

# An Inspector Calls

## Last Minute Revision

### Ticklist

- 10 key words (DEPRECAIDS)
- 4 bits of context (Priestley's Plays Warns Characters)
- 6 key themes (SCROGG)
- 3 Priestley's intentions
- Key quote overview

### 10 Key words

Think about it as: **DEPRECAIDS**

- **D**isillusioned (see the reality)
- **E**xploitative / exploitation
- **P**olitical diatribe (criticising politics)
- **R**emorseless / remorseful (no guilt/ guilt)
- **E**manicipation (freedom)
- **C**ollective social conscience (knowing right from wrong)
- **A**bsolve (free from) guilt/ responsibility
- **I**nterconnectedness / interconnected
- **D**ehumanising
- **S**crupulous / unscrupulous (moral/immoral)

### 4 bits of context:

Think about it as: **P**riestley's **P**lay **W**arns **C**haracters

**P**olitics

**P**riestley

**W**omen

**C**lass system

## Politics:

1912, Britain was capitalist and government had a **laissez faire approach** with the economy (little government intervention, businesses could set their own rates). 1945, **biggest electoral swings** in 20th century. In 1945 Labour party won by a **landslide victory** (massive amount).

- Birlings represent the capitalist attitudes in 1912
- Sheila + Eric's transformation into socialists represents the electoral swing and change in the political environment of 1945

## J.B Priestley:

He fought in WWI so was **scathing** (critical) of governmental abuse of authority. In 1945, he was **co-founder of the common wealth party** (socialist party who favoured equality and helped Labour win in 1945)

- Uses Inspector as his **mouthpiece** (can't be in the play himself so uses him to vocalise his beliefs) to be scathing of capitalism, and therefore government abuse of power, as well as promote socialist ideologies

## Women:

In 1912, they were **disenfranchised** (no vote). In 1945, Women's effort on Homefront was a pivotal turning point- seen as valuable

- Sheila starts off voiceless and weaker (representing disenfranchisement) and develops a voice (representing women's power)

## Class system

1912 (when play was based) was **little social mobility** (can't move/ change classes) - 25% lived in poverty. 1945 acts like the **Equal Franchise Act 1928** meant that men and women over 21 could vote - lower classes had more of a voice

- Eva Smith represents individuals with **little social mobility**
- Birlings symbolise those who upheld the classist and **oppressive systems** of 1912

## 6 Key Themes:

Think about it as **SCROGG**

**S**ocial Class

**C**apitalism vs Socialism

**R**esponsibility

**O**lder vs younger generation

**G**uilt

**G**ender

## Priestley's Intentions:

- Priestley aims to **vilify** capitalism through making immorality, irresponsibility and exploitation synonymous (closely linked) with the characters he constructs to hold these beliefs. He aims to **scrutinise** how detrimental this ideology is to society and how it causes society to **regress rather than progress**.
- Priestley shows that collective responsibility is a **by-product** of adopting socialist beliefs. He asserts that this collective responsibility serves as a **solution to the division and segregation prevalent in society**, ultimately creating inevitable social cohesion.
- He utilises his **allegorical diatribe** (teaching a message while criticising) to both educate his audience and criticise the **oppressive barriers of social class**, arguing that upholding these divisions only exacerbates societal suffering and destruction.

Character	Key Quotes	Key themes it links to
Mr Birling	<p><u>"as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense"</u> (Act 1) *</p> <p><u>"Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges"</u> (Act 2 said by Inspector)</p> <p><u>"There'll be a public scandal"</u> (Act 3)</p> <p><u>"The famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke - "</u> (Act 3)*</p>	<p><b>Social class</b>, responsibility, capitalism, older generation, guilt</p> <p><b>Responsibility</b>, capitalism, social class, guilt</p> <p><b>Guilt</b>, responsibility, social class, capitalism</p> <p><b>Older generation</b>, responsibility, guilt, capitalism</p>

"as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense"

- **Zoomorphism (giving human animal qualities):** he **degrades+** mocks the lower classes being alike to "bees." and **trivialises** (unimportant) community and interconnected responsibility.
- **Hyphen:** prompts a **theatrical pause**, making the actor portraying Mr. Birling to hesitate before "community." - reflects his **physical repulsion** to the concept, suggesting an inability to even verbalise it.
- Acting as a **microcosm** (something small representing something larger) for capitalist ideologies, Mr. Birling becomes vilified for his rejection of the idea of "community" and his preference for **materialism over human relationships**.

To help you remember with your revision:

- **Zoomorphism:** trivialises lower classes + responsibility
- **Hyphen:** physical repulsion to community
- **Microcosm:** vilifies capitalism

"The famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke - " (Act 3)

- **Irony:** He **derisively** (mockingly) labels the younger generation as 'know-it-alls,' but ironically thinks he "know it all," ("Titanic" and "silly little war scares.)
- Priestley deliberately set the play in 1912 to **fragmentize (break) the "know it all" ignorance of the older generation.**
- **Speech is cut off:** after his **callous dismissal** of the suicide as a 'joke,' he is abruptly interrupted by the telephone. Through the play form, Priestley can visually depict Mr. Birling's capitalist beliefs should be physically and symbolically removed from society.

To help you remember with your revision:

- **Irony:** he is the only character to claim to know it all
- **1912:** to fragmentize older generation
- **Speech cut off:** show how these views should be cut off from society

Character	Key Quotes	Key themes it links to
Mrs Birling	<u>"Sheila, what an expression! Really the things you girls pick up these days"</u> (Act 1)	<b>Gender</b> , social class, older generation
	<i>[enters, briskly, and self-confidently, quite out of key]</i> (Act 2)	<b>Social class</b> , guilt, responsibility, older generation
	<u>"I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class—"</u> (Act 2)	<b>Social class</b> , guilt, responsibility capitalism, older generation
	<u>"I consider I did my duty"</u> (Act 2)	<b>Responsibility</b> , guilt, social class, capitalism, older generation
	<u>"He certainly didn't make me confess"</u> (Act 3)	<b>Responsibility</b> , guilt, capitalism, older generation

"I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class—" (act 2)

- **Connotation "girl"**: The term "girl" connotes innocence and vulnerability, showcasing her **willingness to exploit the vulnerable in society and rationalise it for capitalist advancement**.
- **Demonstrative adjective on 'that'**: the demonstrative adjective "that" dismisses them as **an aggregate** (meaning they are all grouped together as one) **inferior and homogeneous (all the same)** group that all behave in the same way.
- Mrs. Birling is entirely governed by the **arrogance of her social status** – she can't even bring herself to specify Eva's social class, considering it so far beneath her.

To help you remember with your revision:

- **Connotation**: innocent = willingly exploit the innocent
- **Demonstrative adjective**: dismisses them as all inferior and homogenous
- **Arrogant**: can't bring herself to specify Eva's class

"He certainly didn't make me confess" (Act 3)

- **Connotations of "confess"**: The verb "confess" has connotations of crime, her denial of criminal acts and accountability comes **effortlessly**, reflecting the irresponsibility and immorality inherent to **capitalist ideologies**.
- **Imperative verb "make"**: The imperative verb "make" shows **it is a way of keeping afloat in the power struggle between her and the inspector**.
- This suggests that admitting responsibility would be **conceding** (admitting something is true) to the inspector, posing a threat to her status in the **capitalist hierarchy** – she is safeguarding her position within the societal structure dictated by capitalist ideologies.

To help you remember with your revision:

- **Connotation**: effortlessly deny criminal activity
- **Imperative**: way to keep afloat in power struggle between Inspector
- **Capitalist hierarchy**: Inspector threatening her position

Character	Key Quotes	Key themes it links to
Sheila	<p><u>“Look Mummy - isn’t it a beauty?”</u> (act 1)</p> <p><u>“But these girls aren’t cheap labour - they’re people”</u> (Act 1)</p> <p><u>“[rather wildly, with laugh] No, he’s giving us the rope - so that we’ll hang ourselves”</u> (Act 2)</p> <p><u>“What he made me feel. Fire and blood and anguish”</u> (Act 3)</p>	<p><b>Gender</b>, social class, socialism, responsibility</p> <p><b>Social class</b>, socialism younger generation, guilt, responsibility</p> <p><b>Responsibility</b>, socialism, younger generation, guilt</p> <p><b>Socialism</b>, responsibility, guilt, younger generation</p>



## “But these girls aren’t cheap labour - they’re people” (Act 1)

- **Connotation of “girls”:** “*Girls*” connotes innocence and vulnerability- she’s recognised how exploitative capitalists **prey on the disadvantaged social classes**. She is disgusted by the inhumanity of her family.
- **Humanistic perspective:** The Inspector's arrival **frees her from the shackles of her oppressive privileged existence**. She develops a humanistic outlook, valuing individuals over profit.
- This **metamorphosis** (change) symbolises the advancement of **women's rights in 1945**, depicting women's empowerment and their role in advocating for social justice for all oppressed members of society.

### To help you remember with your revision:

- **Connotation:** seen exploitative capitalists prey on lower social classes
- **Humanistic:** free from shackles of capitalism - humanistic outlook
- **Women rights:** her change symbolises women empowerment

## “What he made me feel. Fire and blood and anguish” (Act 3)

- **The Inspector’s proxy (taken on someone’s role when they leave):**, Sheila serves as his **proxy**, exemplified by her precise emulation of the polysyndeton on “and”. - she attempts to emphasise the **eternal consequences of lacking social conscience**.
- **Personal pronoun:** Sheila is now a **moral compass** to her family, showcasing her evolution towards empathy as her use of the personal pronoun “me” shows she now experiences genuine remorse.
- Her **awareness extends beyond personal remorse**, she has developed an understanding of the **systemic consequences of capitalist ideologies on society as a whole**.

### To help you remember with your revision:

- **Proxy:** takes on his role to emphasise eternal consequences
- **Personal pronoun:** moral compass as feels personal remorse
- **Her awareness:** understands systemic consequences of capitalism

Character	Key Quotes	Key themes it links to
Eric	<p><u>“Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices”</u> (Act 1) *</p> <p><u>“She was pretty and a good sport”</u> (Act 3)</p> <p><u>“I did what I did. And mother did what she did. And the rest of you did what you did to her”</u> (Act 3)</p> <p><u>“But don’t forget I’m ashamed of you as well – yes both of you”</u> (Act 3) *</p>	<p><b>Social class</b>, younger generation, socialism, responsibility, guilt</p> <p><b>Gender</b>, social class, guilt</p> <p><b>Responsibility</b>, younger generation, socialism, guilt, social class</p> <p><b>Younger generation</b>, guilt. Responsibility, socialism</p>

**“Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices” (Act 1)**

- **Rhetorical question:** Eric is questioning the ethics behind his father’s **exploitative attitude** towards the lower social classes- he **deviates** from the *[half shy]* presentation into the *[assertive]* one foreshadowed at the beginning.
- **Alliteration:** puts emphasis on the **outdated and unjust social systems** that have been created and upheld by older generation members like his parents.
- He exposes and questions the **systemic bias** that favour upper-class capitalists, leveraging a **laissez-faire (minimal intervention)** governmental stance.

**To help you remember with your revision:**

- **Rhetorical question:** questioning exploitative attitude
- **Alliteration:** emphasises unjust social systems
- **He exposes questions:** system bias

**But don’t forget i’m ashamed of you as well - yes both of you” (act 3)**

- **Connotations of “ashamed”:** The term “*ashamed connotes*” embarrassment, revealing **Eric's deep disillusionment** and embarrassment because of his realisation of capitalists' **inherent exploitation** of individuals.
- **Hyphen:** It simplifies the sentence, akin to the Inspector's concise speech, Eric is simplifying to his **obdurate** (stubborn) parents of the older generation the importance of **collective social responsibility**.
- In Act 1, the Inspector's brevity (concise use of words) denotes authority, a trait echoed by Eric as he speaks concisely to showcase his **newfound power rooted in moral conviction**.

**To help you remember with your revision:**

- **Connotation of ashamed:** embarrassment + disillusionment with capitalism
- **Hyphen:** simplifying concept of responsibility
- **Mirrors Inspector:** short speech = newfound power in morality

Character	Key Quotes	Key themes it links to
Gerald	<p><u>[the well-bred young man about town]</u> (Act 1)</p> <p><u>“We’re respectable citizens and not criminals”</u> Act 1</p> <p><u>“She looked young and fresh and charming”</u> (Act 2)</p> <p><u>“Everything’s all right now, Sheila [holds up the ring] what about this ring?”</u> (Act 3)</p>	<p><b>Social class</b>, capitalism, younger generation</p> <p><b>Responsibility</b>, social class, capitalism, guilt</p> <p><b>Gender</b>, social class</p> <p><b>Responsibility</b>, guilt, younger generation, capitalism, social class, gender</p>

## “We’re respectable citizens and not criminals” (Act 1)

- **Collective pronoun “we’re”:** “we’re” reinforces a **segregative ideology**, as Gerald employs it to unite the Birlings against perceived “criminals” – exposes **aristocratic biases as fundamentally ignorant**.
- **Alliteration on ‘citizens’ and ‘criminals’:** creates a sense of similarity, reflecting Priestley's portrayal of **blurred lines between morality and criminality** as one ascends the social hierarchy.
- Much like Priestley's use of **dramatic irony and satire** to mock Mr. Birling, he **subtly ridicules Gerald's pretentious demeanour**, revealing how the wealthy often have biases that align only with their narrow worldview.

## To help you remember with your revision:

- **Collective pronoun:** segregative ideology
- **Alliteration:** blurred lines between morality + criminality
- **Priestley Intentions:** ridicules Gerald's pretentious + narrowminded view

## “Everything’s all right now, Sheila [holds up the ring] what about this ring?” (Act 3)

- **Cyclical narrative:** as it is back on his and Sheila's engagement. This is reflective of his unwillingness to change + desire to absolve himself from **guilt and responsibility**.
- He belongs to the younger generation but **shirks** (avoid/neglects) accountability, disappointing the audience with **his character arc** - Gerald's **obstinate** (stubborn) nature remains unchanged.
- **Ring symbolism:** He **reverts to this symbol of traditional power and possession** in order to reassert himself; he finds comfort in the **ingrained societal beliefs** which make life ‘easy’ for him.

## To help you remember with your revision:

- **Cyclical narrative:** unwilling to change + absolves himself from guilt
- **Younger generation:** disappointing character arc as is obstinate
- **Ring symbolism:** reverts back to comfortable power + possession

Character	Key Quotes	Key themes it links to
The Inspector	<i><u>"It's better to ask for the earth than take it"</u></i> (Act 1)	<b>Socialism</b> , responsibility, social class, guilt
	<i><u>"As if she were an animal, a thing, not a person"</u></i> (Act 3)	<b>Social class</b> , responsibility, guilt. Socialism, gender
	<i><u>"If men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught in fire and blood and anguish"</u></i> (Act 3)	<b>Responsibility</b> , guilt, socialism, social class
	<i><u>"We are members of one body"</u></i> (Act 3)	<b>Responsibility</b> , socialism, social class, guilt

### “It’s better to ask for the earth than take it” (Act 1 said to Mr Birling)

- **Syntax on ‘ask’:** Prior to “take” reflects the hierarchical order of importance crucial for societal collective responsibility- we must “ask” and share resources, in contrast to the **individualistic capitalist notion** of “taking” for personal gain.
- **Connotations of ‘take’:** To “take” carries connotations of stealing, a notion **vehemently** (strongly) condemned in biblical teachings. Religion was the **foundation of morality** in the Edwardian era, capitalist ideals disregard these teachings.
- Juxtaposingly, socialism can be viewed as a return to society's moral foundations, emphasising communal values and collective responsibility over **individualistic desire**.

### To help you remeber with your revision:

- **Syntax:** hierarchical order for collective responsibility
- **Connotation take:** Capitalism goes against biblical teachings
- **Socialism + religion:** brings back society to its foundations

### “If men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught in fire and blood and anguish” (act 3)

- **Polysyndeton (repetition of ‘and’):** reflects the **perpetual** torment awaiting those who **shirk** (avoid) their moral and civic responsibilities.
- ALT, it may allude to the Second World War, “anguish,” symbolises **humanity's failure** to learn from past mistakes, leading to further “blood and anguish”.
- **Biblical allusions:** Inspector could be portrayed as an **agent of God** through the hellish allusions. He is trying to bring the Birling’s back to the **foundation of morality** - religion.

### To help you remeber with your revision:

- **Polysyndeton:** perpetual torment if individuals shirk their responsibility
- **WW2:** alludes to continual anguish coming as humanity hasn’t learned
- **Biblical allusion:** Inspector is an agent of God bringing them back to religion