‘An Inspector Calls’ **EXAM ESSENTIALS**

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| **Arthur Birling** - **greed**   * ‘Just a knighthood of course’ (to Gerald) * ‘The Germans don’t want war’. Dramatic irony. * ‘Look Inspector, I’d give thousands, thousands…’   **Status** important. Self-made man. Represents patriarchal attitudes & capitalism. Hubris. Tries to bribe Inspector at end. | **Sybil Birling** - **pride**   * ‘-Girls of that class!’ (Eva) * ‘You’re behaving like a hysterical child’ (to Sheila) * ‘a piece of gross impertinence – quite deliberate’ (about Eva)   Importance of **etiquette**, ‘proper’ behaviour.  Arguably sheltered/naïve. Superior. Thinks lower class should show respect. | **Eric Birling** - **lust**   * ‘Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages’ * ‘I hate those fat old tarts’ * ‘It’s what happened to the girl and what we all did that matters’   Slightly **distanced** at start (seated downstage)  Drunk (‘you’re squiffy’). Hints of anger & sexual violence. Changes at end | **Sheila Birling** - **jealousy**   * ‘these girls aren’t cheap labour, they’re people’ * ‘she was very pretty’ * ‘It’s you two who are being childish – trying not to face the facts’   Represents **typical upper-middle class woman**. Arguably trapped by gender conventions. Shows regret: breaks free |
| **Gerald Croft** - **adultery**   * ‘For God’s sake – don’t say anything to the Inspector’ * ‘We’re respectable citizens not criminals’ * ‘Everything’s all right now Sheila. What about this ring?’   Represents **aristocracy** & privilege. Surface image of **respectability**, humility, false modesty. Doesn’t change: status quo kept. | **Edna the parlourmaid**   * ‘Ma’am’, ‘sir’ * ‘Please, sir, an inspector’s called”/ ‘It’s Mr Croft’ * “‘All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light.”   Represents the **invisible** **working-class**. Expected to silently serve. Symbolically lets Inspector in (working class brings social change) | **Inspector Goole** -**morality**   * ‘burnt her inside out, of course’/ ‘chain of events’ * ‘We don’t live alone. We are members of one body’ * ‘If men will not learn that lesson, they will be taught it in fire & blood & anguish   Role of **catalyst**: brings change reveals hidden secrets. God-like. Ghost? Could represent voice of Priestley/ morality/1945 | **Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton**   * ‘a lively, good-looking girl’ - Mr Birling * ‘in a way she treated me - as if I were a kid’ Eric * ‘there are millions & millions of Eva Smiths…’   Represents the **universal oppression** and **suffering** of working-class women. Spirited. Rebels against social expectations. |

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| Stage Directions:   * **Props show wealth** & status: champagne glasses * ‘heavily comfortable but not cosy and home-like’ – **suggests trapped by social status & tradition**. | Lighting significance:   * ‘Lighting should be **pink & intimate’: nostalgic**, rose-tinted view of life * ‘brighter & harder when Inspector arrives’: family ‘crimes’ will be revealed | Dramatic Irony:   * ‘The Titanic, unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable’: **emphasises hubris & entitlement** of higher classes. Makes reader feel outraged & judge Birling | Use of Time:   * Play ends ‘full circle’: mankind doesn’t change. Idea of **time repeating until lessons learned** * Inspector arrives as Birling gives capitalist view |



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| Disinfectant motif:  Motif of poison (bleach) represents **toxic class structure** harming working classes. But fresh start? | The ring motif:  **Ring symbolises tradition,** patriarchy, ownership of women. Sheila returns ring. Eva refuses Eric | Form/Genre of play:  **Morality play** exploring ideas of right & wrong. Also ‘**Whodunnit**’ crime: popular genre at the time | Set Design/doors:  Closed doors can represent barriers. Dining room e**nd Act 1** ‘**door slowly opens’: truth is coming out**. |

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| **Metaphor of ‘walls’**: symbolises class barriers /tradition. ‘Mother, you mustn’t try to **build up a kind of wall** between us & that girl’. | **Repetition Eva as ‘pretty’**:  Gendered world: women judged on looks. **Eva exploited** | **Repetition ‘of course’**: Goole echoes Mr B’s use of ‘of course’ exposes **inevitability** Eva’s death |

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| START of play: **false appearance** of ‘perfect’, idealistic upper-middle class family. Priestley encourages 1945 audience to judge excessive wealth & façade of respectability. **Foreshadowing**: Mr Birling ‘as long as we…don’t…start a public scandal’ ‘Well?’ at end of Act1 echoes voice of audience questioning the family. | HEART of play: **CONTRAST** of reactions of older & younger. Mrs B’s **wall of superiority**: ‘a trifle impertinent’ (to Goole) ‘**You and I aren’t the same people who sat down to dinner here**’, (Sheila to Gerald) signals moment of hope for next generation if honest & open and if gender/social walls broken. | END of play: Act 3 builds to a **climax of Birling façade destroyed**: Mrs B ‘very distressed’, Mr B’s bribery offer, Eric ‘breaking point’. Inspector’s speech: moment **possible redemption** but Mr & Mrs B revert to earlier roles.  Gerald’s key role in ignoring lesson (protecting his privilege). End call =  ‘**they stare guiltily & dumbfounded’** |