

# Year 9 Summer Term

## Key Characters



**Mr Arthur Birling:** Mr Birling is the arrogant and selfish leader of the Birling family; he doesn't believe in community, feels he was right to fire Eva, and feels no guilt for her death. Capitalist, Arrogant, Verbose, Stubborn, Industrialist

**Mrs Sybil Birling:** Mrs Birling is a cold woman, who dislikes people of a lower class. She admitted to being prejudiced against Eva. She feels like she did nothing wrong, and wants to forget the whole thing. Judgemental, Old money, Traditional, Insincere, Controlling

**Sheila Birling:** Sheila Birling begins the play as immature and sheltered, but throughout the play she becomes more socially conscious and feels deep regret for what she did to Eva. Intelligent, Feminine, Emotional, Transformative, Empowered

**Eric Birling:** Eric Birling is used to being spoken down to by his father; he doesn't feel comfortable around his family and drinks heavily. He also feels regret for what he did to Eva. Irresponsible, Spoilt, Reckless, Immature, Transformative

**Gerald Croft:** Gerald seems like the perfect man, but as the play continues we see he is manipulative and controls everyone around him. He feels some regret for what has happened, but wants to move on once the truth is revealed. Aristocratic, Secretive, Traditional, Privileged, Evasive

**Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton:** Eva Smith, who changes her name to Daisy Renton, is mistreated in her life, and represents all working class people who are mistreated by the rich. Working class, Determinded, Vulnerable, Emblematic, Allegorical

**Inspector Goole:** The Inspector 'gives an impression of massiveness, solidity, and purposefulness'; he is an imposing figure who draws the truth out of the Birlings and Gerald; he acts as Priestley's mouthpiece to convey his social message. Priestley's mouthpiece, Impressive, Commanding, Social justice.

**Author's Intent - Why did Priestley write the play?**

To challenge upper class perceptions of poverty in sustain and further social reform.

To highlight the importance of morality and to promote social responsibility.

To solidify the end of exploitation of the working classes and the oppression of women.

## 4 Main Themes

**Moral/Social Responsibility :** The consequences of the Birlings' actions highlight Priestley's ideas on social responsibility - do we look after one another in society?

**Age :** The difference between the younger and older characters' reactions to Eva Smith's death shows how Priestley viewed different generations . He viewed the younger generation as hope for the future and this is why both Sheila and Eric learn a lesson from the Inspector.

**Class :**Class issues are also dealt with by having a middle-class family involved in the death of a working-class girl.

**Gender:**How the male characters behave towards the females in the play highlights important points on gender and inequality.

## Class

Working class: Eva/Daisy & Edna – Had the hardest jobs and little money. Expected to have low morals  
Middle class: The Birlings – Owned factories or were professionals (like lawyers). Had plenty of money and control.

Upper class: Gerald – Inherited lots of land and money. Were often Lords and Ladies.

## Morality Plays

A morality play is a play that aims to teach the audience a lesson. They were prominent during the 15th and 16th centuries, and focused on the Seven deadly sins: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride.

