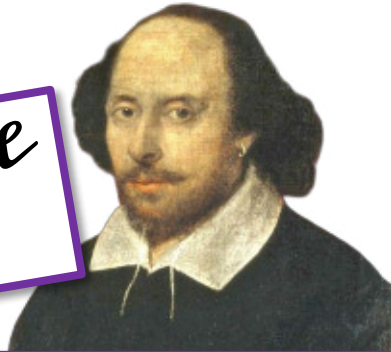


GCSE English Literature Study Guide



Macbeth



A
CHRIST
MAS
CAROL



Name _____



Power
and
Conflict
Poetry



An
Inspector
Calls



GCSE English Literature Paper

1

Macbeth



Key plot detail

- While returning from a battle victory, Macbeth, a powerful lord, meets three Witches who predict that he will become King of Scotland.
- Macbeth tells his wife of the Witches' predictions and she encourages him to murder the current king, Duncan, who is staying with them as a guest.
- After Macduff discovers the murder, Duncan's sons flee the country, leaving the way clear for Macbeth to become king.
- Banquo, Macbeth's best friend, becomes suspicious of what his friend has done so Macbeth has him murdered too.
- Macbeth pays a second visit to the Witches and receives more predictions.
- In England, Malcolm (Duncan's elder son) and his chief supporter, Macduff, plan to invade Scotland to win back the throne. An enraged Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed; Macduff swears revenge.
- Lady Macbeth suffers from guilt for what she has done and eventually commits suicide.
- Malcolm's invasion is successful and Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm becomes the new King of Scotland and the country counts the cost of Macbeth's short but bloody reign.

Macbeth meets the Witches

Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth

Macbeth has Banquo killed

Macbeth kills Duncan and becomes king

More predictions from the Witches

Lady Macbeth suffers guilt

Macduff defeats Macbeth

Macduff swears revenge



Macbeth

A general in King Duncan's army, Macbeth is originally the Thane of Glamis and a respected warrior. When he encounters the witches, the evil idea of killing his king to become king himself is implanted in his head.

Macbeth plots with his wife to kill Duncan and after the deed is done he deeply regrets his actions. Even so, he continues to plan and murder other people that could take his throne, including his best friend Banquo who was told by the witches that his own children would become kings.

He becomes obsessed with making himself safe, to the point of returning back to the witches to find out more about the future despite their connections to evil.

Macbeth sacrifices everything for ambition alone and arguably because of his ruthless and manipulative wife Lady Macbeth. How much responsibility should he take for his own actions? This is where the theme of fate vs free will comes in. He is certainly never comfortable in the role of murderer and criminal, unlike some of Shakespeare's other villains like Richard III and Iago from *Othello*.

Characters

Lady Macbeth

An utterly ruthless individual determined to see her husband rise to be a king. She 'unsexes' herself, associating herself with witchcraft and evil, and manipulates her husband into killing his king for the sake of their ambition.

Despite this ruthlessness, Lady Macbeth has a human side and when we discover she could not kill the king herself because Duncan looked like her own father.

Later in the play, Macbeth takes control of the situation and removes Lady Macbeth's responsibility. She grows isolated and has nothing but her own thoughts and her guilt.

Eventually, after suffering bouts of sleepwalking, Lady Macbeth goes mad and likely takes her own life, leading to her husband reflecting philosophically about the nature of existence and time.

King Duncan

Arguably a popular and well-respected king, Duncan does not deserve to die and his murder acts as a symbol of the dangers of over-powering ambition.

Macbeth himself admits he has no reason to kill Duncan except for his ambition, and Duncan shows nothing but kindness to Macbeth at the beginning of the play – promoting him to the Thane of Cawdor. He holds many qualities that would make up an ideal king: calmness, dignity, humility, grace and honour.

Additionally, he is the king's chosen representative on Earth – King James believed in the Divine Right of Kings, meaning he believed the king was chosen by God to rule over his people. For Macbeth to kill his king would be going against God Himself.

Macduff

A loyal member of Duncan's court and suspicious of Macbeth right from the moment he discovers Macduff is dead. He soon drifts from Macbeth's court and heads to England to ally himself with Malcolm who fled after his father was murdered. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty and Macduff shows nothing is more important to him than Scotland's future. Macduff also gains revenge over Macbeth for his brutal murder of his wife and children. A noble, honest, dedicated, heroic figure that again represents the kind of figure Macbeth could have been if he chose a different path.

Malcolm

Malcolm is Duncan's son. He is named his heir at the start of the play. Originally Malcolm seems weak and uncertain. By fleeing Scotland with Donalbain it made the pair of them look suspicious and timid. However, away from Scotland his personality changes and he shows his kingly qualities in first testing Macduff's loyalty and then leading the English army to victory at Dunsinane castle.

He goes on to represent many kingly qualities as did his father. By becoming king, justice is restored and God's chosen king is back on the throne. It would have been very important to Shakespeare's audience and his king to see Malcolm made king at the end of the play.

Banquo

He is such an important character because like Macbeth he was given a prophecy by the witches, but unlike the witches he did not act on his troubling thoughts. Instead, Banquo ignored his nightmares and his sense of ambition and represents the path Macbeth could have chosen if Macbeth had decided not to go through with the murder.

Banquo is also significant because his children are said to be part of a long line of kings. King James believed he was related to Banquo, and so Shakespeare plays a tremendous compliment to James by having Banquo be the father to a long line of kings. It is also important that Banquo's ghost haunts Macbeth as it is a reminder to him of his guilt, his misdeeds and how his life could have been so different.

Key Quotes

The Witches

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair." (*Act I, Scene I*)

"When the battle's lost and won." (*Act I, Scene I*)

"When shall we three meet again in thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurlyburly 's done, When the battle 's lost and won." (*Act I, Scene I*)

"By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes." (*Act IV, Scene I*)

"Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble." (*Act IV, Scene I*)

Macbeth

"If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me." (*Act I, Scene III*)

"I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none." (*Act I, Scene VII*)

"I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, and falls on the other." (*Act I, Scene VII*)

"Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand?" (*Act II, Scene I*)

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red" (*Act II, Scene II*)

Macbeth:

[*Looking on his hands*] This is a sorry sight.

Lady Macbeth:

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

Macbeth:

There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried,

"Murder!"

That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them;

But they did say their prayers, and address'd them

Again to sleep.

(*Act II, Scene II*)

"There's daggers in men's smiles." (*Act II, Scene III*)



Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth:

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty!
(Act I, Scene V)

"Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness." (*Act I, Scene V*)

"Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't." (*Act I, Scene V*)

"Screw your courage to the sticking-place." (*Act I, Scene VII*)

Key Quotes

Can you think of any other key quotes? Add them to your notes here. Explain why they are important in terms of the whole play, its themes and characters

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood



Understanding context (A03)

William Shakespeare wrote Macbeth in 1606 and it was performed at a time of political tension. The current monarch was James I, who inherited the throne of England after Queen Elizabeth I died. With Elizabethan having no children, her distant cousin James was the next best claimant to the crown. Many other members of the aristocracy felt they too had a good claim to the throne, which meant James' place as king was not always certain.

King James was a protestant – one of the reasons he was able to gain the crown – despite his mother being a catholic. Catholics in England had hoped that James might support them because of his family connections, but he did not. This led to a number of conspiracies and plots being developed against him, including the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, just a year before Shakespeare wrote Macbeth.

King James I was Scottish by birth and fascinated by his own family history. The play 'Macbeth' is based on real events from Scottish history and there was actually a King Macbeth in Scotland. In real life, King Macbeth reigned from 1040 to 1057 and had many successes as a king, whilst Duncan was actually a weak man who lacked respect from the people of Scotland.

King James believed himself to be a descendant of Banquo's (although we now know he wasn't), which may have affected the way Shakespeare showed Banquo on stage.

The Jacobean believed in the idea of a 'Great Chain of Being' The idea of this was that God had created a hierarchy that everyone had to live by, which God at the top and the King or Queen one place below Him. Therefore no one should want to become king because it was a position chosen by God and no one else could choose it. To want to become the monarch was therefore viewed as a sin and going against God. King James very much believed in the concept of 'divine right' to rule. When a king or queen is coronated, the ceremony makes them 'divine'.

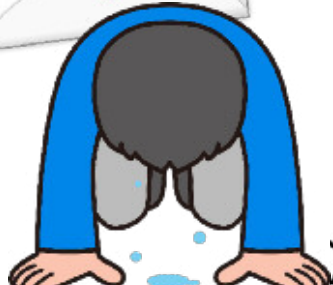
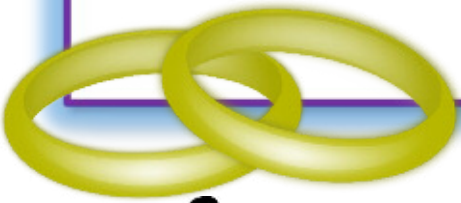
Furthermore, King James was intrigued by the supernatural, such as witches and ghosts, and wrote a book called 'Daemonologie' about this. That the play is so packed full of the supernatural is again possibly to interest the king.

GCSE English Literature Paper

1

A Christmas Carol

GCSE Revision Guide





Key plot detail

1. On Christmas Eve, Scrooge makes his clerk, Bob Cratchit, work in the cold.
2. He refuses an invitation to his nephew Fred's Christmas party and will not give money to the charity collectors.
3. At home he is visited by the ghost of his old business partner, Marley.
4. The Ghost of Christmas Past wakes Scrooge and shows him moments from his childhood, his apprenticeship and his failed engagement.
5. The Ghost of Christmas Present takes him to the Cratchit's home, where he is saddened by the ill, but kind, Tiny Tim. He is also shown how Fred celebrates Christmas with friends and how others celebrate Christmas together.
6. The final ghost is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come who terrifies Scrooge with visions of his death.
7. Scrooge awakes on Christmas Day and is delighted to find he has the chance to repent of his miserly ways. He buys a turkey for the Cratchits and attends his nephew's party.
8. Scrooge becomes like a second father to Tiny Tim and gains a reputation for knowing how to celebrate Christmas.

	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
<p>Ebe nez er Scr oog e</p>	<p>The central protagonist (main character) of the novella, Scrooge is a selfish, greedy but ultimately isolated elderly man that has spent much of his life hoarding his wealth away from others despite being surrounded by poverty and suffering. He is initial cruel and callous to everyone else before the visits of Marley's Ghost and the Three Spirits bring about his epiphany and the change in his character. Through the help of the narrator we follow Scrooge on his journey through his own past, present and potential future and celebrate his embracing of the Christmas spirit at the end.</p>	<p>"Bah! Humbug!"</p> <p>"Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry."</p> <p>"A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still." Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.</p> <p>"Another idol has displaced me" (Said to Scrooge by Belle</p> <p>"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future."</p>	<p>Isolation Christmas Spirit Regret Sorrow Greed Choice Guilt and Blame Emotional Coldness Emotional Warmth Catharsis Transformation Memory and the Past Compassion and Forgiveness</p>

	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
Jacob Marley	Scrooge's former business associate and friend. Marley passed away seven years ago on Christmas Eve. Marley inspired Scrooge to be selfish, greedy and utterly ruthless when dealing with other people. However, it is Marley that comes back to Scrooge as a ghost to tell him to change his ways or end up with the same fate as him, cursed to forever travel the world filled with regret and sorrow.	"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world -- oh, woe is me! -- and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"	Christmas Spirit Regret Sorrow Greed Supernatural Choice Time Guilt and Blame Emotional Coldness Memory and the Past Compassion and Forgiveness

The Ghost of Christmas Past	The first of the three spirits to visit Scrooge, The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge on a journey through his memories – ones he enjoys remembering and others that bring up emotions that he has long since buried. We see his absolute joy at seeing Fan and Fezziwig again, but his immense sorrow and regret for what happened between him and Belle. The Ghost is presented as very unusual looking and re-reading and re-analysing the use of description of the character would be very useful to you as part of your revision.	"It wore a tunic of the purest white, and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful." But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light	Supernatural Memory and the Past Compassion and Forgiveness Regret Sorrow Guilt and Blame Choice Isolation Christmas Spirit Family Emotional Warmth Time
-----------------------------	---	---	---

	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
The Ghost of Christmas Present	The second of the three spirits that is presented a giant representing all that is great and good about Christmas Day. He is more dominating than the previous spirit and mocks Scrooge's own words from Stave 1 when Scrooge previously asked about prisons and workhouses being in operation. This spirit shows to Scrooge how everyone across society takes joy from Christmas and celebrate together, they do not isolate themselves like Scrooge has done. In particular, the visit to the Cratchits and Scrooge seeing the love for Tiny Tim hits him hard.	"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me." "The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there"	Christmas Spirit Family Compassion and Forgiveness Isolation Emotional Warmth Supernatural Choice Guilt and Blame Time Self-awareness

The Ghost of Christmas Yet-to-Come	The final spirit is a dark, silent phantom that terrifies Scrooge and in some ways resembles the Grim Reaper, a classical symbol of death. This spirit shows Scrooge how the death of an isolated and friendless man sees vagabonds still his personal items, people celebrating his death and others suffering at his lack of compassion in life. Finally, the Ghost shows Scrooge his own gravestone and it is as this point that Scrooge has his epiphany.	But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded. "He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him." "We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline."	Supernatural Regret Sorrow Choice Time Guilt and Blame Transformation Emotional Coldness Isolation Death Family
------------------------------------	---	---	---

	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
Fred	Scrooge's nephew and the son of Ebenezer's sister Fan. Fred embodies everything good about Christmas and is filled with joy and happiness everywhere he goes. He is the antithesis of Ebenezer Scrooge. When Scrooge sees Fred spending Christmas with his friends Fred refuses to criticise Scrooge, only saying he pities him. Fred is delighted to see his uncle in Stave 5.	<p>"He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow"</p> <p>(Talking about Scrooge) "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried."</p>	<p>Family Christmas Spirit Memory and the Past</p>

The Cratchits	<p>Bob Cratchit – An honourable man and a wonderful father. Scrooge comes to respect him very much. He is part of the Cratchit family including his wife, Martha, Belinda and Peter.</p> <p>Tiny Tim - Bob's son who everyone loves and everyone pities. Dickens was arguably trying to evoke immense sympathy from his readers for this weak but wonderful young boy. Tiny Tim survives his illness thanks to Scrooge's financial help.</p>	<p>"[Tiny Tim] told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see."</p> <p>"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all. (Stave 3)</p> <p>Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons</p>	<p>Christmas Spirit Family Memory and the Past Guilt and Blame Emotional Warmth Regret Sorrow Transformation Charity</p>
---------------	--	--	--

Understanding context (AO3)

Although now in Britain we have what is known as the welfare state (which includes support for the neediest including the NHS, social housing, unemployment benefits and more), there was little government support for the poorest in society during the Victorian era.

Many wealthy Victorians who were socially conscious (meaning they felt a responsibility to help those who could not help themselves) became heavily involved in philanthropy. They used their own money to give to charities and to set up their own charities to help those that needed help. Charles Dickens was one such person and he used his own money to help others, as well as working with wealthy benefactors to make changes in society, too. Moreover, Dickens used his writing to act as a social commentator – bringing to the attentions of his middle and upper class readers the need for social upheaval.

Throughout much of Dickens' life, workhouses were one form of 'welfare' for the poorest in society. Workhouses existed well before the Victorian era, but the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act made it a legal requirement for all able-bodied people to work in workhouses to get their 'poor relief' (financial support). Before this time the poorest in society had to rely on charity and handouts to survive. However, Victorians saw poverty as a kind of illness or disease in society that needed to be eradicated. Governments were keen to move the poorest indoors, away from everyone.

However, those in charge of the country made workhouses places to be feared in order to prevent 'lazy' citizens thinking it was an easy option instead of going out to find work.

Workhouses meant the poorest would work for food and a place to sleep, but many people saw it as a form of slavery. Workhouses also took in orphans, abandoned children, the mentally ill, the disabled, unmarried mothers and the elderly. Despite their age or abilities, all were required to work long and demanding hours.

Whenever someone entered a workhouse they were stripped, bathed whilst being supervised and then provided with a uniform. This uniform separated them from the rest of society. If those from workhouses were out in the streets everyone else would instantly know they were in a workhouse. Often children were 'hired out' to wealthy business men and made to work in awful places such as mines.

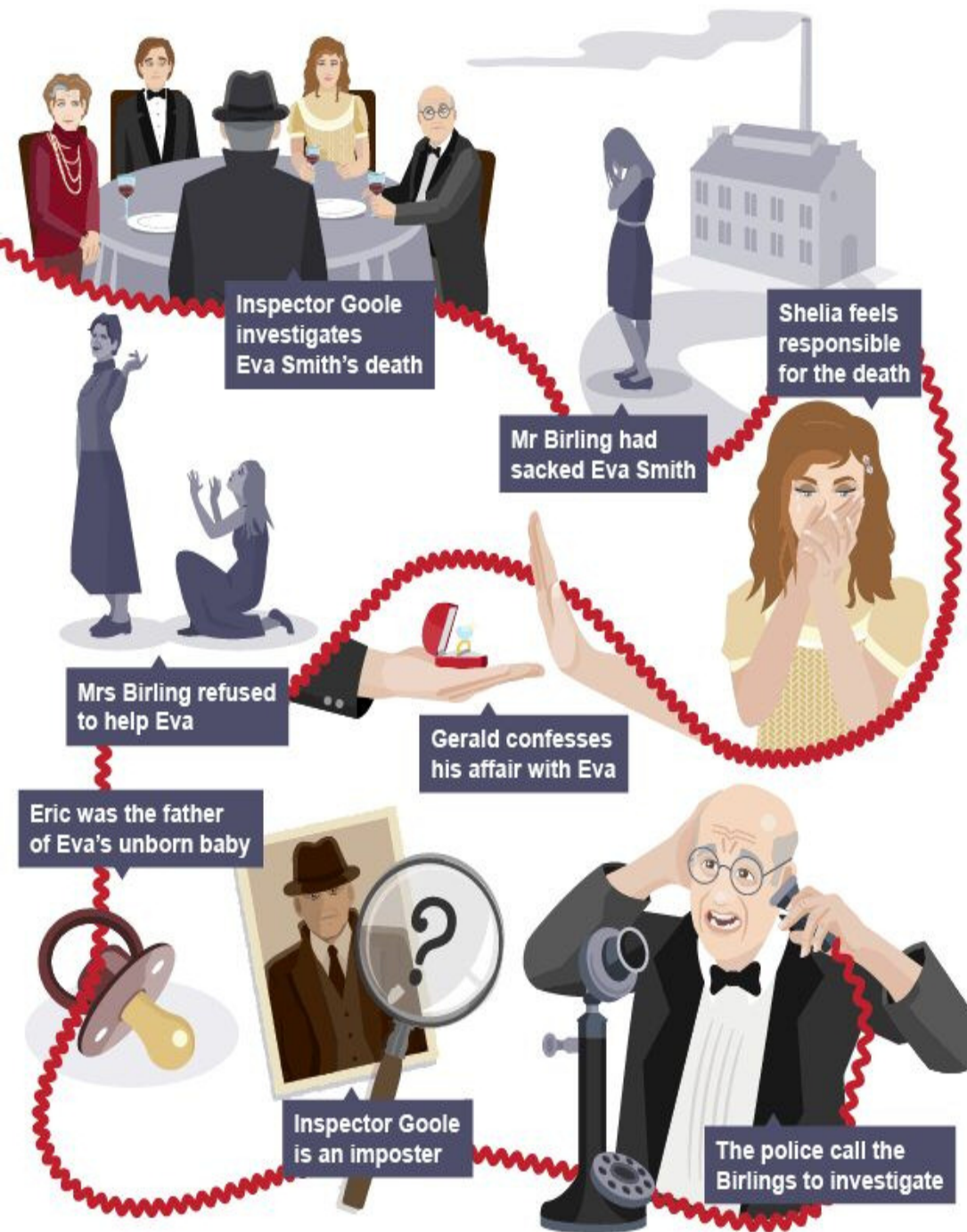
You were not allowed to try to contact your family and doing so could result in being punished. The standard of education provided was awful and would not help those within the workhouses get out of them. The food given to those in the workhouses was of a poor quality, simple and the same every day. Food was seen as a tool to keep you working, not as something to be enjoyed. 15

GCSE English Literature Paper 2

An Inspector Calls

GCSE Revision Guide





1. An inspector arrives at the Birling house. He tells them how a girl called Eva Smith has killed herself by drinking disinfectant - he wants to ask them some questions.
2. The Inspector reveals that the girl used to work in Arthur Birling's factory and he had her sacked for going on strike. Mr Birling refuses to accept any responsibility for her death.
3. The Inspector then reveals that Sheila thought that Eva had made fun of her, complained and got her sacked. Sheila is deeply ashamed and feels responsible for the girl's death.
4. The Inspector forces Gerald to confess to an affair he had with Eva. Sheila respects Gerald's honesty but returns the engagement ring he gave her.
5. It is revealed that Sybil Birling had refused to help the pregnant Eva.
6. It turns out that it was Eric who got Eva pregnant, and stole money from his father to help her.
7. The Inspector leaves. The family ring the infirmary and there is no record of a girl dying from drinking disinfectant.
8. Suddenly the phone rings, Mr Birling answers it, to his horror the phone call reveals that a young woman has just died from drinking disinfectant and the police are on their way to question them about it. The curtain falls and the play ends.

Mr Arthur Birling

Mr Birling is described as "a heavy-looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech." He is proud that he has built up his business and made so much money himself.

Birling boasts of his achievements to others, particularly Gerald and Eric, explaining how he was once Mayor and is hoping to get a knighthood soon. Plus, he uses his connections as a way of trying to influence the Inspector and protect his family's reputation.

Birling is very pleased his daughter is marrying someone whose family is higher up in society than he is and wants himself and his family to continue to rise up socially. He tells Gerald: "it's exactly the same port your father gets." Marrying Gerald will also mean Birling and Co potentially merging with Crofts Limited rather than competing as rivals.

Birling seems confident that war will not happen and mentions about the Titanic being unsinkable, even though the war takes place just two years after 1912 when the play is set, and the Titanic sinks just a few days after it is set. Priestley shows Birling to be wrong about everything, including his optimism.

When the Inspector questions Birling, he never once admits responsibility for Eva Smith's death and says he paid his workers the 'usual rate' – no more or less.

Birling is more concerned with maintaining his reputation than taking any kind of responsibility, and is particularly concerned when it is revealed that Mrs Birling was responsible for turning away a pregnant Eva looking for help with the charity she was chairing. ("I must say, Sybil, that when this comes out at the inquest, it isn't going to do us much good. The press might easily take it up—"). This, coupled with the fact Eric was stealing money from the company, means Birling is incredibly keen to cover up as much as he can to protect his reputation.

In fact, Birling attempts to bribe the Inspector to hush up the investigation ("Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands...") which of course the Inspector refuses. It seems as though Birling may not be getting his precious knighthood after all, and the merger of Birling and Co with Crofts Limited seems unlikely.

As soon as the Inspector leaves, Birling works with his wife and Gerald to discredit Goole by claiming he is a fake and that no girl has died at all – it is all a hoax.

It seems like Birling might be right, only for a phone call at the end to confirm that a girl had killed herself and a police inspector is coming round to ask the family questions. Imagine how a man like Birling feels at this point. What message was Priestley trying to give to people like Mr Birling?

Why is Mr Birling important?

- He represents middle class men who have made money via capitalism.
- He refuses to accept responsibility for anyone else except himself.
- He represents capitalism and its ideals.
- He also represents an older generation that is less likely to be influenced by ideas of socialism.



She is initially described as being "about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior" suggesting Mr Birling may have married her for her social standing.

Mrs Birling is shown throughout the play to be very snobbish – thinking herself better than people from other classes – and having very forthright and sanctimonious views.

She criticises her husband for failing to follow accept social conventions and etiquette ("Arthur, you're not supposed to say such things-") and is cruel in the way she describes Eva ("girls of that class"). She even refuses to believe that Eva would not accept money from Eric when she knows it is stolen because Eva was working class ("She was giving herself ridiculous airs.")

Mrs Birling sees herself as a powerful figure and tries to use her social standing and power to get rid of the Inspector, but it fails. She also denies recognising Eva from the photo she is seen despite the fact she was the last person in the family to have seen her alive.

She refuses to believe that Eric is a drunkard, that Gerald had an affair and even that Alderman Meggarty is anything but a morally perfect person. As chair of her charity, Mrs Birling used her power to ensure Eva received no financial aid despite her being heavily pregnant.

Mrs Birling refuses to take responsibility for Eva or her future baby and instead says the father should take the responsibility – the dramatic irony here being that Sheila and the audience have already worked out that Eric is the father, and thus Mrs Birling has just pinned all the blame on her own son unknowingly.

Like Mr Birling, Sybil Birling always sees Eric and Sheila as children and not as adults and will not change her view on this throughout the whole play.

Moreover, just like Arthur, Sybil tries to find any way out of accepting responsibility for Eva's death by developing a theory that Goole is a fake and the death a hoax. When it is revealed that Eva has died at the end of the play, Mrs Birling knows her reputation will be damaged, her daughter is no longer marrying an aristocrat and her son is a drunkard who got a young girl pregnant and stole money from the family business.

Why is Mrs Birling important?

She represents many of the upper and middle class attitudes from the time: arrogance, sanctimony, snobbishness and selfishness.

She is part of the older generation that refuses to change or accept new ideas. She is happy to live in the status quo.

She uses her influence to hurt other people rather than help them – it is difficult for the audience to do anything but dislike Mrs Birling, as is the case with her husband.



Sheila begins the play very much as childlike: "a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited." She is innocent and naïve, living in a world where her biggest concerns are engagement rings and dresses.

She is engaged to be married to Gerald Croft, the son of wealthy aristocrats, but suggests she is not entirely happy after mentioning about Gerald not going near her one summer. This implies she has more depth to her than we first think.

Unlike her parents, Sheila immediately feels empathy and pity for Eva when she hears her story and takes responsibility for her role in her death when she knows what consequences her actions have had. By getting Eva fired from the Millwards department store, Sheila realises she has forced Eva into a more difficult life.

As the play progresses, Sheila appears more understanding and perceptive of those around her: she sees Gerald's reaction to the name Daisy Renton and explains that the Inspector already knows how all the characters are connected to Eva.

She tries to protect her mother later in the play – a brilliant reversal of roles from the beginning – but her mother inevitably and unknowingly denounces her own son.

Sheila shows a growing maturity as she explains she is not angry at Gerald but rather respects him more for his honesty as he retells his relationship with Daisy.

In the final act of the play, Sheila shows a confrontational side and an anger at her parents for refusing to accept any responsibility for Eva's death ("pretend that nothing much has happened." "It frightens me the way you talk").

It is clear that Sheila has changed by the end of the play and like her brother Eric is now more socially responsible. She is the kind of younger head that could lead to a changing society, or face the harsh consequences of fire, blood and anguish as the Inspector elucidates.

Why is Sheila important?

She shows how gender roles are clearly defined at the start of the play: she is meant to be the sweet, innocent and naïve girl that gets married.

As the play progresses, her character changes and she becomes far more determined, confrontational and aware.

By the end of the play she represents a younger generation that is far more willing to take responsibility for the people around them.



At the start of the play, Eric is described as "in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive." He is an awkward character that doesn't seem to fit in very well with his family. This awkwardness seems to be explained once we find out that he got an unmarried girl working class girl pregnant and stole money from his parents.

Eric is not naïve like his sister and is even willing to briefly challenge his father: "What about war?" It also suggests all is not well in his relationship with his dad.

Moreover, it is soon revealed to the characters and the audience that Eric is a drunkard and drinks alcohol heavily, as Gerald explains: "I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard."

Like Sheila, who says that the workers are not cheap labour but rather people, Eric shows empathy for the workers of the factory: "Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices. And I don't see why she should have been sacked just because she'd a bit more spirit than the others. You said yourself she was a good worker. I'd have let her stay."

Eric's drinking can likely be equated with his thoughtless actions and the consequences he can now see as a result of what he did. He got a young girl pregnant by violently threatening her, and can see how he has contributed to Eva's death.

Eric, like Sheila, is disgusted by his parents' reactions as the end of the play, and even tells his father: "I don't give a damn now whether I stay here or not." Whilst Birling thinks he may be able to protect his reputation, it appears his children have lost any respect they might have had for him.

Eric has changed by the end of the play and realises his actions had consequences. He is now aware of his social responsibilities.

Why is Eric important?

He represents the younger generation that are more socially responsible than their parents.

He drinks because he feels guilt about what he did: by violently forcing himself on Eva, he got her pregnant and helped to drive her towards suicide.

Because he accepts responsibility by the end of the play, the audience come to respect Eric a lot more.



Gerald Croft works at his father's company, Crofts Limited, a rival to Birling and Co. Although engaged to be married to Sheila at the start of the play, we find out that his parents - Sir George and Lady Croft - are higher up the social hierarchy than the Birlings (Mr Birling and Mrs Birling) and are aristocrats. It is also suggested by Mr Birling that Gerald's parents do not approve on the marriage to Sheila – they are, after all, not at the engagement party. Gerald is an attractive, popular man of about 30 years old.

As the play develops, it is revealed that Gerald had an affair with Eva Smith when she was calling herself Daisy Renton. He met her at the Variety Theatre in town and 'rescued' her from Alderman Meggarty (a well-known and highly respected dignitary) who Gerald describes essentially as a womanizer.

Gerald and Daisy enter into a relationship behind Sheila's back (during the same summer when he wouldn't go near Sheila, as she reminds him in Act One). Gerald eventually breaks it off and gives Daisy money to keep her going. He tells her he has to go away on business.

It is the shock of hearing the name 'Daisy Renton' that reveals to Sheila and the Inspector that Gerald knew Eva, and after all is revealed about his relationship with her, Gerald goes outside for fresh air to reflect on his relationship with her.

Gerald is older than both Sheila and Eric, but is not as old as Mr and Mrs Birling. He initially takes some responsibility for Eva's death, but then like Mr and Mrs Birling at the end of the play is all too willing to cover it up and deny that Goole is a real inspector. He seems happy enough at the end when it seems that Mr and Mrs Birling might be right. Gerald is more concerned with protecting his reputation than he is taking

Why is Gerald important?

He represents the upper classes in the play

We – the audience – want him to change, after all, he did help Daisy with money, but he doesn't.

He represents how the old class system is hard to remove – aristocrats don't want to lose their power and their status.



Inspector Goole is described as "an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit. He speaks carefully, weightily, and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking" when he enters in Act One.

Despite questioning a family of wealthy members of the upper middle classes, the Inspector appears calm and assertive throughout. He uses his language like a machine to gain control over the other characters and seems to have already pre-planned exactly who is going to speak to and when and how he will speak to them.

As Sheila comes to understand, the Inspector already knows how all the characters are connected to Eva. Because of this, it seems to give him a ghost-like or supernatural quality to him.

Although Mr Birling tries to bribe him, Goole is not in the slightest bit interested. Nor does Birlings' apparent connections to the police or those in politics have any effect on the Inspector.

His final speech seems like a politician or a sermon to a congregation. When he leaves and we find out he was not a real police inspector, it confuses us about who he was and why he was there, but the second phone call at the end confirming a young girl has died adds in another 'supernatural' layer to the play.

Why is the Inspector important?

He seems to be operating on a different level of consciousness to the other characters and this has led to a number of theories about who or what Inspector Goole is. Could he a ghost? The name 'Goole' could be a pun on 'ghoul', which is similar to a spirit or ghost. Could he be the voice of Priestley or the voice of God? Could he represent the voices of the working classes as a collective? You can choose for yourself.



Act One

Mrs Birling: Now, Sheila, don't tease him. 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'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

Sheila: But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people.

Inspector ... what happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened to her afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.

Birling: Community and all that nonsense

Birling: And I say there isn't a chance of war.

Sheila: (*taking out the ring*) Oh – it's wonderful! Look – mummy – isn't it a beauty? Oh – darling - (*she kisses Gerald hastily.*)

Birling: And I'm taking as a hard headed, practical man of business

Eric: Yes, I know – but still -

Birling: Just let me finish, Eric. You've a lot to learn yet

Birling: the titanic...unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.

Birling: Still, I can't accept any responsibility.

Sheila (to Gerald): Why - you fool - *he knows*. Of course he knows. And I hate to think how much he knows that we don't know yet. You'll see. You'll see. *She looks at him almost in triumph.*

Act Two

INSPECTOR [massively] Public men, Mr. Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.

Sheila: (*eagerly*) Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame – and I'm desperately sorry

Inspector: And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?

Gerald: If possible – yes.

Inspector: Well, we know one young woman who wasn't, don't we?

Gerald to Sheila: You've been through it – and now you want to see somebody else put through it.

Sheila: (*bitterly*) So that's what you think I'm like. I'm glad I realised it in time, Gerald.

Gerald: (*apologetically, to Mrs Birling*) I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard.

Note: Gerald explains that Eric is a heavy drinker to his mother.

Gerald: (*hesitatingly*) it's hard to say. I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.

Sheila: (*with sharp sarcasm*) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

Mrs Birling: I must say that so far you seem to be conducting in a rather peculiar and offensive manner. You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate--

Gerald: (*distressed*) sorry – I – well, I've suddenly realized – taken it in properly – that's she's dead--

Mrs Birling: That – I consider – is a trifle impertinent, Inspector.

Sheila: (*slowly, carefully now*) You mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the inspector will just break it down. And it'll be all the worse when he does.

Mrs Birling: secondly, I blame the young man who was the father of the child she was going to have

Act Three

Inspector: We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.

Sheila: I tell you – whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke. You knew it then. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way.

Sheila: And it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it.

Eric: And I agree with Sheila. It frightens me too.

Birling: ... we've been had ... it makes all the difference.

Gerald: Of course!

Sheila [bitterly]: I suppose we're all nice people now.

Gerald: Everything's all right now, Sheila. (*Holds up the ring.*) What about this ring?

Sheila: No, not yet. It's too soon. I must think.

Birling: (pointing to Eric and Sheila) Now look at the pair of them – the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke-

Eric: (*bursting out*) What's the use of talking about behaving sensibly. You're beginning to pretend now that nothing's really happened at all. And I can't see it like that. This girl's still dead, isn't she? Nobody's brought her to life, have they?

Sheila: (*eagerly*) That's just what I feel, Eric. And it's what they don't seem to understand.

Eric: whoever that chap was, 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... The money's not the important thing. It's what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters. And I still feel the same about it, and that's why I don't feel like sitting down and having a nice cosy talk.

An Inspector Calls and Context

John Boynton Priestley was born in Yorkshire in 1894 and from an early age he began writing. As a member of the middle classes he had the chance to go on and study at university, but felt he would get more of a feel for the 'real' world by going out to work instead. Therefore, he became a junior clerk with a wool firm at the age of 16.

During the First World War, Priestley joined the infantry and narrowly avoided death on a number of occasions. After the war, he went to Cambridge University and earned a degree before moving to London to work as a freelance writer. Although mostly remembered for *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley wrote many, many articles, novels and plays. He was very much into his politics and this shone through in his writing.

In the 1930s Priestley became very much concerned about social inequality and this led to him setting up a new political party (The Common Wealth Party) to try and fight this. The new party wanted public ownership of land, greater levels of democracy, and a new kind of 'morality' in politics. This party eventually went on to merge with the Labour Party in 1945, but it was instrumental in helping to establish the Welfare State in the United Kingdom (which includes pensions, benefits, the NHS and more).

During the Second World War he presented a very popular weekly radio programme which the Conservative political party branded as being very left-wing. The programme was cancelled by the BBC because it was felt to be too one-sided and critical of the Government at the time.

'*An Inspector Calls*' was published and performed in 1945 in the Soviet Union as the Second World War came to an end. It was written at a time when class divisions were becoming blurred in Britain, where women were being given more rights and respect, and people want great change in society.

The play itself is set in 1912 – a time before the two World Wars, where class divisions were very clear, where women were poorly treated, where social inequality was great and where there was very little support for the elderly, sick, disabled and poorest in society. It is important to remember that women were not even given the vote in Britain until 1928; before that time movements like the Suffragettes campaigned through militant action to make significant changes to society.

In 1945 Clement Attlee's Labour Party won a landslide election victory despite Winston Churchill's Conservatives leading the UK to victory in Europe in the Second World War. It was clear that the British people wanted great social change, and with the NHS being founded in 1948, the play helped to continue to change attitudes towards social inequality in the country. This is what Priestley intended with his play; he wanted the people of Britain to embrace change and make the most of the social upheaval that the two World Wars had caused.

Priestley continued to write into the 1970s, and died in 1984.