

An Inspector Calls

- Identify who is speaking and what they are talking about. Each extract includes the Inspector.
- Look at the description of the Inspector and think about what Priestley (the playwright) is trying to convey to the audience through this character.

The Inspector need not be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period. He speaks carefully, weightily and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking. (Act One, pg 11)

1.

Rubbish! If you don't come down sharply on some of these people, they'd soon be asking for the earth.

I should say so!

They might. But after all it's better to ask for the earth than to take it. (Act One)

2.

How do you get on with our Chief Constable, Colonel Roberts?

I don't see much of him.

Perhaps I ought to warn you that he's an old friend of mine, and that I see him fairly frequently. We play golf together sometimes up at the West Brumley.

(dryly) I don't play golf.

I didn't suppose you did. (Act One)

3.

There are a lot of young women living that sort of existence in every city and big town in this country, Miss Birling. If there weren't, the factories and warehouses wouldn't know where to look for cheap labour. Ask your father.

But these girls aren't cheap labour - they're *people*.

(dryly) I've had that notion myself from time to time. In fact, I've thought that it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies in their dingy little back bedrooms. (Act One)

4.

Getting a bit heavy-handed, aren't you Inspector?

Possibly. But if you're easy with me, I'm easy with you.

After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.

Sometimes there isn't as much difference as you would think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line. (Act One)

5.

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

If possible - yes.

Well, we know one young woman who wasn't. (Act Two)

6.

(ignoring this) Now Miss Birling has just been made to understand what she did to this girl. She feels responsible. And if she leaves us now, and doesn't hear any more, then she'll feel she's entirely to blame, she'll be alone with her responsibility, the rest of her life, all tomorrow, all the next night - (Act Two)

7.

(sternly to them both) You see, we have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt. (Act Two)

8.

You seem to have made a good impression on this child, Inspector.

(coolly) We often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable. (Act Two)

9.

(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.

I don't understand you. *(To Inspector)* Do you?

Yes. And she's right. (Act Two)

10.

(rather taken aback) Well, I only did what any employer might have done. And what I was going to say was that I protest against the way in which your daughter, a young unmarried girl, is being dragged into this -

(sharply) Your daughter isn't living on the moon. She's living here in Brumley too. (Act Two)

11.

(angrily, to Inspector) Look here, I'm not going to have this Inspector. You'll apologise at once.

Apologise for what - doing my duty?

No, for being so offensive about it. I'm a public man -

(massively) Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges. (Act Two)

12.

She appealed to your organisation for help?

Yes.

Not as Eva Smith?

No. Nor as Daisy Renton.

As what then?

First, she called herself Mrs Birling.

(astounded) Mrs Birling!

Yes, I think it was simply a piece of gross impertinence - quite deliberate - and naturally that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case.

And I should think so damned impudence!

You admit being prejudiced against her case? (Act Two)

13.

(very deliberately) I think you did something terribly wrong - and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it. I wish you'd been with me to fight at the Infirmary. You'd have seen -

(bursting in) No, no, please! Not that again. I've imagined it enough already.

(venerably) Then the next time you imagine it, just remember that this girl was going to have a child. (Act Two)

14.

Look here, this wasn't Gerald Croft -

(cutting in, sharply) No, no. Nothing to do with him. (Act Two)

15.

That doesn't make it any the less yours. She came to you for help, at a time when no woman could have needed it more. And you not only refused it yourself but saw to it that the others refused it too. She was here, alone, friendless, almost penniless, desperate. She needed not only money but advice, sympathy, friendliness. You've had children. You must have know what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face. (Act Two)

16.

(very sternly) Her position now is that she lies with a burnt-out inside on a slab. *(As Birling tries to protest, turns on him)* Don't hammer and yammer at me again, man. I'm losing all patience with you people. (Act Two)

17.

But if her story was true, if this boy had been giving her stolen money, then she came to you for help because she wanted to keep this youngster out of any more trouble - isn't that so?

Possibly. But it sounded ridiculous to me. So I was perfectly justified in advising my committee not to allow her claim for assistance.

You're not even sorry now, when you know what happened to the girl?

I'm sorry she should have come to me with a horrible end. But I accept no blame for it at all.

Who is to blame then?

First, the girl herself. (Act Two)

18.

(grimly) Don't worry, Mr Birling. I shall do my duty. *(He looks at his watch).*

(triumphantly) I'm glad to hear it.

No hushing up, eh? Make an example of the young man, eh? Public confession of responsibility - um? (Act Two)

19.

(cutting in smoothly) Just a minute, Mr Birling. There'll be plenty of time, before we're gone, for you all to adjust your family relationships. But now I must hear what your son has to tell me. *(Sternly, to the three of them)* And I'll be obliged if you'll let us get on without any further interruptions. (Act Three)

20.

Well, I'm old enough to be married, aren't I, and I'm not married, and I hate these fat old tarts round the town - the ones I see some of your respectable friends with -

(angrily) I don't want any of that talk from you -

(very sharply) I don't want of it from either of you. Settle it afterwards. (Act Three)

21.

(cutting in) And my trouble is - that I haven't much time. I shall be able to divide the responsibility between you when I've gone. (Act Three)

22.

(taking charge, masterfully) Stop!
They are suddenly quiet, staring at him.
And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. You don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself - and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. *(He looks from one to the other of them angrily.)* But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did, Mr Birling. You turned her away when she most needed help. You refused her even the pitiable little bit of organised charity you had in your power to grant her. Remember what you did - (Act Three)

23.

You helped - but didn't stop. *(Rather savagely, to Birling)* You started it. She wanted twenty-five shillings a week instead of twenty-two and sixpence. You made her pay a heavy price for that. And now she'll make you pay a heavy price still.

(unhappily) Look, Inspector - I'd give thousands - yes, thousands -

You're offering the money at the wrong time, Mr Birling. *(He makes a move as if concluding the session, possibly shutting up notebook etc. Then surveys themardonically)* No, I don't think any of you will forget. Nor that young man, Croft, though he at least had some affection for her and made her happy for a time. Well, Eva Smith's gone. You can't do her any more harm. You can't do her any good now, either. You can't even say 'I'm sorry, Eva Smith.' (Act Three)

24.

But, just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone - but 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, and what we think and say and do. 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. (Act Three)