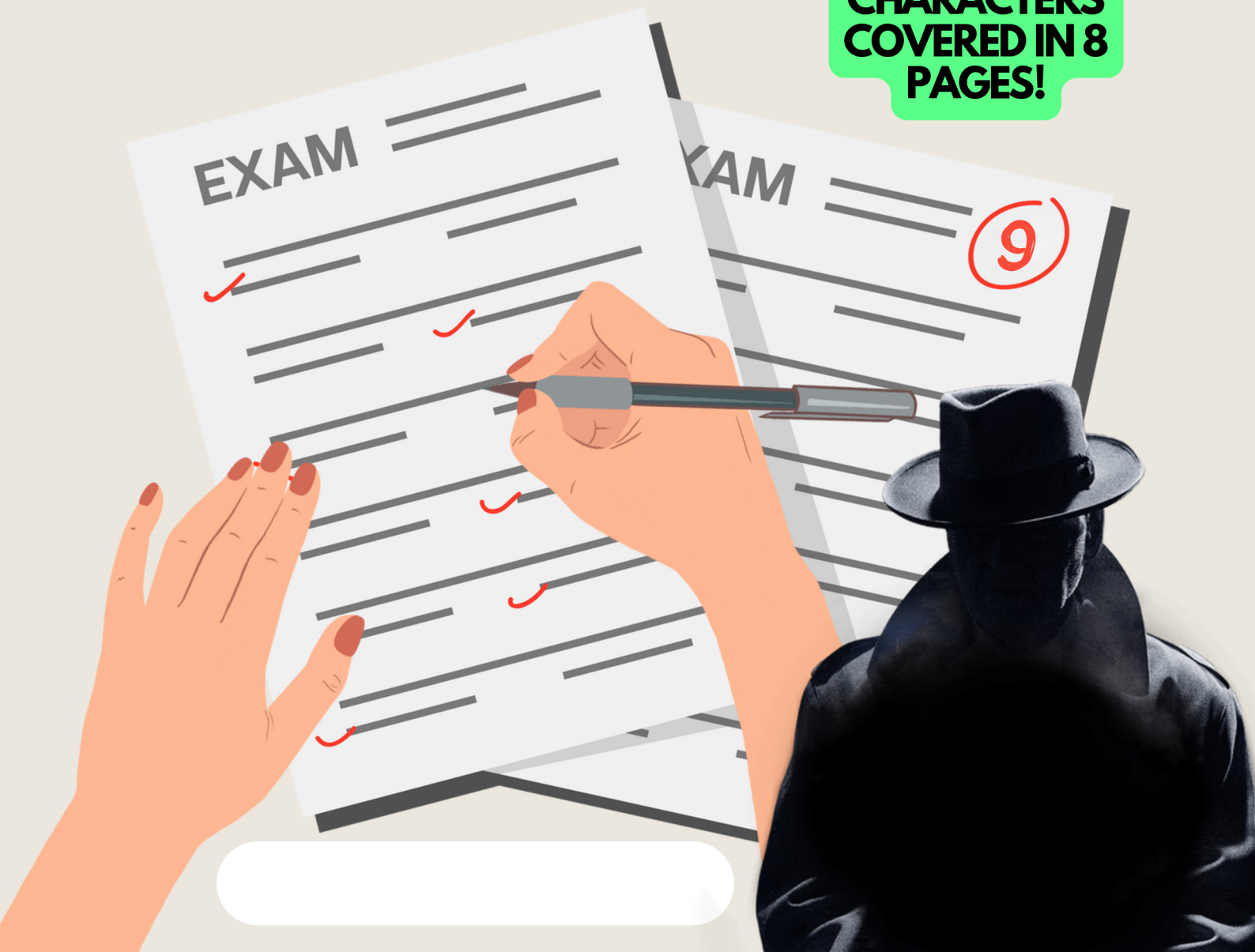


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AQA GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

AN INSPECTOR CALLS NOTEBOOK

THEMES &
CHARACTERS
COVERED IN 8
PAGES!



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RESPONSIBILITY

TIMELINE THROUGH THE ACTS

Act 1 →

- Birling: dismisses idea of responsibility ("If we were all responsible...").
- Sheila: begins to feel guilt ("At least I'm trying to tell the truth").

Act 2 →

- Inspector: stresses privilege = responsibility ("Public men... responsibilities as well as privileges").

Act 3 →

- Inspector: collective duty ("We are members of one body").
- Eric: admits guilt ("We did her in alright").

CHARACTER RESPONSIBILITY

The Inspector

- Priestley's mouthpiece → preaches social responsibility.
- Argues wealth/power = duty to protect vulnerable.
- Final speech warns of "fire, blood and anguish" if society ignores duty.

Mr & Mrs Birling

- Represent selfish older generation.
- Arthur: sacked Eva, values business > workers.
- Sybil: refused charity help, condemned Eva.
- Both justify actions as "duty", refuse blame.

Sheila

- Feels guilt for sacking Eva.
- Learns lesson, symbolises younger generation's change.
- Challenges parents, shows moral growth.

Eric

- Drank, forced himself on Eva, got her pregnant, stole money.
- Accepts guilt → "We did her in alright".
- Represents possibility of change through remorse.

Gerald

- Affair with Eva/Daisy, feels guilt, then dismisses as a hoax.
- Gives Sheila back ring → symbolises real change.

WHY PRIESTLEY USES THIS THEME

Setting/period:

- 1912 = selfish; 1945 = demand for change (welfare state).
- Shows consequences of selfishness & ignorance.

Plot driver:

- Inspector: interrogates, reveals truth, "chain of events" leads to death.

Audience appeal:

- Sheila/Eric = progressive youth.
- Older gen = criticised for denial of complicity.

CAPITALISM VS SOCIALISM

TIMELINE

Act 1 →

- Birling: "For lower costs and lower prices" → profit > people.
- Titanic speech = symbol of arrogance.
- Inspector: "It's better to ask for the earth than to take it".

Act 2 →

- Mrs Birling: money = worth; dismisses Eva's claim.

Act 3 →

- Inspector: "We are members of one body" → collective responsibility.

CHARACTERS

The Inspector (Socialism)

- Mouthpiece for Priestley's socialist ideology.
- Stresses collective responsibility: "chain of events".
- Final speech warns of consequences if society ignores duty.

Mr Birling (Capitalism)

- Birling: "For lower costs and lower prices" → profit > people.
- Gerald = selfish, exploits Eva but denies responsibility.

Eva Smith (Socialism)

- Hardworking, exploited, sacked, denied help.
- Sheila: "chain of events" of capitalism leads to death.

Why Priestley uses this theme

- 1912 = selfish; 1945 = demand for change (welfare state).

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TIMELINE

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INSPECTOR GOOLE



OVERVIEW

- May not be a real inspector → possibly supernatural/ghostly.
- Moral voice of the play, challenges the Birlings + audience.
- Promotes social responsibility + Priestley's socialist message.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Prophetic – warns of “fire, blood and anguish.”
- Imposing/commanding – dominates conversations.
- Moral authority – judges behaviour.
- Emotive – graphic imagery (“burnt-out inside on a slab”).
- Mysterious – omniscient knowledge, origin unknown.

ROLE & THEMES

- Mouthpiece for Priestley → exposes selfishness of upper class.
- Represents socialism vs capitalism, responsibility, guilt.
- Purpose = to teach a lesson → younger generation accept, older resist.

INSPECTOR'S IMPORTANCE

- Chain of events: links each Birling to Eva → shows interconnectedness.
- Generational divide: Sheila/Eric receptive; Mr & Mrs Birling reject change.
- Voice of the oppressed: speaks for “millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths.”
- Audience impact: Priestley uses Inspector as a direct challenge to 1945 viewers.

LANGUAGE & TECHNIQUES

- Emotive language → evokes sympathy (Eva as “pretty” and “lively”).
- Harsh imagery → forces discomfort (“burnt-out corpse”).
- Stage directions → “sharp bell cuts Birling's arrogance”.
- Blunt tone → direct, no politeness.
- Shock tactics → twists words on characters (Sybil condemns her son).

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Act 1 → reveals Birling + Sheila's role in Eva's downfall.
- Act 2 → exposes Gerald's affair + Sybil's cruelty.
- Act 3 → Eric's confession, delivers moral sermon.
- Catalyst for change → he himself does not change.

ARTHUR BIRLING



OVERVIEW

- Former Lord Mayor + magistrate, wealthy factory owner.
- Patriarch of Birlings → symbol of capitalism, selfishness of generation.
- Key traits: ambitious, stubborn, anxious, selfish, lacks empathy.
- Symbolises: wealthy capitalist, patriarchal power, older generation resistant to change.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Capitalist greed → views workers as “nonsense”, sacks them for demanding better conditions.
- Ambitious → seeks world's engagement for business, boasts about connecting to golfing elite, Chief Inspector.
- Shows “unsinkable” confidence, foolishness.
- Authority + control → dominates others, repeats his dominance.

ROLE IN PLAY

- Represents capitalism + conservatism → Priestley's caricature of a capitalist.

LANGUAGE & TECHNIQUES

- “Wrong” (nuclear war) → arrogance + arrogance.
- “I am not a politician” → dismissive tone, long phrases, dismissive phrases (“nonsense”, “nonsense”).
- “I am a businessman” → shows “new money”, social insecurity.
- “I am a businessman” → shows “new money”, social insecurity.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Act 1: Arrogant businessman, rejects responsibility for Eva.
- Act 2: Defends Gerald + Sybil, protects reputation.
- Act 3: Learns nothing → relieved Inspector was a “hoax”, obsessed with knighthood + avoiding scandal.

SYBIL BIRLING



Represents cruelty, arrogance + hypocrisy of wealthy upper/middle class. Protects old generation + capitalist ideals, opposes Inspector's socialist message.

OVERVIEW

- On cold, calculating, superior, obsessed.
- On Eva's death → denies her death.
- Key traits: Stubborn, Selfish, Hypocritical, Proud, Cold.
- Themes: Capitalism vs Socialism | Generational Conflict | Social Inequality.

- Her social position: prizes class above humanity (even rebukes husband for praising cook).
- Hypocritical: condemns poverty but protects her own son when guilty.
- Older generation: refuses change, rejects responsibility, contrasts with Sheila & Eric.
- Charity irony: runs women's charity yet uses it to preserve her own status + punish Eva.

LANGUAGE & TECHNIQUES

- Dramatic irony: audience realises Eric is father before her → emphasises blindness.
- Dismissive language: calls Eva “girl of that class”, refuses to use her name.
- Stage directions: “haughtily”, “very sharply”, “bitterly” → cold + superior tone.
- Key quotes:
 - “Girls of that class...” (Act 2)
 - “Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility” (Act 2, irony).
 - “I think she had only herself to blame” (Act 2).
 - “I accept no blame for it at all” (Act 3).

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Act 1: Prejudiced + cold, dismissive of Eva + Inspector.
- Act 2: Abuses charity power, calls Eva “disgusting”, blames father of child.
- Act 3: Shocked Eric is the father, but still rejects responsibility. By end, celebrates “hoax” idea, pleased she was right.

Final point: never changes → Priestley shows danger of clinging to outdated values.

CHARACTER

RESPONSIBILITY 🌍

Birling: "A man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own." 📦

- A02: Rule-of-three → selfish capitalist ideology.
- A03: 1912 = individualism, 1945 audience = socialist welfare state emerging.
- Essay use: Birling epitomises selfish capitalism → Priestley tears this view down.

Eric: "We did her in all right." ⚡

- A02: Collective pronoun "we" → shared guilt. Colloquial "all right" jars with tragedy.
- A03: Reflects post-war collectivism → duty to others.
- Essay use: Eric embodies younger generation accepting blame.

Mrs Birling: "I accept no blame for it at all." ❌

- A02: Declarative → denial + stubbornness.
- A03: Priestley critiques arrogance of pre-war elites ignoring suffering.
- Essay use: Old generation refuse responsibility → contrasts Sheila & Eric.

Inspector: "We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other." 🌐

- A02: Religious imagery (body of Christ) → moral unity.
- A03: Priestley's socialist message to 1945 audience.
- Essay use: Heart of play's moral lesson.

Sheila: "The fact remains that I did what I did. And mother did what she did."

- A02: Anaphora ("did what...") = blunt acceptance of blame.
- A03: Priestley shows young generation taking accountability unlike parents.
- Essay use: Sheila becomes play's voice of reason → contrasts older gen.

Eric: "The money's not the important thing. It's what happened to the girl and what we all owe to her that matters."

- A02: Anti-capitalist money vs morality → values over wealth.
- A03: Priestley critiques capitalist obsession with money on humanity.
- Essay use: Shows socialist priorities → hope for moral reform.

CAPITALISM V SOCIALISM

Birling: "Unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable." 🚢

- A02: Dramatic irony → mo... arrogance, complacency.
- A03: Symbol of capitalist... in 1912 vs lessons of w...
- Essay use: Metaphor for... capitalist ideals.

Inspector: "If men will not learn that lesson, they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish." 🔥

- A02: Tricolon + prophetic tone → evokes WW1 & 2.
- A03: 1945 audience... through both wars... change.
- Essay use: Priestley's warning... dangers of capitalism.

Sheila: "The... labour... people..."

- A02: Contrast: capita... del... ("lab...").
- A03: ...rowing role in workp...
- Essay use: Early... socialism + empas...

Mr Birling,

pr...

- A02: ...position... "ies"
- vs "p... moral vs material duty.
- A03: Attac... "ian"

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CLASS

Sheila: "You mustn't try to build up a wall between us and the..." 🧱

- Metaphor "wall" = class barrier, fore... collapse.
- A03: Wars... own class... audience wanted

... a rejects... change.

Mrs Birling: "Girls of that class..."

- Passive dismissive tone, "that" =... nising.
- ...reflects hypocrisy of... rdian charity system vs... welfare state.
- Essay use: Priestley attacks upper-class prejudice + cruelty.

Mrs Birling: "I wasn't satisfied with the girl's claim – she seemed to me to be not a good case."

- A02: Passive dismissal → "not a good case" dehumanises Eva into a file.
- A03: Priestley exposes hypocrisy of Edwardian charities run by elites.
- Essay use: Shows corruption + cruelty of class-based "charity."

GENDER 🧑🧒

Gerald: "Everything's all right now, Sheila. What about this ring?" 💍

- A02: Symbol of materialism + patriarchal control.
- A03: Reflects 1912 women's dependence in marriage vs 1945 independence.
- Essay use: Gerald unchanged → highlights hypocrisy of gender roles.

Sheila: "These girls aren't cheap labour – they're people." 🧑🧒 (also in Socialism)

- A02: Contrast in language → objectification vs humanity.
- A03: Shows early challenge to patriarchal capitalism.
- Essay use: Sheila represents feminist/socialist hope.

GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

... on do on the young... impressionable."

- "Impressionable" = youth open to growth vs old stubbornness.
- A03: Priestley's faith in younger gen... st-1945 to reform society.
- Essay use: Reinforces idea that... lies with progressive youth.

... don't understand anything. You... er did." 🧑🧒

- A02: Direct accusation = collapse of parental respect.
- A03: Post-war shift: youth rejecting outdated authority.
- Essay use: Shows generational rift, old values discredited.

“POWER QUOTES BY THEME”

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Z

MR. ZEE'S RESOURCES