mr Birling ▪ “as if we’re all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense” Mr Birling ▪ “The Germans don’t want war. ... Everything to lose and nothing to gain by war.” Mr Birling ▪ “A man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own.” Mr Birling ▪ “Please, sir, an inspector called.” “Yes Sir” Edna ▪ “Show him in here. Give us some more light” Mr Birling to Edna ▪ “Chain of events” Inspector Goole ▪ ‘I don’t come into this suicide business’ Gerald ▪ “But these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people.” Sheila ▪ “So long as we behave ourselves, don’t get into the police court or start a scandal – eh.” Mr Birling ▪ ‘One person and one line of inquiry at a time’ Inspector Goole ▪ “It’s my duty to ask questions.” Inspector Goole ▪ “If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we’d had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn’t it?” Mr Birling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “You mustn’t try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl.” Sheila ▪ “Nothing but morbid curiosity.” Mrs Birling to Sheila ▪ “Yes, I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence.” Mrs Birling ▪ “Why should you do any protesting? It was you who turned the girl out in the first place.” Inspector Goole ▪ “I didn’t install her there so that I could make love to her. I made her go to Morgan terrace because I was sorry for her.” ‘It wasn’t disgusting’ Gerald ▪ ‘She didn’t blame me at all’ Gerald ▪ “I rather respect you more than I’ve ever done before.” Sheila to Gerald ▪ ‘My God!... I’ve suddenly realised - taken in properly - that she’s dead-’ Gerald ▪ ‘I’m rather more – upset – by this business than I probably appear to be –’ Gerald ▪ ‘Please don’t contradict me like that’. Mrs Birling to Sheila. ▪ “Girls of that class” Mrs Birling ▪ ‘If you think you can bring any pressure to bear upon me, Inspector, you’re quite mistaken. Unlike the other three, I did nothing I’m ashamed of or that won’t bear investigation.’ Mrs Birling. ▪ “First, the girl herself. ... Secondly, I blame the young man who was the father of the child... He should be made an example of.” Mrs Birling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I wasn’t in love with her or anything – but I liked her – she was pretty and a good sport.” Eric ▪ “The money’s not the important thing. It’s what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters.” Eric ▪ “I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty” Eric ▪ “You’re not the kind of father a chap can go to when he’s in trouble” Eric ▪ “We are member of one body. We are responsible for each other.” Inspector Goole ▪ “One Eva Smith has gone... but there are millions... of Eva Smiths... all intertwined with our lives... if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish.” Inspector Goole ▪ ‘There isn’t any such inspector. We’ve been had’ Gerald ▪ ‘Everything’s alright now Sheila. [holds up the ring] what about this ring? Gerald to Sheila ▪ ‘We’ve no proof it was the same photograph and therefore no proof it was the same girl’ Gerald ▪ “You’re beginning to pretend that nothing’s really happened at all” Eric ▪ ‘The fact remains that I did what I did’ Eric ▪ “The point is, you don’t seem to have learnt anything.” Sheila to Mr Birling ▪ “Probably a Socialist or some sort of crank.” Mr Birling about Goole ▪ “Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.” Sheila ▪ “I don’t care about that, the point is that you don’t seem to have learnt anything” Sheila ▪ “The famous younger generation who know it all.” Mr Birling ▪ [As they stare guiltily and dumbfounded, the curtain falls.] Final line

Character	5 things to remember
Mr Arthur Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wealthy, middle-class businessman. He does not believe in social responsibility. He is keen to receive a knighthood. His views are completely opposite to Inspector Goole's. He likes taking charge and tends to preach about his views.
Mrs Sybil Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She comes from a higher social class than her husband. She is haughty, and regards most people as socially beneath her. She is not used to being contradicted. Mrs Birling has rigid Edwardian views, and is prejudiced towards Eva Smith. She is more concerned about avoiding scandal than being honest.
Sheila Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Her engagement to Gerald will bring financial rewards to her father. She acknowledges her guilt and is genuinely remorseful. Sheila recognises that it is no good lying to the Inspector. Although she respects Gerald's honesty, she still feels she needs to break off the engagement. Of all the characters, Sheila changes most, and realises the need for socialism.
Eric Birling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eric is the Birling's son and Sheila's brother. He feels unable to discuss his problems with his parents. He treated Eva Smith very badly and was the father of her unborn child. He stole money from his father's company to give to Eva, until she realised it was stolen and refused to accept it. He takes the Inspector's words about social responsibility to heart.
Gerald Croft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gerald is the son of Lord and Lady Croft, and of a higher social status than Arthur Birling. He is mature, polite, and appears to love Sheila, to whom he just got engaged. He played the gallant gentleman, rescuing Eva/Daisy from the advances of Alderman Meggarty. He began a secret affair with Eva/Daisy. He was kind to her, but broke off the relationship when it suited him. He is the character who discovers that Inspector Goole is not a real police officer and suggests that there was no suicide at all.
Eva Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eva never appears on stage. We learn about her through the other characters. She is twenty-four, her parents are dead and she moved to the city for work. She is a clever, pretty girl with potential that is never fulfilled. She commits suicide by drinking disinfectant. She was not afraid to stand up for her rights, taking strike action against Birling and Co.
Edna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edna is the Birling's maid. She has little to say, which reflects her low status. She ushers in the Inspector. She is a symbol for the working class.
Inspector Goole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His main function is to present Priestley's ideas about social justice. He makes a powerful speech about social responsibility. The Inspector presents Eva Smith's story methodically, with the help of a photograph(s) and her diary. He shows how the Birlings and Gerald played an important part in Eva Smith's death, either unintentionally or through their cruelty or meanness. His origins are unknown. He may be a supernatural figure or a hoax – someone/something seeking vengeance for the poor.

Theme	5 things to remember
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a marked difference in attitude between the younger and the older generations, as noted by Inspector Goole in Act One. The young are honest and admit their faults. Eric refuses to try to cover his part up, saying, "the fact remains that I did what I did." The old will do anything to protect themselves: Mrs Birling lies to the Inspector when he first shows her the photograph; Mr Birling wants to cover up a potential scandal. Gerald Croft is caught in the middle, being neither very young nor old. In the end he sides with the older generation, perhaps because his aristocratic roots influence him to want to keep the status quo and protect his own interests. Parent/child relationships become increasingly strained as the play progresses.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Inspector wanted each member of the family to share the responsibility of Eva's death: he tells them, "each of you helped to kill her." Eva Smith is the symbol of the poor who are denied social justice. Birling believes his responsibilities are only to himself and his family – and to make profit. Gerald agrees. Mrs Birling only gives charity to those she feels deserve it. Initially, Sheila and Eric are unaware of how the working class struggle. Through the Inspector, Priestley delivers a powerful socialist political message about social responsibility.
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The play takes place in real time, as though events are actually happening on stage over the course of a couple of hours. At the end of the play, we understand that time and events are about to repeat themselves (the second twist) upsetting this idea of real time. Inspector Goole appears to know about events before they occur. Eva's story occurs off-stage in the past (as a backstory) but at the end of the play it is about to be told again – in the future. Priestley's timing of the first twist, the discovery that Inspector Goole was not a real police officer, creates mystery and a false sense of relief for the older Birlings.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Birling shows that he has a patronising view of women, making the suggestion that clothes are a sign of self-respect for them. Gerald makes sexist and superficial comments about the women in the bar he visits. Priestley shows that even women like Mrs Birling can hold the same old-fashioned Edwardian values as the men. The 'patriarchy' is a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. This was dominant in 1912. Sheila begins the play powerless and voiceless but later asserts herself and develops independence, like the suffragettes fighting for the vote.
Inequality / Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priestley calls for equality in society through the idea of social responsibility. In the play, the need for equality is best understood by the extreme inequality that is depicted. There are several classes (different levels of society) depicted in the play. The Birlings and Gerald represent the classes that have the greatest power. Eva, Edna, the factory workers, shop assistants and prostitutes represent the lower classes. They have little or no power.

‘An Inspector Calls’ Vocabulary

Term	Definition	Synonyms	Example
Authoritative	Commanding and self-confident; likely to be respected and obeyed.	Reliable, controlling, ruling.	The Inspector is authoritative when he interrogates the Birlings.
Bourgeoisie	The capitalist class who own most of society's wealth and means of production (Communist definition).	Middle class, conservative.	The Birling family are bourgeoisie in their ownership of wealth and power.
Capitalism	An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.	Private ownership, individualism, free enterprise	Arthur Birling values capitalism as a way to run society, as ‘man has to make his own way’.
Catalyst	An event or person that causes great change.	Spur, stimulant, motivation.	Eva/Daisy's suicide is a catalyst for Sheila to change her perspective.
Class	A system of ordering society: people are divided into groups based on perceived social or economic status.	Category, rank, caste.	In capitalism, the class system is quite rigid, as the upper classes need the working class in order to generate capital.
Condescending	Treating someone as if you are more important or more intelligent than them.	Snobbish, superior, patronising.	Arthur is condescending to Eric when he calls him ‘spoilt’.
Conservative	Averse to change or innovation and holding traditional values.	Traditional, old-fashioned.	Gerald is conservative and wants things to stay the same.
Dandy	A man overly concerned with looking stylish and fashionable.	Fop, beau, man about town.	Gerald is described as nearly a dandy – his appearance shows his upper class wealth and privilege.
Dramatic irony	The situation in which the audience of a play knows something that the characters do not know.	Foreshadowing, advance knowledge	Dramatic irony is created when the Birling refers to the Titanic as unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable’.
Edwardian	The Edwardian era or Edwardian period of British history covers the brief reign of King Edward VII, 1901 to 1910.	Early 20 th century.	‘An Inspector Calls’ is set in the Edwardian age and therefore women did not yet have the vote.
Equality	The right of different groups of people to have a similar social position and receive the same treatment.	Fairness, similarity, parity.	Arthur and Sybil Birling distrust the idea of equality, and believe in the class system.
Etiquette	The set of rules that control accepted behaviour in particular social groups or situations.	Manners, protocol, code.	Sybil is obsessed with etiquette, and is outraged by the ‘rude’ way the Inspector addresses her.
Generation	All the people of about the same age within a society or within a particular family.	Age, peer group, stage of life.	Arthur and Sybil are an older generation compared to Eric and Sheila.
Hierarchy	A system in which people or things are arranged according to their importance.	Ranking, ladder, grading.	The upper class are at the top of the class hierarchy.
Industrialist	A person involved in the ownership and management of industry (usually factories) .	Manufacturer, businessman.	Arthur is an industrialist and describes himself as ‘a hard-headed practical man of business’.
Infirmary	A hospital.	Health facility, sanatorium.	Eva/Daisy dies in an infirmary.
Interrogative	A word or sentence used when asking a question.	Questioning, inquiring, probing.	The Inspector uses lots of interrogatives to interrogate the Birlings.
Lodgings	Temporary accommodation.	Accommodation, apartment.	Eric pressurises Eva/Daisy to let him into her lodgings.
Morals	Standards of behaviour; ideas of right and wrong.	Lessons, rules, teachings.	The Inspector tries to convey a moral when he says ‘it's better to ask for the earth than to take it.’
Naïve	(of a person or action) showing a lack of experience, wisdom, or judgement.	Innocent, simple, childlike.	Sheila is very naïve in Act One, but later becomes more mature.
Oppression	Extended cruel or unjust treatment or use of authority.	Abuse, tyranny, persecution.	Priestley believed the working class were victims of oppression.
Philosopher	A person who offers views or theories on the ‘big questions’ such as what is right or wrong or why we exist.	Thinker, theorist, sage.	Priestley could be described as a socialist philosopher.
Progressive	Arguing for progress, change, improvement, or reform.	Innovative, liberal, left-wing.	Eric appears progressive when he says ‘I'm never likely to forget’ what happened.
Prophecy	A prediction of what will happen in the future.	Forecast, prognosis, divination.	The Inspector seems to give a prophecy about the World Wars when he describes a possible future of ‘blood and fire and anguish’.
Reputation	The widespread opinion about a person or thing, especially by the community or the public.	Name, standing, position.	Arthur and Sybil Birling seem only concerned with their reputation and the risk of a ‘public scandal’.
Responsibility	Having a duty to deal with something or being to blame for something.	Power, duty, culpability.	The Inspector says ‘public men...have responsibilities as well as privileges’.
Socialism	An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled more by the state, to ensure everyone gets a share.	Welfarism, leftism, collectivism.	Priestley believed that socialism is needed to address inequality in society.
Symbolism	Symbolism is a literary device used whenever something is meant to represent something else.	Metaphor, analogy, comparison.	The symbolism of the Birlings’ wealth is conveyed in the port, cigars and champagne classes.