

## “Do Now” Work

Description of Birling	Quotation
Worried about his social status	"provincial in his speech" and his wife is his "social superior" but tells Gerald he may get a "knighthood". He worries that Lady Croft thinks Gerald may have done "better" than marrying Sheila. He "clearly relaxes" when Edna leaves.
Sycophantic	"it's exactly the same port as your father gets."
Self-important	Repetition of "I" - "I'm talking as a hard, headed practical man of business."
Selfish	"A man has to look after himself..."
No sense of responsibility	"Community and all that nonsense."
Personifies capitalism	The engagement is "one of the happiest nights" of his life, but it is because "Crofts and Birlings" will be "working together".
Patronising	"You two young fellows"
Tension with Eric, his son	Eric: Yes, I know - but still - Birling: Just let me finish, Eric
Wrong about history (dramatic irony)	"Titanic... unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable."

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

How does Priestley present **Arthur Birling** in *An Inspector Calls*?

[30 marks]

AO4 [4 marks]

How does Priestley present **selfishness** in *An Inspector Calls*?

[30 marks]

AO4 [4 marks]

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.

Through his selfishness and self-important nature, Birling personifies capitalism. When speaking of Gerald and Sheila's engagement, he says that this is "one of the happiest nights of [his] life" but this is actually because it will mean the merging of "Crofts and Birling" rather than the joy a marriage would naturally bring to the family. Birling describes himself as "a hard-headed practical business man" (notice the similarity to hard-hearted) and believes a "man has to make his own way". Priestley uses dramatic irony to make Birling look stupid and therefore belittle ~~the views of~~ capitalists. He says that the Titanic is "unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable" & that war is "impossible" and "nonsense" and there will be no more "Capital versus labour agitations" - all of these happened and so makes Birling's view unreliable. This would have been particularly powerful with the original 1946 audience who had just lived through two world wars and the strikes and Titanic sinking would have been, for some of the audience, in their lifetime. Priestley is criticising this complacent mind set and Birling represents a section of society that thought it was indestructible.

→ **Technical term**

→ **Context**

**embedded quotation**

**WWW:** short, integrated quotations  
 uses technical terms that help the analysis - e.g.  
 dramatic irony  
 relates to the context - 1946 audience

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

Read up to page 20.

## “Do Now” Work

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

1. Why did Mr Birling sack Eva Smith?

In Silence Please

 **BOURNVILLE**  
SCHOOL

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

### **Eva Smith**

What is the significance of this name in 1945?

Eva Smith's timeline: 'A CHAIN OF EVENTS'



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September  
1910

Sacked from  
Birling and Co.

April  
1912

Commits  
suicide

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

1. What does Mr Birling say about responsibility (page 14)?
2. What does Mr Birling think his "duty" (page 15) is? What does this suggest about him?
3. Why does Mr Birling think he was "quite justified" (page 17)?
4. How does Eric react (pages 15 and 16)?

**Challenge:** How is this different to how his father reacts?

5. How does Gerald react to Birling's decision to sack Eva (page 17)?
6. How does Priestley create sympathy for the Eva on page 19?

**Challenge:**

1. How does Sheila react to the idea that Eva was "cheap labour" (page 19). Is there a difference in attitude towards Eva between the younger and older generations of the Birling family?
2. How could Sheila be seen as selfish on page 17?

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

1. What does Mr Birling say about responsibility (page 14)?

"If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody... it would be very awkward." Or "I cannot accept any responsibility"

2. What does Mr Birling think his "duty" (page 15) is? What does this suggest about him?

"It's my duty to keep labour costs down." He cares more about profit than his workers which reflect his capitalist views.

3. Why does Mr Birling think he was "quite justified" (page 17)?

"The girl had been causing trouble in the works." He thinks he had a reason to sack her.

4. How does Eric react (pages 15 and 16)? How is this different to how is father reacts?

"Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?" / "He could have kept her on." Eric is sympathetic towards the workers (Eva). He disagrees with his father.

5. How does Gerald react to Birling's decision to sack Eva (page 17)?

"I know we'd have done the same thing." Gerald agrees with Mr Birling.

6. How does Priestley create sympathy for the Eva on page 19?

She had "no relatives to help her, few friends, lonely, half-starved, she was feeling desperate". This list shows that she was vulnerable.

Challenge:

1. How does Sheila react to the idea that Eva was "cheap labour" (page 19). Is there a difference in attitude towards Eva between the younger and older generations of the Birling family?

"But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people". Eric and Sheila show sympathy towards Eva. This might imply that the younger generation are more sympathetic / more willing to change.

2. How could Sheila be seen as selfish on page 17?

"-and I've been so happy tonight. Oh I wish you hadn't told me". This suggests that Sheila is concerned about how Eva's death has affected her, not Eva.



How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

How does Priestley present Arthur Birling in *An Inspector Calls*?

[30 marks]

AO4 [4 marks]

How does Priestley present selfishness in *An Inspector Calls*?

[30 marks]

AO4 [4 marks]

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*

Write a PETER paragraph which answers this question:

**How does Priestley present Mr Birling in 'An Inspector Calls'?**

Priestley presents Birling as a man who doesn't care about the working class as he thinks that if you don't come down "sharply" on "these people, they'd soon be asking for the earth." The noun phrase "these people" implies that Birling sees all of his working as the same, rather than individuals who need to be cared for. Also, it reinforces the idea that Birling sees himself as being above the working class. By using the adverb "sharply", Priestley reinforces this uncaring attitude as it implies that the working class need to be punished. Finally, the idea that the working class will soon be "asking for the earth" is hyperbolic and implies that Birling does not understand the plight of the working class in 1912.

Priestley also presents Mr Birling as...

How does Priestley present Mr Birling?

*Be able to identify the ways Birling is presented and explore the effect.*



