

# Summarised notes- Mrs Birling

## Act 1

POINT	KEY QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Conserved within her class	<p><u>"husband's social superior"</u></p> <p><u>referred to as Arthur Birling's "wife"</u></p> <p><u>"Arthur you're not supposed to say such things"</u></p> <p><u>"I think Sheila and I better go to the drawing room and leave you men"</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Priestley <b>satirises a society</b> that allows human beings to be <b>defined by their role or purpose within the class system</b>.</li><li>- Her <b>social role dehumanises her and detaches her from any sense of being</b>.</li><li>- <b>She is trying to iron out any social faux pas so her and her husband operate seamlessly within the expectations of their class</b>, she is <b>reluctant to deviate from these in any way</b>.</li><li>- Mrs Birling works to <b>uphold the patriarchy in dismissing herself from the room</b> she ensures that women and men reside in <b>separate spheres</b>.</li></ul>
Emphasises the disparity between the generations	<p><u>"Sheila! What an expression! Really, the things you girls pick up these days!"</u></p> <p><u>"when you're married you'll realise"</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- This exposes her <b>superficially driven codes of conduct</b> as she cares more about etiquette than morality. She is opposed to Sheila's use of <b>colloquial language as it is an emblem of the progressive younger generation</b> that challenge her beliefs. Through using the noun 'girl' Mrs Birling <b>belittles Sheila in order to dismiss her behaviour and portray it as foolish or uncouth</b>, she reinforces the separation between the older generation who are <b>robust to these newer ways of thinking</b> and the younger ones that seem vulnerable to 'pick[ing]' them up as if they were a disease.</li><li>- Her worldview is largely based on her role as a wife. She is a <b>tool for Priestley</b> to capture how marriage within the Edwardian era was a <b>rite of passage</b>, though which men would be <b>permitted to exert newfound control over their wives</b> and women would shift to <b>operate under a stricter degree of control</b>.</li></ul>

# Act 2

POINT	KEY QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Shrouded in pomposity and egotism	<p><u>"enters, briskly and self-confidently, quite out of key"</u></p> <p><u>"affecting great surprise", "smiling, social" and "same easy tone"</u></p> <p><u>"rebuking them"</u> <u>"I'm talking to the inspector now, if you don't mind"</u></p> <p><u>"Girls of that class-"</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She is so performative in her expression of her class that it seems <b>she is living a different narrative to the rest of the characters in the play.</b></li> <li>- She is <b>well-rehearsed in conducting her social behaviour</b>, but this act fails to apply to the present situation they have found themselves in, her <b>affable performance does not match the tone of the investigation.</b></li> <li>- <b>Her aggression exemplifies her belief in her inherent superiority.</b> It also shows her defensiveness as her reputability is threatened.</li> <li>- She dismisses the lower class as <b>an aggregate inferior group that all behave in the same way.</b></li> </ul>
Ignorant and oblivious	<p><u>"He's only a boy"</u></p> <p>- <u>"Well Really! Alderman Meggarty! We really are learning something tonight."</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mrs Birling absolves Eric from his behaviour, although this is an example of <b>dramatic irony</b> as we know in reality he is far from an innocent child.</li> <li>- This exposes how ignorant she is to what goes on around her, she is <b>encapsulated within the contrived and artificial bubble</b> that she has created for herself. Alternatively, it could show her <b>desperation to condemn and denounce others to distract from any of her own flaws and deny taking any responsibility.</b></li> </ul>
Robust to accepting responsibility	<p><u>"gross impertinence"</u></p> <p><u>"gross".</u> <u>"disgusting", and "wretched"</u></p> <p><u>"I consider I did my duty"</u></p> <p><u>"I won't believe it"</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is <b>hyperbolic</b> (an over-exaggeration) suggestion that Eva Smith's use of the <b>pseudonym</b> Mrs Birling was a great <b>misconduct to insult her status.</b></li> <li>- There is a <b>semantic field of disgust</b> woven into Mrs Birling's vocabulary concerning the working class to portray her <b>overt repulsion of the lower classes</b>, strong enough to <b>elicit revulsion and repugnance.</b></li> <li>- The noun <b>"duty"</b> could be a tool to explore the <b>disparity in the perspectives of capitalists and socialists</b>, for capitalists, <b>upholding the class system was paramount</b>, thus for Mrs Birling, her <b>duty may be to uphold the class gap</b> by refusing Eva help.</li> <li>- She is <b>incapable of addressing her own wrongdoing.</b> This also suggests that her ignorance and blindness previously discussed is a <b>deliberate choice extending from selective belief.</b></li> </ul>

# Act 3

POINT	KEY QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Is she the most to blame?	<u>"the girl had begun by telling us a pack of lies"</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A more niche interpretation could extend from the arguably logical conclusions she made about Eva Smith when she sought help from the charity, it could be reasonable for Mrs Birling to deny Eva help if she believed she was lying.</li> </ul>
A commentary on the Welfare state	<p><u>[distressed]</u></p> <p><u>"No- Eric- please- I didn't know- I didn't understand-".</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her reaction to learning the truth portrays how she would've behaved differently if she had been aware of the circumstances pleading to Eric, the verb "understand" is pivotal her to depict how <b>subjective welfare organisations are set to fail</b>, and instead should be <b>implemented by an objective government</b> body.</li> </ul>
Lack of conscience	<p><u>"triumphantly"</u></p> <p><u>"a trifle impertinent"</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These stage directions connote to the idea that Mrs Birling feels she has won a battle.</li> <li>- She quickly became defensive against him setting up the <b>dynamic of a battle</b>.</li> <li>- Alternatively, it could be a more abstract, <b>microcosmic representation of the battle</b> between the <b>socialist forces trying to change the capitalist society and the classist older generation</b>.</li> </ul>
Unfair distribution of power	<p><u>"used her influence"</u></p> <p><u>"I was the only one who didn't give in to him"</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mrs Birling's <b>power within the play seems entirely undeserving</b>, yet she exercises it consistently.</li> <li>- This portrays her <b>distorted perception</b> of pride, she <b>boasts about a lack of moral sensitivity</b> which seems corrupt and callous.</li> </ul>