

Knowledge Organiser – An Inspector Calls

Plot			
1	The start of Act One	At the start of the play, the Birling family are seated at a dinner table having a dinner party to celebrate the engagement of Sheila Birling and Gerald Croft. The phone rings, disrupting the family, and announces that a girl has committed suicide and an Inspector is on his way to speak to the family.	
2	Mr Birling's involvement	Mr Birling encountered Eva Smith when she worked for him in his factory. Having asked for a slight raise in salary, Eva Smith worked alongside others to go on strike. Following this, Mr Birling fired Eva Smith from his works meaning that she had to find another job.	
3	Sheila Birling's involvement	Sheila encountered Eva Smith in a department store called Millwards, where Eva worked as a sales assistant. When Sheila tried on a dress, she felt Eva was laughing at her, so she used her status to get her fired from Millwards. Although Sheila felt awful, this was Eva Smith's last stable job.	
4	End of Act One	The family begin to break down with Sheila reacting differently to her parents. The Inspector reveals that Eva Smith changed her name to Daisy Renton, causing Gerald Croft to suddenly change his mood. He then reveals to Sheila that he knows Daisy Renton but asks her to keep it hidden from The Inspector.	
5	Gerald Croft's involvement	Having saved Eva Smith from being assaulted by Alderman Meggarty in the Palace Bar, Gerald Croft provides Daisy Renton (Eva) with shelter and provides her with money. Gradually, Daisy falls in love with him and they have an affair. Gerald breaks her heart by leaving her to return to Sheila.	
6	Mrs Birling's involvement	Being a prominent member of the Brumley women's charity organisation, Mrs Birling encounters a pregnant Eva Smith who presents herself as Ms Birling. Being offended that a girl in her social standing uses the Birling name, Mrs Birling refuses to provide Eva Smith with any help saying that it is the father's responsibility.	
7	End of Act Two	The family break down even further with Sheila directly challenging the involvement that Mrs Birling had with Eva. Mrs Birling directly challenges the father saying it is his responsibility as Sheila tries to convince her mother to think and stop talking. Eric then walks into the room, the family look at him and the curtain drops.	
8	Eric Birling's involvement	Eric encountered Eva Smith as Daisy Renton in a bar. He was intoxicated and ended up getting Daisy Renton (Eva) pregnant. Eric tried to take responsibility by stealing money from his father to help Eva Smith but she refuses to take the money once she realised it was stolen.	
9	End of Act Three	The Inspector provides the family with a warning through his dramatic monologue and then leaves. The family continue to break down until Gerald returns from his walk and announces the Inspector was not real. The older Birling's celebrate. Then, the phone rings announcing a girl has died and an Inspector is on their way.	
Characters			
10	Mr Birling	Mr Birling is a wealthy businessman and the head of the Birling family. He proudly promotes Capitalist viewpoints and is critical of those in lower social standings. He encounters Eva Smith when he fires her from his factory.	

11	Mrs Birling	Mrs Birling is described as Mr Birlings “social superior”. She is of a high class and shares Mr Birlings outlook on society. Mrs Birling is a member of the Brumley’s women’s charity organisation where she refuses to help Eva Smith.	
12	Sheila Birling	Sheila is the daughter of Mr and Mrs Birling. She can be described as being a transformative character as, throughout the investigation, she becomes more astute towards the consequences of her actions. She is often described as a pseudo-Inspector as she promotes Socialist views	
13	Eric Birling	Eric is the son of Mr and Mrs Birling. He is an alcoholic and almost outcast of the family. He challenges Mr Birling’s viewpoints in both Act One and Act Three and shows a similar level of remorse for his actions as Sheila.	
14	Gerald Croft	Gerald Croft is a wealth ‘man-about-town’ who is engaged to Sheila Birling. He has mysteriously been absent the previous summer, resulting in tension between him and Sheila. Mr Birling views this engagement as a means to bring together business rivals.	
15	Inspector Goole	The Inspector is a mysterious character who arrives to speak to the family regarding the suicide of Eva Smith. He is omniscient as he has access to a lot of information in this case. His methods and strategies are suspicious.	
16	Eva Smith	The victim within this play. Although we never hear from Eva Smith, she plays a central role within the play. She represents women who have been mistreated within society. She also goes by the names of Daisy Renton and Ms Birling within this play	
17	Edna	Edna is the parlour maid that works for the Birling family. Again, we do not hear much from Edna but she is used as a symbol for the wealth and status of the Birling family.	

Key Quotations

	<u>Who said it?</u>	<u>Quotations</u>	<u>Who/what is it about?</u>
18	Mr Birling	“We’re in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity”	Capitalism
19	Mr Birling	“unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable”	The Titanic
20	Mr Birling	“The way some of these cranks talk and write now, you’d think everybody has to look after everybody else”	Socialism
21	Mr Birling	“Fiddlesticks – the German’s don’t want war”	Society
22	Mr Birling	“If we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense”	Socialism
23	Sheila Birling	“But these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people”	Eva Smith
24	Sheila Birling	“He’s been steadily drinking too much for the last two years”	Eric Birling
25	Sheila Birling	“It’s the only time I’ve ever done anything like that, and I’ll never, never do it again to anybody”	Eva Smith
26	Sheila Birling	“Look mummy – isn’t it a beauty?”	Engagement Ring
27	Sheila Birling	“He’s giving us the rope so we’ll hang ourselves”	The Inspector
28	Mrs Birling	“she was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd for a girl in her position”	Eva Smith
29	Mrs Birling	“Girls of that class”	Eva Smith
30	Mrs Birling	“Go look for the father of the child, it’s his responsibility”	Responsibility
31	Mrs Birling	“I am sorry she should have come to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame for it at all”	Responsibility
32	Stage directions	“not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive”	Eric Birling
33	Stage directions	“a rather cold woman and her husband’s social superior”	Mrs Birling
34	Stage directions	“Need not be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness.”	Inspector Goole

35	Eric Birling	"I was in a state where a chap easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row"	Involvement with Eva
36	Eric Birling	"I wasn't in love with her or anything – but I liked her – she was pretty and a good sport"	Daisy Renton (Eva)
37	Inspector Goole	"And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?"	To Gerald
38	Inspector Goole	"Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges"	Responsibility
39	Inspector Goole	"But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. (He looks from one to the other of them carefully) But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did"	Responsibility
40	Inspector Goole	"One Eva Smith has gone- but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us"	Socialism
41	Inspector Goole	"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."	Foreshadowing

Key Themes

42	Responsibility	There are many references throughout this play that criticises the way that the Birlings refuse to take responsibility. It is important to work together and help one another to strengthen society. Priestley uses this as an important message for the future.	
43	Generational Divide	The younger Birling's gradually challenge the mentality of their parents throughout the play. This may be done to demonstrate hope for future generations. Changing their mind-sets and in turn, changing the shape of society.	
44	Capitalism vs Socialism	As a Socialist, Priestley uses a Capitalist family, The Birlings, to criticise the impact Capitalism had on society. Priestley believed that part of the cause of World War 1 and 2 were Capitalism beliefs.	
45	Gender	Edwardian England is a Patriarchal (male-dominated) society. We see the way that women, regardless of their social class, are considered as being inferior to the men within the play. This forms another of Priestley's criticisms of society at this time.	

Techniques/Dramatic Devices

46	Dramatic Irony	Where the audience know information that the characters do not. This form of irony is used within this play to criticise the way the Birling family view society around them.	
47	Stage Directions	Information in a play script that directs actors in the way a character acts or behaves or how the staging should look at particular moments in the play. This helps to understand and interpret Priestley's intentions in the play.	
48	Lighting	The way lighting is used within the play to reflect moods and establish an atmosphere	
49	Foreshadowing	Warnings/clues placed within a narrative that either provide a real life warning or help to establish ideas that are resolved at the end of a text	
50	Dramatic Monologue	An extended speech delivered by one character containing an important message or information. The Inspector's final speech would represent a dramatic monologue.	

51	Cliffhanger	A shocking revelation at the end of a scene. We see this at the end of each Act where information is revealed directly to the audience.	
52	Symbolism	Where something represents a wider message or image within society.	
53	Microcosm	Translates to 'small world'. Where one situation represents many similar situations within society. E.g. The Birling family were not the only family in society to act the way that they do	
Context			
54	1912	The play is set in 1912, two years before World War One. There were rumblings of war but many refused to believe that this was likely. Heavily industrial society where Capitalism dominated. Strong social divide between rich and poor.	
55	1945	Two World Wars have happened since 1912 that has reshaped society. Socialism has become more prominent in society. Women have gained more respect and rights within society.	
56	J.B. Priestley	The writer of the play. He is a Socialist who was an influential member in establishing the Labour party. During World War 2 he ran a political broadcast in which he promoted Socialism and criticised Capitalism.	
57	Bildungsroman	A bildungsroman is a coming-of-age story. Arguably, we would say that An Inspector Calls is Sheila's Bildungsroman in which she learns her own worth and responsibility.	
58	Sonderfahngliste	Hitler produced a list of influential figures within the UK who he would arrest should he take over this country. On this list of influential figures was J.B.Priestley which highlights the power and respect that he had in society.	
59	Theory of eternal recurrence	Ouspensky established a theory of eternal recurrence in which he believe that there can be moments of time in which people are trapped and forced to repeat until they learn from it. This could be connected to the text with the phone ringing at the start and the end.	
60	Time Travel	J.B. Priestley was fascinated by the concept of time travel. If he could travel in time to a fixed point, he may well have chosen 1912 in the hopes to educate members of society in the same manner the Inspector does to prevent future wars.	