

An Inspector Calls – Knowledge Organiser

Plot summary			
<p>Act 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheila and Gerald’s engagement is celebrated • Birling says there will be no war; references Titanic • Inspector arrives; a young girl has committed suicide • Birling threw her out after strike • Sheila had her fired for laughing • Eva changed her name to Daisy Renton • Sheila confronts Gerald and warns him not to lie <p>Act 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerald’s affair with Daisy Renton is revealed • Sheila ends her engagement to Gerald • Mrs Birling refused to give charity to Eva <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric leaves the house • Mrs Birling admits refusing Eva charitable help • Mrs Birling blames the father of Eva’s unborn child • Eric returns <p>Act 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric’s involvement revealed; possible rape hinted at • Eric admits stealing money from Birling & Co. • Inspector tells them they are all to blame and then leaves. • Mr Birling plans how to cover up the scandal • Gerald returns; met policeman, no Inspector Goole • Telephone rings; an inspector is coming 			
Key characters	Key themes	Context	Dramatic Devices
<p>The inspector - Priestley’s mouthpiece; advocates social justice</p> <p>Mr Birling - Businessman, capitalist, against social equality</p> <p>Mrs Birling - Husband’s social superior, believes in personal responsibility</p> <p>Sheila Birling - comes to change views and pities Eva, feels regret</p> <p>Gerald Croft - Businessman, engaged to Sheila, politically closest to Birling</p> <p>Eric Birling - Young man, drinks too much, rapes Eva, regrets actions</p> <p>Eva Smith - Unseen in play, comes to stand for victims of social injustice</p>	<p>Social responsibility - Or socialism; we must all look after each other</p> <p>Class, status & power - Upper and lower social classes are segregated</p> <p>Age - Old vs young - new and old ideas counterposed</p> <p>Attitudes to women - Patriarchal leading to misogyny</p> <p>Remorse & guilt – AIC is often seen as a morality play – one that tells us about good and evil.</p> <p>The law & morality – The persona of the Inspector suggest a legal crime has been committed, but the ‘crime’ of Eva’s death is more about morality.</p> <p>Public image & hypocrisy – the respectable façade of the Birlings is contrasted with their private shame. Each character is made to confess their sins.</p>	<p>Time - The play is set in 1912, just before WWI and the sinking of the Titanic. Priestley wrote the play in 1945, the year WW2 ended and the beginning of the welfare state.</p> <p>Capitalism - Business should make money no matter the human cost; we are all responsible only for ourselves.</p> <p>Conservatism – Political belief that seeks to preserve traditional values and whatever is seen as good, and opposes radical change.</p> <p>Socialism – an economic system based on collective ownership – usually state ownership – of money and industry.</p> <p>Liberalism – The belief that social progress should come through reform rather than revolution; an economic theory that promotes free competition and a self-regulating market.</p> <p>Welfare state – government programmes that aim to provide economic security for the population by providing for people when they are unemployed, ill or elderly.</p>	<p>Dramatic irony - the audience knows what the characters don’t</p> <p>Stage directions - Instructions for the actors; often revealing</p> <p>Setting - Constant throughout but subtle changes e.g. lighting</p> <p>Tension - Builds up throughout the play</p> <p>Cliff-hanger - Each Act ends on a cliff-hanger and the ending of the play allows the audience to make up their minds</p>

Key quotations	
Birling's confidence	'We're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity'
Birling on society	'the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else'
Sheila's recognition	'but these girls aren't cheap labour – they're <i>people</i> '
Sheila's regret	'it's the only time I've ever done anything like that, and I'll never, never do it again to anybody'
Sheila on the Inspector	'we all started like that – so confident, so pleased with ourselves until he began asking us questions'
Sheila on Eric	'he's been steadily drinking too much for the last two years'
Inspector on guilt	'I think you did something terribly wrong – and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it'
Mrs Birling defends herself	'she was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position'
Eric explains	'I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that – well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row'
The Inspector says	'but each of you helped to kill her. Remember that'
Inspector's message	'there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering, and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, with what we think and say and do. We don't live alone.'
Birling's confidence	'the famous younger generation who know it all'