

## KEY WORDS

**Lustful, Misogynistic, Dismissive, Materialistic**

# Gerald Act 2

## DENYING RESPONSIBILITY

- Gerald uses apathy to distance himself from the tragedy, **this endures from act one** when he refers to it as **"suicide business"**. He **euphemises** Eva's death through the insensitive noun of business. In one sense this portrays him as indifferent and callous, however, it could be interpreted as a **coping mechanism** - he can only think about her death in this **euphemistic** way to protect himself from grief.
- This **vocational** (relating to employment) **semantic field** continues throughout Act Two through phrases such as **"install her"** and **"in return"**. The **rhetoric of finance** concerning his affair makes it seem like a transaction, this could reflect the wider societal flaws at the time how almost all **relationships were corrupted by a preoccupation with money and wealth**.
- Gerald does however acknowledge the immorality of the upper classes and it is clear he does have some **perception of morality**. He is **speciously** honourable and initially puts on a **façade of remorse** by saying **"she didn't blame me at all. I wish to God she had now"**. His **disingenuous** nature is exposed through the **irony** that Gerald prioritises his attempt to rid himself of the blame for Eva's death, so in fact, he does not wish for the blame he claims to.

## COMPARISON

Unlike the Birling parents, Gerald is less inclined to directly refute any responsibility instead he attempts to **alleviate himself from it in any way he can**.

He is **comparatively favourable** to Mr and Mrs Birling as he does recognize some of the **immorality pertinent within the upper classes** however it could be argued he is equally guilty as he does nothing to change it and is thus accepting of it.

## MISOGYNISTIC

- Gerald attempts to **exclude Sheila** from the conversation with the inspector as he deemed her as a woman to be driven by her emotions rather than logic. Sheila is aware of this and **exposes Gerald's true intent** by saying **"he means I'm getting hysterical now"**.
- The notion of **hysteria** was a means of discrimination against women, it was falsely perceived as a **diagnosable disorder** to disregard women and **silence them both politically and socially**. Gerald's **colloquial** reference to this displays him as a **misogynist** even to his own wife.
- In a **pseudo-heroic manner** (trying to act like a saviour), Gerald agrees that **"women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things"**. Not only is this **repressive and patronising** but it is also **laced with irony** as he willingly exposes Eva to his lustful desires which could easily be deemed **"unpleasant and disturbing"**.
- This is one of the first examples we see of Gerald's **sophistry and deceit**, he acts selfishly as he pretends he intends to protect Sheila as an innocent young woman when really it is so he doesn't have to face her directly whilst discussing his **lustful infidelity**.
- Gerald attempts **misogyny as a form of self-preservation** and protection this supports what we have seen in act one as he acts **deliberately and consciously** in social situations.

**AO2: semantic fields are a high-level language technique and it shows you are looking at the text holistically which will display to the examiner that you understand the writer's methods and intentions.**

**TOP TIP**



## SAVIOUR OR PREDATOR

- The audience may be led to **question the validity** of Gerald's recount of his interactions with Eva as it is an entirely one-sided story and other events of the play have exposed him to be selfishly moral (only honest when it is for his own benefit). However, we could then link this to the role of the **omniscient inspector** whom we are conditioned to trust as an audience, we can by extension trust Gerald's words as we know the inspector would **rebut** any false claims.
- Following on from this it seems plausible that Gerald did perceive himself as the 'knight in shining armour' for Eva and had genuine intentions of helping her.
- Perhaps his unfaithful relationship with her was driven by his **romanticised self-image** as opposed to **lust**, he uses his high social standing to characterise himself as a hero thus he wanted to answer Eva's **"cry for help"**.
- Gerald describes Eva as **"fresh"** which allows the **saviour/predator argument to remain up for debate**. The noun **"fresh"** connotes to innocence and purity which presents Eva as prey for Gerald, it introduces this **notion of consumption** which implies Gerald is acting on **primal and lustful desires**.
- Alternatively, this idea of innocence distances Eva from a typical prostitute- suggesting that Gerald did not pursue their relationship as a **Michet** (a customer of a prostitute) and it was instead a **heroic response** to the sympathy he felt towards her.

## TOPIC SENTENCES

- Gerald's sense of morality remains somewhat ambiguous throughout the play, he is seemingly only honest when it serves to preserve his image. This exposes the societal flaw that Priestley wishes to critique within the play; there is a disregard for morality until they are made to face the consequences.
- Gerald embodies the misogyny which was rife in 1912 Britain, he wishes to exclude and silence Sheila on account of hysteria, which is ironic as she is the most perceptive character within the play. Consequently, he is emblematic of the arrogant aristocratic male that indulged in male superiority.
- Interestingly, occupies a liminal position where he is neither willing to accept nor completely absolve himself from the responsibility for Eva's death. He stands in a middle ground between the Birling parents and children, however, he fails to exhibit the same levels of impressionability as Sheila and Eric so reverts back to the selfish immorality of the upper class.

