

Five key things about Inspector Goole

1. His **main function** is to present Priestley's ideas about **social justice**.
2. He makes a powerful **speech** about **social responsibility**.
3. The Inspector presents **Eva Smith's story** methodically, with the help of a **photograph(s)** and her **diary**.
4. He shows how the **Birlings** and **Gerald** played an **important part** in Eva Smith's **death**, either unintentionally or through their cruelty or meanness.
5. His **origins** are unknown. He may be a **supernatural figure** or a **hoax** – someone/something seeking **vengeance for the poor**.

What do we learn about the Inspector at the start of the play?

- He interrupts the Birlings' celebratory dinner.
- He cuts an impressive figure that attracts attention.
- The Inspector has called at the Birlings to investigate the suicide of a young woman.
- Initially, he is polite but reserved towards Mr Birling.
- He is not influenced by Mr Birling's attempts to impress or bully him.



How does the Inspector behave as the play develops?

- The Inspector does not change his viewpoint.
- He is increasingly in control of events, and is completely in charge by Act Three.
- He grows impatient with Mr Birling – for example, when he snaps at him for interrupting (end of Act Two).
- He shows no sympathy for Mrs Birling, even when she realises that she has lost a potential grandchild (start of Act Three).
- He has little sympathy for the other characters, except when Sheila accepts the blame for Eva's death (Act Two), when he acknowledges that Gerald treated Eva kindly (Act Three) and when Eric says he needs a drink (start of Act Three).

Five key quotations

1. His gaze: '*a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking*' (stage directions, Act One)
2. His role: '*It's my duty to ask questions.*' (to Mr Birling, Act One)
3. On Eva/Daisy: '*She wanted to end her life. She felt she couldn't go on any longer.*' (to Sheila, Act One)
4. A voice for the poor: '*all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do*' (Act Three)
5. Rhetorical language: '*We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.*' (Act Three)

Note it!

Note the clue to the Inspector's identity in his name, 'Goole'. It suggests the word 'ghoul', meaning a ghost, or someone who has a gruesome interest in death.

Exam focus

How can I write about Inspector Goole's message? AO2

You can comment on how Priestley uses language to present Inspector Goole as a voice for the poor.

When the Inspector delivers his monologue in Act Three, he reminds the Birlings that people like Eva Smith *are all intertwined with our lives*. The Inspector is warning that the Birlings must not think only about themselves and their family, but must care for the wider community, particularly the poor. Priestley's purpose is to remind the audience of this.

Identifies use of literary technique

Quotation embedded in the text

Detailed explanation

Explains Priestley's greater purpose

Now you try!

Finish this further paragraph about Priestley use of language. Use one of the quotations from the list.

In addition, the Inspector repeats words for rhetorical impact in his monologue. For example, the word

Five key things about the theme of social responsibility

1. **Social responsibility** is the central **theme** of the play, and is closely related to the themes of **morality and judgment** and **inequality**.
2. For **Priestley**, social responsibility meant acting for the **benefit** of **everyone in society**.
3. Through the **Inspector**, Priestley delivers a powerful **political message** about social responsibility.
4. **Eva Smith** is the **symbol** of the poor who are **denied social justice**.
5. The characters' **failure** to demonstrate social responsibility led to **the death of Eva Smith**.

What does social responsibility mean to the characters?

- Mr Birling believes his responsibilities are only to himself and his family, to keep his company profitable and, perhaps, to pay Edna's wages.
- Mrs Birling believes that the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation should only give help to the people who are poor through no fault of their own.
- Initially, Sheila and Eric are unaware of how the poor struggle.
- Gerald agrees with Mr Birling that company profits are more important than factory workers' welfare, but he pities Eva/Daisy.



How do these views change as a result of the Inspector's visit?

- Mr and Mrs Birling's views harden. However, their sense of superiority is disturbed by the Inspector's visit and they fear for their social position.
- Sheila undergoes the greatest change and becomes fully aware of what social responsibility means.
- Eric's attitude changes, but his irresponsibility towards Eva results in a sense of guilt, anger and hopelessness rather than a clear determination to change his ways.
- Gerald is troubled by his own behaviour, but is not changed by the Inspector's arguments.

Four key quotations

1. Mr Birling's selfish interests: **'a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too'** (Act One)
2. The Inspector's advice: **'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'** (Act One)
3. Sheila's changing attitude: **'Miss Birling has just been made to understand what she did to this girl. She feels responsible.'** (Inspector Goole, Act Two)
4. The consequences of ignoring social responsibility: **'they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish'** (Inspector Goole, Act Three)

Note it!

Note how divisions grow (for example, between Sheila and Gerald in Act Two) as each character responds to the idea of social responsibility.

Exam focus

How can I write about social responsibility? AO2

You can show how Priestley uses emotive language to discuss this theme.

Priestley gives the Inspector a powerful **metaphor** for his final speech. **The Inspector says that if we do not take social responsibility for each other then 'fire and blood and anguish' will follow.** **By this, Priestley means conflict, whether in the form of social disorder or as war.** **He uses these three nouns to create a forceful visual image of destruction and death, to give impact to the Inspector's warning.**

Appropriate mention of literary technique

Example of metaphor

Explanation

Analysis and purpose of metaphor

Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about Sheila's sense of social responsibility. Use one of the quotations from the list.

Sheila's transformation is central to the theme. When the Inspector says