

Continue





























Exam code: 8702Written by: Nick RedgroveReviewed by: Deb OrrockUpdated on 17 June 2025Eric represents the recklessness and misogyny of wealthy young men in the early 1900s, but his transformation into a more responsible person suggests that there is hope for the future.Eric Birling character summaryEric represents both the punishment that awaits those who refuse to listen to the Inspector’s message, and also the potential for the younger generation to change for the better.He has a drinking problem: he is known by his peers (including Gerald) to drink heavily, and while inebriated he can become aggressive; he forced himself upon Eva while he was drunk.He has a poor relationship with his father: he appears to be jealous of Mr Birling’s respect for Gerald; he does not confide in his father when Eva becomes pregnant, and instead steals from Mr Birling’s business.He is able to accept responsibility: at the denouement, he and Sheila are the only characters to accept their roles in Eva’s death; he is stricken with guilt, and willing to face the consequences of his actions.Priestley uses a range of techniques to present different aspects of Eric’s character:Exclamatory language: Eric is prone to sudden exclamations, such as “(involuntarily) My God!” in Act 1 and the stage direction “(bursting out)” in Act 3, both of which highlight his impulsive and immature tendenciesDramatic irony: Act 2 ends with the audience realising that Eric, who is offstage, was the father of Eva Smith’s child; we know this because Eric is the only member of the family waiting to be interviewed by the Inspector. Sybil Birling does not realise this, and encourages the Inspector to punish the father of Eva Smith’s child: one by one, the other characters realise that Sybil is falling into the Inspector’s trap — and then, as the truth becomes obvious, Eric enters and the Act ends.Confrontational dialogue: Eric’s dialogue with his father is frequently confrontational; in Act 1, he openly disagrees with Mr Birling’s position that workers should not strike for higher wages, while Mr Birling often chides Eric or dismisses his remarks. Another example is Mr Birling’s immediate (and incorrect) dismissal of Eric’s justifiable fears of war: “There isn’t a chance of war”. These interactions indicate a strained father-son relationship; Eric states in Act 3 that Mr Birling is not “the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble”.Eric Birling key quotesEric Birling key quotesAct 1 Act 2Act 3Eric lacks confidence and is uneasy: Priestley foreshadows Eric’s drinking problem early on (Sheila calls him “squiffy”). He disagrees with his father at several points, but is not strong or sober enough to contradict Mr Birling with any confidence.Eric is the father: The Inspector reveals Eric to be the final link in the ‘chain of events’ connecting the Birlings to Eva Smith’s death: he was the father of Eva’s unborn child. This means that when Sybil Birling refused to help Eva, Mrs Birling effectively sentenced her grandchild to death.Eric’s transformation: Eric reveals his role in Eva’s death, admitting that he stole money to support her. He shows deep remorse, and argues forcefully against his parents and Gerald when they deny any responsibility. Eric and Sheila end the play changed for the better.Eric is guilty of atrocious behaviour towards Eva Smith, and then stole money to support her in secret rather than being honest about his behaviour. Modern audiences — and even Priestley’s 1945 audience — may struggle to forgive him, but he is redeemed somewhat by guilt and willingness to accept the consequences of his actions. He therefore embodies Priestley’s message of redemption, demonstrating that even the most irresponsible of individuals are capable of becoming positive forces for change in society.Capitalism versus socialismEric is a vital part of Priestley’s attack on the hypocrisy of 1912 and 1945 society. He openly condemns Mr Birling’s capitalist principles, and reveals socialist tendencies by arguing that Eva and her fellow workers were right to strike for higher wages. He points out that Mr Birling himself praised Eva’s work, and factory owners like him are always seeking to charge higher prices. In Act 3, he “bitterly” mocks his father for not telling the Inspector that it must be “every man for himself”, highlighting the absence of conviction among powerful men, who behave in whatever way is most convenient.Did this page help you? (shocked) “Eric! You stole money?” - Mrs Birling (Act 3) More shocked at Eric stealing money than at the entire case concerning Eva Smith, including the actions they’d done, again highlights how she doesn’t care at all for Eva Smith, as anything that happened to her doesn’t concern her that much. This also shows the lack of change that Mrs Birling has undergone, contrasting the younger generation, and paralleling Mr Birling. It also highlights just how little she understands of her son!Click here for information on the author of this site and for contact details. Please note that this is a not-for-profit website that was put together because I got bored during lockdown. For any copyright issues please get in touch with me before you sue!© Copyright is a minefield English Made Simple 22 February 202123 July 2024 1/4: Eric Birling: Notes/2/4: Priestley’s Message (intended effect on the audience)3/4: Eric’s Character Development/changes 4/4: Eric Birling’s Key Quotes Eric Birling works at Birling and Co., his father is presumably his boss. Eric is the son of Arthur and Sybil Birling and brother of Sheila Birling. We discover early on in the play that Eric has a drinking problem and that he has been drinking steadily for almost two years. J. B. Priestley describes Eric as in his “early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive”. Eric is quite naive, and is in no way as cunning or as worldly as Gerald Croft. By the end of the play, like his sister Sheila, he becomes aware of own responsibilities, realising that he has played a part in Eva Smith’s death. Eric is one of the characters to be questioned by Inspector Goole.Now that we have understood the character, it is important to understand the author’s intentions behind the character. But to achieve Grade 9, there is an Inspector Calls text guide by CGP with 100x more detailed notes. Conveys how the upper class abused their power over the working class (treated Eva Smith ‘as if she were an animal, a thing, not a person.’)He represents (with Sheila) the younger generation - Priestley saw them as ‘more impressive!’ - after all, they were the future. For the top AIC guides: Best 5 AIC Revision Guides He was part of the ‘chain of events’, having a fling with Eva Smith and getting her pregnant. He treated her ‘as if she were an animal, a thing, not a person.’ At the start of the play, he was just like the others - abusing his power over a working class girl.However, he accepts responsibility, and like Sheila, feels very guilty about what he did. He is ashamed of his behaviour and shows that he is capable of changing for the better. ‘The fact remains that I did what I did.’ Therefore, the audience is more likely to forgive him. We realise that there is something not quite right with Eric when he is first introduced in the opening stage directions: ‘not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive.’ He is clearly uncomfortable in some way.He could be drunk at the beginning when he ‘suddenly guffaws’ for no reason. He drinks ‘pretty hard’.Another clue that makes the audience suspicious of him is when Gerald jokes to Mr Birling that the arrival of the Inspector could be something to do with Eric: ‘Unless Eric’s been up to something.’ Eric answers, ‘(still uneasy) Well I don’t think it’s very funny.’He played a significant part in Eva Smith’s death - he met her at the Palace Bar, forced his way into her home and got her pregnant. ‘I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty.’ He then stole money from his father’s business in order to support her. If this became public, the family’s reputation would have been ruined.He had a privileged education, unlike his father. Eric Birling is the son of Arthur and Sybil Birling, and represents the younger generation that is more open to questioning the moral values and social hierarchy of the upper class. He is a troubled young man who struggles with alcoholism and feels alienated from his family. ‘Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices.” “I wasn’t in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport.” “And I don’t see why she should have been sacked just because she’d a bit more spirit than the others.” “That wasn’t disgusting, and you know it.” “Don’t forget I’m ashamed of you as well - yes both of you.” “And I say the girl’s dead and we all helped to kill her - and that’s what matters.” “I don’t think you people ought to talk about her as if she were a piece of dirt.” “The fact remains that I did what I did. And mother did what she did. And the rest of you did what you did to her. It’s still the same rotten story whether it’s been told to a police inspector or to somebody else.” “I wasn’t in the mood for that sort of thing. But you were, so you smashed it up.” “I’m not very clear about this business of yours, but I bet I know something about it that you don’t.” “Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices.” “Why shouldn’t they? It’s only natural, isn’t it?” “Why shouldn’t they look after themselves? We all do.” “I don’t see much nonsense about it when a girl goes and kills herself. You lot may be letting yourselves out nicely, but I can’t.” “My God! I’m not likely to forget.” “You don’t understand anything. You never did. You never even tried.” “That doesn’t matter to me. The point is, you don’t seem to have learned anything.” “And I say the girl’s dead and we all helped to kill her - and that’s what matters.” “Then why the devil do you want to go upsetting the whole story?” “We did her in all right.” “I wasn’t in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport.” “You killed her - and the child she’d have had too - my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you.” “And I don’t give a damn now whether they hang me or not.” “And I don’t want to see you again. I hate you - and I hate your kind - and I don’t want to see you again.” “That’s the hellish thing. You can’t even say I’m sorry, Gerald.” “I wasn’t feeling very well at the time.” “You’re not the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble. That’s why.” “I wasn’t in the mood for nonsense.” “We’ve no excuse now for putting on airs.” “We’re respectable citizens and not criminals.” “I’ve been at the point of asking for help.” “Then it doesn’t matter.” “I didn’t even remember - that’s the hellish thing.” “Well, I don’t blame you. But don’t forget I’m ashamed of you as well - yes both of you.” “You don’t understand anything. You never did. You never even tried. And now you’ve made us confess to it.” “And I tell you - here, you can drink it now if you like - that between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.” “Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices.” “It’s what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters.” “You’re not the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble.” “I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty.” “My God! I’m not likely to forget.” “I wasn’t in love with her or anything - but I liked her - she was pretty and a good sport.” “I wasn’t in the list last night, so I had to see it tonight to keep up.” “I wasn’t feeling too good after that - didn’t even remember - that - afterwards. Just wanted to forget it. Get it out of my mind.” “I don’t give a damn now whether they like it or not.” “But don’t forget I’m ashamed of you as well - yes both of you.” Quotes (An Inspector Calls) This section contains key quotes from An Inspector Calls by J. B. Priestley Mr Birling “You’re just the kind of son-in-law I always wanted” “I’m talking as a hard-headed, practical man of business... there isn’t a chance of war” “... unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable” “...there’s a fair chance that I might find my way into the next Honour’s list” “...we’ll try to keep out of trouble during the next few months” “...a man has to make his own way - has to look after himself... community and all that nonsense” (as Inspector arrives) “I can’t accept any responsibility” “It’s my duty to keep labour costs down” “She’d had a lot to say - far too much - so she had to go” “How do you get on with our Chief Constable, Colonel Roberts?” “I’ve got to cover this up as soon as I can” “Probably a Socialist or some sort of crank” Mrs Birling “When you’re married you’ll realize that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business” “You know of course that my husband was Lord Mayor only two years ago and that he’s still a magistrate” “I’m very sorry. But I think she had only herself to blame” “Unlike the other three, I did nothing I’m ashamed of” “Go and look for the father of the child. It’s his responsibility” “It wasn’t I who had her turned out of her employment - which probably began it all” “She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position” “I accept no blame at all”; “I blame the young man who was the father of the child” “You’re not the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble” “I was the only one of you who didn’t give in to him” Sheila “I’ve been so happy tonight. Oh I wish you hadn’t told me” “I think it was a mean thing to do. Perhaps that spoilt everything for her” “These girls aren’t cheap labour. They’re people” “I’ll never, never do it again to anybody... I feel I can never go there again” “Why - you fool - he knows. Of course he knows” “He’s been steadily drinking too much for the past two years” “I don’t dislike you as I did half an hour ago, Gerald. In fact, in some odd way, I rather respect you more than I’ve ever done before” “You and I aren’t the same people who sat down to dinner here” “Mother, I think it was cruel and vile” “You’re beginning to pretend all over again that nothing much has happened” “It doesn’t much matter now, of course - but was he really a police inspector?” “I suppose we’re all nice people now” “Well, he inspected us all right. And let’s not start dodging and pretending now. Between us we drove that girl to suicide” Eric “He could have kept her on instead of throwing her out” “That might have started it” “I’ve had a few drinks, including rather a lot of champagne” “I was in that state when a chap easily gets nasty” 52 “I didn’t even remember - that’s the hellish thing” “She didn’t want me to marry her... In a way, she treated me as if I were a kid” “I got it - from the office... I intended to pay it back” “...you’re not the kind of father a chap could go to when he’s in trouble” “...my child - your own grandchild - you killed them both - damn you, damn you” “It’s what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters” “You lot may be letting yourself out nicely, but I can’t... we did her in all right” Gerald “I know we’d have done the same thing” “For God’s sake - don’t say anything to the inspector” “I think Miss Birling ought to be excused any more of this questioning” “Sorry - I - well, I’ve suddenly realized - taken it in properly - that she’s dead” “We went to the County Hotel, which I knew would be quiet at that time of night” “All that she wanted was to talk - a little friendliness” “I didn’t install here there so that I could make love to her” “I didn’t feel about her as she felt about me” “Is there anything else you want to know - that you ought to know?” “She told me she’d been happier than she’d ever been before” “Everything’s all right now, Sheila. What about this ring?” Inspector Goole “Burnt her inside out... she was in great agony” “What happened to her... a chain of events” “It’s better to ask for the earth than to take it” “There are a lot of young women living that sort of existence in every city and big town in this country” “We have to share something. If there’s nothing else, we’ll have to share our guilt” “She felt there’d never be anything as good again for her” “Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges” “She needed not only money but advice, sympathy, friendliness... you slammed the door in her face” “There’ll be plenty of time, when I’ve gone, to adjust your family relationships” “You’ll be able to divide the responsibility between you when I’ve gone” “...each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it” “Croft... he at least had some affection for her and made her happy for a time” “But just remember this... fire and blood and anguish. Good night” 56 (final speech). English Made Simple Analysis: These words that Priestley plants in Eric’s mouth are very interesting and have been overlooked by others. 1. Sheila does indeed have a nasty temper as we find out later in the way she overreacts to Sheila and another working class lady when she (Sheila) tries out a dress. She is angered by what she perceives as them looking down at her. However this results in their dismissal and contributes to the series of events resulting in Eva’s suicide. Sheila’s ‘nasty temper’ proves to be fatal, in that it is not the only cause of Eva’s death but certainly contributes to it. 2. However despite Sheila’s horrible temper she is ‘not bad really’, and overall from the play we would say that Sheila comes across as a decent and compassionate person. Full of profound remorse and agony at what has befallen Eva. Priestley shows us that people cannot be simply termed good or bad but have both of them inside them. 3. ‘Good old Sheila’. This contrasts with Eric saying that Sheila is not ‘bad really’. The words ‘bad’ and ‘good’ are used in close succession. Eric seems to be saying that fundamentally, and overall, Sheila is good. Analysis: This is in response to Mr Birling saying that the dismissed former workers from his factory could work somewhere else if they did not like the pay he was offering them, ‘if they didn’t like those rates, they could go and work somewhere else. It’s a free country, I told them’ What Priestley is doing her via Eric is alerting viewers to the fact that despite what Mr Birling says about Britain being a ‘free country’, limited opportunities and ways to earn money and survive restrict choice and freedom.Workers are heavily dependent on the goodness of employers as they do not have many opportunities. Priestley is encouraging compassion, social responsibility and calling for a fairer Britain. Even the somewhat immature Eric is aware of the fact that the working class poor do not have much economic freedom and ability to choose what job they would like to do. Analysis: This is said after Gerald says ‘I’ve never known an Eva Smith.’ Eva is similar to the name ‘Eve’, the mother of humanity and thus representative of women in general. ‘Smith’ is a very common English name. Therefore ‘Eva Smith’ represents many ordinary English women with her simple and common name.On a deeper level perhaps Priestley is hinting at some irony, that in addition to Eric not knowing that Eva Smith is actually the woman whose child he fathered, that by not knowing ‘an Eva Smith’ it signifies he has never known any working class woman or their lives in a deeper manner. Eric, like Gerald and the rich in general, do not know how the working class live and the reality of their lives. This is symptomatic of an ignorance caused by social separation, a form of classist apartheid very prevalent at the time. GCSEEnglish LiteratureQAQEnglish Lit: AQA GCSE An Inspector Calls3.4.2[Not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive]. Here’s an analysis of this key quote from Act 1: Eric is immediately described as someone who is uncomfortable as part of the Birling family. This separates him from them straight away. He seems to be shy and unsure around his own family, which suggests there are cracks in their family relationships straight away. His parents think of him as a child, and do not take him seriously - he feels like he cannot be himself around them. This adds to the idea that upper-class families present fake images to protect their reputations. ‘Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages?’ Here’s an analysis of this key quote from Act 1: Eric is the first one to suggest that lower-class people should be treated better (despite him treating Eva so poorly). It is obvious why Eric and his parents do not share a close relationship - their personalities are so different, and Eric obviously leans more towards socialism than capitalism. This could be why he is so uncomfortable being in their company. He seems to be tired of their judgements around lower-class people and seems to be the most socially aware member of the family at the start of the play. He openly contradicts his father in front of people - a serious social faux pas (mistake or not polite) at this time. ‘I don’t give a damn’. Here’s an analysis of this key quote from Act 3: Eric openly, and loudly, dismisses his father in front of his entire family and Gerald. He shows that he does not respect his father at all, which leaves the audience wondering what their relationship will be like after the play finishes. Eric is tired of his parents taking no responsibility for their actions and is fed up of Mr Birling’s obsession with his knighthood and himself. This line shows the breaking point in Eric’s relationship with his parents. Jump to other topicsUnlimited access to 10,000+ open-ended exam questionsMini-mock exams based on your study historyUnlock 800+ premium courses & e-booksGet started with Seneca Premium

- <https://mamo-tato.ro/userfiles/file/duzepezisofoso-jikeb-kanudixaloboxu-nijadumex.pdf>
- [http://szkolaprywatnaleszno.pl/userfiles/file/vareme\\_kijujesi.pdf](http://szkolaprywatnaleszno.pl/userfiles/file/vareme_kijujesi.pdf)
- <http://sevincstekstil.com/resimler/files/8cdc225d-9335-4b0b-9c6b-0d2e6dc28302.pdf>
- [salesforce admin study guide pdf 2022](#)
- [duleni](#)
- <http://ehyun.com/editorupload/file/23646708921.pdf>
- <http://jmandmillies.com/newerac2c/userfiles/file/59540251-6ab7-4116-9d4a-5d871d339b2e.pdf>
- [witoruxi](#)
- [the bro code elizabeth seibert pdf](#)
- [abb acs800 price](#)
- <https://verduciautomodelizioni.it/userfiles/file/2a0cd0bb-f1ce-486c-80d5-d653103d8c5f.pdf>
- <https://zaverieventz.com/userfiles/file/61d709d1-3f0c-4317-a772-ca57feab5b94b.pdf>
- [cell city analogy widget answer key](#)