

## “Do Now” Work

How does Priestley show the differences in attitudes between the generations in 'An Inspector Calls'?  
*Be able to identify relevant quotations and explore the effect on the audience.*

1. Which characters learn Priestley's socialist message?
2. Which characters don't learn Priestley's socialist message?
3. Why is there a divide? What does it suggest?

In Silence Please



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1. Which characters learn Priestley's socialist message?

Sheila Birling and Eric Birling

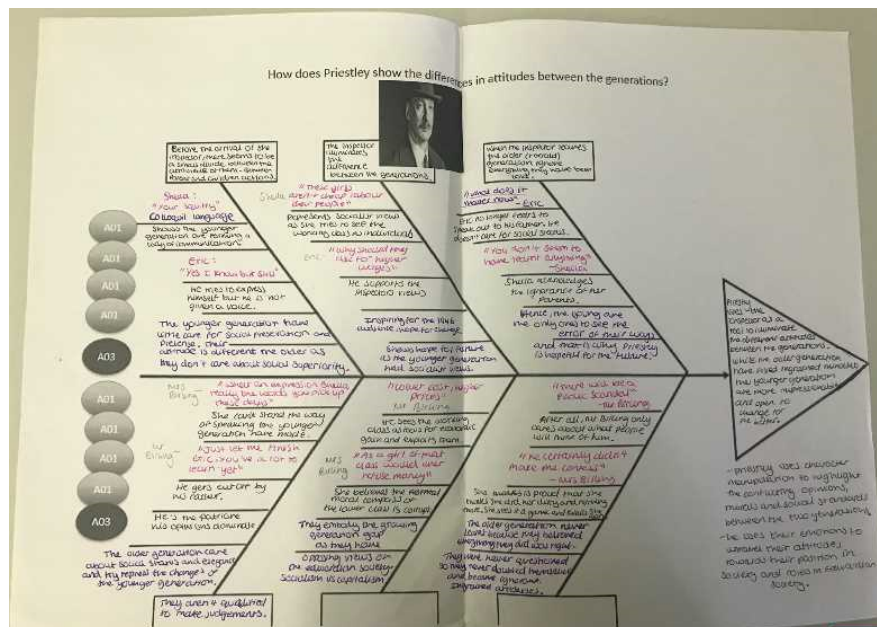
2. Which characters don't learn Priestley's socialist message?

Mr Birling, Mrs Birling and Gerald Croft

3. Why is there a divide? What does it suggest?

The younger generation represent the idea that society can change. Sheila and Eric learn Priestley's socialist message because, as the inspector says, "they're more impressionable". Priestley wanted the younger generation to vote for change - it is easier to change their minds. It also gives hope for the future.

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[illegible]

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Priestley uses the inspector as a tool to illuminate the different attitudes between the generations. While the older generation have a fixed, capitalist mindset, the younger generation are more impressionable and open to change. The inspector plays a pivotal role in creating the generation gap.

*Conceptualised.*

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Before the inspector arrives, there seems to be a small divide between the generations. The younger generation do not have a strong voice. Traditionally, young people are expected to respect and obey their elders. Mr Birling dominates the conversation and expects the others to listen.

The inspector's arrival illuminates the difference between the generations as Sheila and Eric begin to challenge their parents views. For example, Sheila calls her mother's actions "cruel and vile" and tells her father not to "interfere".

When the inspector leaves, the older generation (and Gerald) ignore everything they've been told. Mr Birling mocks the "famous younger generation" who can't take a "joke". The younger generation challenge the older generation's viewpoints.

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Eric: Yes, I know, but still...

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

Mr Birling: It's my duty to keep labour costs down.

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

Eric: Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?

Mrs Birling: In the morning, they'll be as amused as we are.

Sheila: You don't seem to have learnt anything.

Sheila: It frightens me the way you talk.

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"you're squiffy"

"Yes, I know but still..."

"What an expression, Sheila. Really, the things you girls pick up these days."

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

"These girls aren't cheap labour, they're people."

"Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?"

"Mother, I begged and begged you to stop."

"Everyone knows about that horrible old Meggarty."

"Girls of that class"  
 "She had to go."

"Surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty."

"And Eric's one of them."  
 "It isn't true."

"You don't seem to have learnt anything."

"You're beginning to pretend now that nothing's really happened at all."

"There will be a public scandal."

"In the morning, they'll be as amused as we are."

"famous younger generation and they can't even take a joke -"

"It frightens me the way you talk."



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRqPsWJ9Keo>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw4IK0rZYP4>



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conceptualised  
approach to  
task

Priestley explores the idea of a generation gap and the problems that may come with it in *An Inspector Calls*. There seems to be misunderstanding and conflict between the two generations presented in the play, as well as how the younger characters are easily 'moulded' - through either exploitation or 'education', being both more easily controlled and influenced.

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writer's method:  
characterisation

Sheila is a clear example of how the younger generation is presented by Priestley as more open minded and willing to learn.

apt ref

She fully acknowledges that she did something wrong, and that her actions have consequences ("I behaved badly too. I know I did. I'm ashamed of it.") She is also more open to

listening to the opinions than the ones she's been fed by her elders, as even though her parents both seem to almost completely dismiss the Inspector's opinions, by the end of the play, Sheila has gone from being completely ignorant to learning a lesson, forming her own opinions on things like class and responsibility. She even goes as far as to confront her parents on these things (PTO)

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apt reference  
 integrated into  
 interpretation

("You began to learn something. And now you've stopped.... It frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it."), which she would not have thought of doing at the beginning of the play - this further shows how impressionable the younger generation are presented by Priestley. As well as Sheila being taught the idea of questioning authority of older figures, not believing everything her parents tell her.

Sheila also refers to Eva as a person, unlike her father - "but these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people." This shows how she's more compassionate.

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Complete your PETER paragraph from yesterday's lesson.

In Silence Please

 **BOURNVILLE**  
SCHOOL

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Write your own PETER paragraph to answer the question in today's title.

How does Priestley show the differences in attitudes between the generations in 'An Inspector Calls'?  
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The difference between the attitudes between the younger and older generations is illuminated by Inspector Goole. Mr Birling thinks it's his "duty" to "keep labour costs down". By using the noun phrase "labour costs" to refer to his workers, Birling is presented as someone who sees the working class as a commodity - something he can buy and use using his power as a middle class business man. Also, Birling wants to keep the "labour costs down" suggesting that he is more focused on his profit than his workers, highlighting his capitalist viewpoint to the audience.

In contrast, Sheila, a member of the younger generation, disagrees with her father by saying that "these girls aren't cheap labour, they're people". The use of italics to emphasise the noun "people" shows that Sheila is more compassionate than her father as she understands that the workers are not simply something to be bought. It also reinforces to the audience that Sheila is disagreeing with her father, something that would not be expected in Edwardian Britain as it was a patriarchal society. Sheila, unlike her father, seems to have some care for the working class here which is a sign that she will take on the inspector's socialist message about responsibility. As a young female, Sheila was not present for her father's capitalist speeches at the start of the play which could be another reason for her different attitude; she has not been indoctrinated with the ideals of capitalism.

