

Edexcel English Literature GCSE

An Inspector Calls: Character Profile

Eva Smith

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First Impressions

Character in context

We never find out Eva's true identity within the play. This ambiguity enables her to become a **universal symbol of oppression**. She represents the oppression that both women and the lower classes experienced in early 20th Century society.



The audience learns that all the characters have come into contact with Eva and, together, their actions result in her suicide. The Inspector claims that Eva worked for Mr Birling and was **fired for striking** in favour of fairer wages. Then she worked at a shop, Milwards, where Sheila was **instrumental in her dismissal**. Next, she had a relationship with Gerald, and then Eric, with whom she became **pregnant**. Finally, Eva turned to Mrs Birling's **charity committee** for aid, yet they rejected her, giving her pregnancy outside of wedlock as the reason. She subsequently **committed suicide** by drinking disinfectant two hours before the play begins.

- Eva symbolises the **suffering of the lower-classes**.
- She is the victim of a **patriarchal society** and the **class inequality** which is apparent throughout the social hierarchy of 1912 Britain.
- She **demonstrates** the need for a **welfare state**.

Eva Smith

Priestley uses the name Eva as a reference to Eve, the first woman in the **Biblical** story of the **Garden of Eden**. She was tempted by Satan to eat fruit from the Forbidden Tree which resulted in Adam and Eve being expelled from the Garden of Eden (this expulsion is often called the fall of man).

- Eve is from the Hebrew "**to live**" / "**source of living**" and therefore Eva's suicide is **paradoxical**, as the source of living has given up on existence.
- She is a **symbol of all those living** as Eve is the mother of humanity. Eva is the representation of all humanity, but especially women and those living in poverty.
- While Eve tempted men to corruption through offering Adam the apple in the Garden of Eden, Eva is the **opposite** of this; *she* is corrupted by the *men* in the play.
- She **never appears on stage**, but is the **central figure** around which all of the action spins.

The surname Smith

- Priestley uses "**Smith**" as at the time it was the **most common** surname in Britain and therefore **symbolises** the everyday people of Britain. Eva's story of **poverty and suffering** is the universal story of the common people. This is demonstrated by the Inspector's message that "**there are millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths**".
 - '**Smith**' is a working class name, originating from '**blacksmith**', and Priestley uses this to demonstrate that her class is a **fixed part of her identity and origins**, something that **she can't escape**.



- In using just two names to represent the entire working class, they lose identity as individuals. This suggests these are people that society has forgotten, or has simply ignored from the start.

Daisy Renton

The Inspector suggests that Eva **changed her name** to Daisy Renton. However, desperately looking for a way to absolve himself of guilt, Gerald argues that Eva and Daisy are in fact two different girls and that the Inspector's story isn't true.

Why does Priestley portray Eva under two different names?

Priestley uses this name change to demonstrate how Eva felt the need to change the direction of her life in order to survive in a society that is **hostile towards people like her**.

After trying, and failing (as a result of the Birlings), to earn enough money through 'honest work' she resorts to prostitution which goes against her own **moral principles**.

- The name "**Renton**" is derived from the **verb "rent"**, which was a **euphemism** for prostitution.
- She is forced to **rent herself** to survive, further lowering her standing in society - in a largely Christian world, prostitution (sex outside of marriage) was seen as sinful, and not viewed as a legitimate job.
- Although she is **stigmatised** for resorting to prostitution, the men who use her services are, in a **sexual double standard**, not treated in the same way.
- She is paid for her affection, company and body.

Significance of her death

Eva's death is a necessary indicator of the consequences of the other characters' **immoral actions**. The worst-case scenario of suicide allows the characters and, more importantly, the audience to understand the **fatal** impact of careless **individualism and capitalist attitudes**.

Eva Smith found herself in such a desperate situation that she saw suicide as the only way to end her suffering.

Exam tip -

Using terminology, which you may be unfamiliar with can be scary at first, but once you get the hang of it, this can score you marks for AO2 (subject terminology).

Disinfectant

Priestley evidences that Eva killed herself with "**a lot of very strong disinfectant**" demonstrating the deliberate and meaningful attempt to commit suicide. Perhaps Priestley did this to reveal connotations of **cleansing and purification** that come with disinfectant. The sexual abuse and exploitation that Eva suffered at the hands of Eric and Gerald left her **unclean and violated**. Therefore, she needed to be **purified**.

Priestley uses of **shocking imagery** of drinking disinfectant, which "**burnt her inside out**" to describe her suicide. This associates Eva's death with **hell**. The use of the **violent verb "burnt"** shows the suffering and torture that this death would have caused. The association with hell is linked to the contemporary Christian belief that **suicide is a grave sin**; committing suicide violates



the commandment 'thou shalt not kill', which is punishable by an afterlife in hell. The fact that Eva still chose suicide demonstrates that her life was already a **living hell**, and could imagine nothing worse.

Graphic death

Priestley deliberately uses **graphic language** to describe the gruesome death of Eva in order to awaken the **privileged** upper class audience to the suffering of the working classes.

Priestley uses the character of Eva to **inflict guilt** upon the Birling family to make them repent, change, and ultimately accept responsibility for their actions. He must **emphasise and dramatise** the suffering they caused for the characters to take any notice; the more brutal Eva's suicide, the greater the guilt they should feel.

After Sheila's confession, the Inspector reminds her that Eva "**died in misery and agony – hating life**". The **graphic adjectives** "**misery and agony**" encourage the audience to **empathise** with Eva, as they would **visualise** the pain and suffering she had endured at the hands of the Birlings. Priestley **intensifies** Sheila's guilt as her enjoyment of life is **at the expense of others**.

Eva's death is used by Priestley to highlight to the audience the injustice and inequality among the social classes.

Audience reaction

Why is her identity never revealed?

Priestley does not reveal the identity of Eva Smith as an individual. This allows him to use her as a **symbolic representation of the oppressed working class people (the masses)**.

- If she were given a face, she would become an individual instead of a representation of all who suffer as a result of **class inequality and capitalism**.
- By keeping her faceless, the audience is encouraged to give her the face of whoever they may have personally impacted through **individualistic** actions, allowing them to gain a new outlook on their own actions instead of just condemning the Birlings.

Perhaps Priestley wants the audience to reflect on whether Eva would have suffered to the same degree in their era.

- This is **contextually relevant** as the Labour government was on the brink of revolutionising British society when *An Inspector Calls* was first performed in 1945. The start of the **welfare state** was well under way (liberal reforms in the early 1900s, the [Beveridge Report](#) planning NHS in 1942).
- Therefore, Priestley could be sharing a hopeful message, as the audience should feel optimistic about the improvements society has made since 1912, encouraging them not to fall back to the old ways (like the Birlings do).

Priestley allows the story of Eva's life to be told by other people, encouraging each member of the Birling family to describe their involvement with her in turn. This reflects how her actual life was



controlled and dictated by other people, eventually driving her to take her own life. In doing this, Priestley **symbolises** that the narrative of working class lives are told and controlled by the **upper classes**, **demonstrating** the control that the **upper classes** have over the **working class**.

Relationship with other characters

Parallels to Sheila

Priestley establishes **parallels** between Sheila and Eva to demonstrate that the progression of a woman's life depends entirely on the **family she is born into**. It is important to consider why Priestley portrays **Eva as similar to Sheila**.

- This allows Priestley to comment on the **inequality** within society, as Sheila's life is easy because she is upper-class whereas Eva's life has been full of **suffering** due to being lower-class. This is luck, something they were born into.
- Their **physical descriptions are similar** as Sheila is described as a "**pretty girl in her early twenties**"; while Eva is "**twenty-four**" and "**very pretty**".
- Sheila's looming wedding and respected husband makes her "**very pleased with life and rather excited**" by the future, while Eva was so terrified of what tomorrow held that she killed herself, dying "**hating life**".
- The contrast between the lives of the two young women is emphasised by making them similar in all ways **except class** – even down to the men they are connected to:
 - Sheila is engaged to Gerald, while Eva is exploited by him as a mistress.
 - Sheila is related to (and teases) Eric, while Eva is raped by him.

Exam tip -

You will develop your AO2 for characterisation, if you are able to include a direct comparison between the characters of Eva and Sheila.

Because class is what **differentiates them**, the audience is given the impression that **class**



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determines that Sheila will live an easy, carefree life, while Eva will be subject to constant suffering. This means that Priestley is able to use Sheila as evidence of the **divisive nature** of social class and how it creates **undeserved privilege and undeserved persecution**. Priestley uses this parallel between characters to further his agenda of condemning the **class system**.

Exploited by the patriarchy

The way in which Eva is treated by the male characters within the play reflects the patriarchal society of the time. Her value to the male characters is merely a **hedonistic** (pleasure-seeking) way of fulfilling their **lustful desires**. They do not value her as an individual, but rather as how she can further their own business success or sexual desires.



Eva is female and working class, and therefore this makes her among one the most **inferior demographics** in society. She was **sexually exploited** and **abused** by Eric, who raped her. Eva's vulnerability and **economic disempowerment** (lack of money) was also **taken advantage of** by Gerald, who kept her as a mistress. Mr Birling mistreated Eva **commercially** through **exploiting her labour**, paying her very low wages.

- The male characters see her as a **tool**, an **object**. This is evident through their descriptions of Eva as "**cheap labour**" or a "**good sport**".
- Alderman Meggerty had "**wedged her into a corner with that obscene fat carcass of his**". Eva was trapped in that corner by Meggerty, just as the upper class **traps her and confines** her to the working class.

Gerald's exploitation of Eva as his mistress

Priestley explores how Eva is kept by Gerald in a **possessive fashion** as his mistress. It is important to understand how Gerald's saving of Eva from the Palace Bar is in fact a **superficial rescue**; it a mere **substitution of abusers**.

Gerald's **lustful desires** are evidenced through his **predatory description** of Eva/Daisy, who is "**young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down there**". The **adjective "fresh"** bears connotations of **desire and fertility**, as Gerald views her with sexual desire from the start. Describing her like food makes it clear that he sees her as an **object or possession**. Gerald's **misogynistic objectification** evidences his sinful lust.

Priestley also includes **connotations of purity** as she is "**out of place**", which is possibly a **euphemism** for her still being a virgin. This is reinforced by Eva only recently turning to prostitution. She appeals to him because she **seems innocent** and sinless, which allows Gerald to disguise his use of prostitution from himself, as Eva's **innocence** is refreshing for Gerald, who is used to the "**hard-eyed**" prostitutes of Palace Bar.

Exam tip -
For visual learners, see Figure 1 at the bottom of the document for a diagram of the social hierarchy

Benefits of her relationship with Gerald (alternative interpretation)

It could be argued that Eva actually benefited from her relationship with Gerald and that they had a **genuine connection**. The Inspector evidences Eva's **joy** in their relationship as "**she'd been happier than she'd ever been before**". Furthermore, Gerald showed Eva some affection and kindness, as he listened to her and helped her in a time of need.

Gerald differs in his treatment of Eva as "**he at least had some affection for her and made her happy for a time**". However, his help was **self-serving**. He is a self-professed "**wonderful fairy prince**" to Eva. Gerald admits to enjoying his time with Eva and being her **knight in shining armour**.

- Having a relationship with Eva appealed to Gerald at the time, and it was **convenient** to help her as he was able to use her to **satisfy himself sexually** whenever he pleased.
 - This allowed him to feel important – like a prince and a saviour.



Yet, once it was no longer convenient for Gerald, and he could no longer use the excuse of being "**busy at the works**" instead of meeting Sheila, he says that he "**broke it off**" with Eva. The use of the **verb "broke"** suggests a sudden, but casual, action which requires little thought.

Eva is grateful to Gerald for his help as he provided her with necessities for her survival; financial aid, shelter, and more importantly, a **degree of real human affection**. Such basic needs bring her happiness because their fulfilment is foreign to her. She is not used to being treated with any **compassion**, so a time when she is cared for constitutes the happiest of her life. Eva was "**intensely grateful**" for his help. Yet she didn't expect to have any lasting kindness as she "**knew it couldn't last**" due to their class differences. It was a novelty for her to feel treated like a human being.

Perhaps Gerald did love her and it wasn't just exploitation. This is evidenced as Gerald leaves, almost immediately after the Inspector asks "**were you in love with her?**" and Sheila exclaims "**just what I was going to ask!**" Him leaving could be to avoid the question, which he doesn't answer, meaning that he may have **genuinely loved her**. It may also indicate that he is **overwhelmed by emotion**, having now learned of her death and of his role in it, demonstrating that he does care for her.

Emotional reaction to death

Gerald is clearly moved by the news of Eva's death, feeling **guilt and remorse**.

- Gerald's **staggered and interrupted speech** reveals the true sadness that he feels at her death, as he stammers, "**I – well, I've suddenly realised – taken it in properly – that she's dead**".
 - Gerald, however, is clearly attempting to suppress this emotion, eventually "**pulling himself together**", as Priestley describes in the **stage directions**.
- In British patriarchal society of 1912, it was not socially acceptable for men to show their emotions, as being sensitive was considered a **feminine trait** and was seen to **undermine their masculinity** and authority.
 - Despite this stigma, he is unable to entirely conceal his emotions, perhaps demonstrating that he had genuine feelings for her.
- It is clear that until this point Gerald hadn't expressed much remorse over their former relationship.
 - Until it directly affects them, the upper classes ignore the consequences of their actions, allowing them to continue **living a life of luxury without guilt**.



Final impressions

Victim of capitalism

Eva is portrayed by Priestley as a victim of the **capitalist attitudes** held by the upper classes. It is important to understand why Priestley presents Eva as a **victim** throughout the play.

- Eva is a working class woman and suffers because of it.
- She was fired for asking for a living wage, which is a reasonable request. However, the strikers are not protected and are therefore exploited.
 - All that Eva did was ask for higher wages and the Inspector points out that "***it's better to ask for the earth than to take it***".
 - Mr Birling's **stinginess** is forgotten when there is a **chance of criminal prosecution**, as Mr Birling claims that he would "***[unhappily] give thousands - yes, thousands ---***".
 - The Inspector reminds Mr Birling that he is "***offering the money at the wrong time***"; Eva is dead, and he is only moved to help now that his involvement means that his own comfort is threatened, revealing his selfishness.
- All that workers can do is ask for better rights but even this is denied of them as they have no voice.
 - Priestley **reflects this** through the character of Eva, who also has **no voice and no presence in the play**.
 - She is **powerless** to change anything as her story is being told by the upper-class.
 - In a socialist world, this is not so much the case, demonstrated by the **Labour government**, who would go on to set up trade unions and protect the rights of workers (as the audience knows).



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Within the play, Eva is essentially **killed by capitalism**. Through her, Priestley demonstrates the **fatal consequences** of living by such an ideology in Britain.

Victim of society's prejudice and individualism

Priestley portrays Eva as a victim of this **patriarchal society's classist prejudice** and lack of **social responsibility**. Priestley uses Eva as a **vehicle** for exposing the **harmful individualism of capitalism**.



Mrs Birling's treatment of Eva

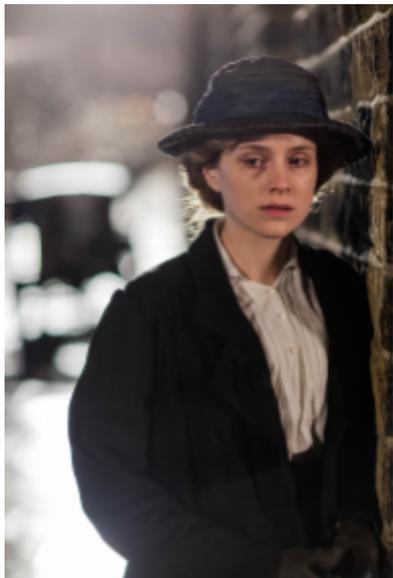
The character of Eva is used by Priestley, to convey the notion that **poverty is an unnecessary evil** and a **symptom of capitalist corruption**. This is evidenced through Mrs Birling who is supposed to be a "**prominent member of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation**" and therefore a moral person. Moreover, she claims "**with dignity**" that they "**we've done a great deal of useful work for deserving cases**". However, Priestley's use of the **stage direction "with dignity"** suggests that Mrs Birling's role is not held out of care or compassion for the poor, but as a way to gain influence and status within society.

- ❖ Contextual note: 1912 was before women could vote, but wealthy women could hold positions on councils and committees.

Through Mrs Birling's claim that the charity is only for "**deserving cases**", Priestley highlights that financial aid given out is at the **discretion of the upper classes**. This is another example of how the upper class **exert control over** the lower classes. Mrs Birling is **prejudiced** against Eva's story due to her **class**, declaring that "**a girl of that sort would [not] ever refuse money**". This is something she even admits to when pointing out Eva's "**impertinence**" (calling herself Mrs Birling) as "**one of the things that prejudiced me against her**". This demonstrates Mrs Birling's hypocrisy, accusing Eva of the **greed** her own family embodies.

Victim of gender prejudice and patriarchal values

Priestley conveys the concept that Eva is the most **oppressed demographic** in society; she is a lower-class woman. It is important to understand why Priestley presents Eva as a victim of a **patriarchal** society.



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Objectification

Eva is **objectified**. In 20th Century British society, a woman's value was based a lot in their appearance. This is evident as Eva is referred to as "**pretty**", "**very pretty**" "**a lively, good-looking girl**" by Gerald and Eric. Her **physical appearance**, rather than her personality, is what matters to them.

Gerald dehumanises Eva, referring to her as "**the girl**", erasing her individual identity. Therefore, it is clear that Gerald **doesn't recognise her as an individual**, as he doesn't dignify Eva/Daisy with a name, another example of **objectification**.

Transactional language

Priestley uses **transactional language** and the **semantic field of finance** when Gerald describes his relationship with Eva; "**install her**" "**this business**" "**anything in return**". Gerald's use of **business terminology** undermines his claims of caring for her and conflicts with the tone of his story. This **capitalist corruption** of human relationships is reflected through his marriage with Sheila, done for the financial and social benefit of both families.



In a patriarchal society, women have little in the way of value or rights. Their only value is through how they can be exploited to benefit men (be it sexually or as a worker). Therefore, a woman's purpose in society is merely as a transactional piece (owned by their father, then by their husband).

Eric

Eric refers to Eva as "**pretty and a good sport**", which implies that he saw her as a means to **fulfilling his own desires as "good sport"** is a **euphemism** for willing to sleep with him. "**Good sport**" also has **hunting connotations**. Perhaps Priestley does this to demonstrate the **predatory nature** of their relationship as Eva takes on the **symbolism** of **prey**. This is reinforced by Gerald's description of Eva as "**young and fresh**".

Exam tip -

When analysing language techniques, ensure you refer to "Priestley" explicitly. This shows the examiner that you are considering his methods directly.

Eva's relationship with Eric was not consensual, as he confesses "**she didn't want me to go in**", yet she was powerless to prevent him. Priestley describes drunken Eric as "**in that state when a chap easily turns nasty**", implying that male violence is commonplace and accepted in society.

Hypocrisy of the upper classes

Eva is used by Priestley as a **symbol** to highlight the **overt hypocrisy** of the upper classes in their treatment of the lower classes.

Money

Mrs Birling claims that "**a girl of that sort would [not] ever refuse money**", as she assumes that due to her lower class origin, Eva is **inherently greedy**. Despite this, Eva is presented as a **moral force**, who never takes stolen money and won't marry Eric just for his wealth and social status.

- This is **in contrast to Eric**, who steals money (from his own father), despite coming from the upper classes. This makes Mrs Birling's assumption of Eva's greediness **ironic**.
- The Birlings arrange Sheila's marriage for financial gain; in the name of "**lower costs and higher prices**".

Shirking responsibility

This hypocrisy is also demonstrated by Gerald's attempt to escape the group's guilt and responsibility by claiming Eva was many different girls, rather than the same girl. This is despite him **linguistically echoing** Sheila's description of Eva, describing her as "**very pretty**" and having "**big dark eyes**". Furthermore, he recalls her telling him she had a job that she had to "**leave after a strike**" and "**said something about the shop too**".

Therefore, it is obviously clear that the characters are **denying the Inspector's accusations for their own benefit**, in order to continue living as before, without taking responsibility.



Symbolism

Expose the impact of individualism

Priestley uses the character of Eva to force the Birlings to realise that their actions have consequences for which they must take responsibility. Priestley uses Eva to criticise **individualism**.

- All the main characters have impacted Eva, driving her to suicide (except for the Inspector).
- She serves as the Inspector's evidence, an example for why taking responsibility is necessary, exposing the dangers of the **class system**.
 - ◆ This demonstrates that what he is teaching is for the **greater good of society**.
 - ◆ **Structurally**, Priestley shows this through the Inspector's repeated reference to Eva's death and suffering throughout.
- More importantly, the audience is reminded to **connect individualistic** actions to Eva's suffering, **encouraging the audience** to behave more collectively.

Need for welfare

Priestley uses the character of Eva to exhibit the **failure of a capitalist society** in providing for the **working class majority**, rather than just the **elite few**.

- ❖ If the organisations, which are meant to support and protect the needy, are **prejudiced** against them, then there is no way out of **poverty**.
 - Mrs Birling had judged her and decided on how to treat her before even hearing her story.
- ❖ Mrs Birling openly admits to Eva's use of the name 'Mrs Birling' when appealing for help being "**one of the things that prejudiced me against her**", demonstrating that **prejudice** is not something rejected by society, rather that it is acceptable and commonplace.
 - Referring to Eva, simply as a "**girl**" is **condescending** and shows how Mrs Birling **perceives her as lesser and inferior** due to her class.
 - This is supported by her use of the **adjective "impertinent"**, which implies a lack of respect to someone who deserves reverence and therefore it is evident that she views herself as **superior** than Eva.

Context

- ❖ After World War II, many citizens supported a welfare state as government interference in war gave them a taste of it.
- ❖ Priestley **campaigns for the Labour party**; the introduction of the welfare state and trade unions were some of their key policies.

Antithesis (opposite) to her stereotype

Priestley uses the character of Eva to dismiss the **contemporary beliefs** concerning the causes of **poverty**. In his play, Priestley aims to counter the **negative stereotype** of the lower classes. It was commonly believed that **poverty was merely** the result of **poor morals and laziness**, and therefore the poor were not deserving of aid to escape their situation, which the upper classes perceived to be self-inflicted. This is clearly demonstrated when Mrs Birling blames "**first the girl herself**". Despite this, Eva is a stark contrast to the **lower-class stereotype**.



Lazy

Mr Birling's describes Eva as "**a good worker**" and "**lively**", rather than the **lazy and avarice** (greedy) stereotype. Yet, even these **favourable characteristics** are not enough to prevent her falling into poverty as the poor are viewed as "**cheap labour**" and exploited to benefit the wealthy.

Immoral

Priestley uses the character of Eva to **subvert** the idea that the lower classes lack morals. Throughout the play, Eva puts morals before money and even her own survival.

- She refuses to accept money from Eric ("**she wouldn't take any more**") once she finds out it was stolen.
- She refuses to marry Eric despite her pregnancy, as Eric reports that "**(she) said I didn't love her**").

Priestley suggests that she is forced to **immorality** because of the Birlings' actions. After being fired twice, she is forced to prostitute herself in order to survive.

Socialist propaganda

'An Inspector Calls' can be seen as **socialist propaganda** and a criticism of the **capitalist society currently in place**. Priestley uses the play to suggest that under a **socialist government**, Eva wouldn't have suffered to the extent she did as she would have been able to have fulfilled "**a nice little promising life**".

- Her **positive characteristics** of "**lively**" and "**a good worker**" would have been duly rewarded under **socialism** and this would result in a **good standard of living**.
 - Priestley makes it explicit that her traits made her life "**promising**", but this promise cannot be fulfilled in a **capitalist society** as it is not equal and those at the bottom are exploited for the benefit of those at the top.

Therefore, Priestley suggests that the problems Eva faced would be solved by the Labour party's policies.

- Eva striking would have been protected by trade unions and therefore workers couldn't be fired, as they were easily let go by businesses under the **capitalist system** because Eva couldn't challenge them if dismissed unfairly.
- She wouldn't only rely on organisations run by the wealthy, but by the government.
 - Thus, she wouldn't be **forced into prostitution**, as she would be provided with money and support by the government indiscriminately if unemployed.
 - This is **contextually significant** as the National Insurance Act was one of the things Labour hoped to reform (they did so in 1946).
- In a **socialist society**, Eva wouldn't have been in poverty in the first place, due to the policy of **wealth redistribution**. Therefore, she acts as **the evidence for the need for socialism**.



Possible 'Topic Sentences'

- Priestley explores the detrimental effect of the class system through portraying distinct parallels between Eva and Sheila.
- Priestley portrays Eva Smith as a victim of the prejudices and individualistic attitude of the capitalist society of early 20th Century Britain.
- Through the character of Eva, Priestley depicts the collective suffering of the lower classes at the hands of the upper classes, therefore arguing the need for socialist reform.

Exam tip -

Topic sentences should always link back to the question at hand. Also, try to link these sentences together (e.g. discuss the initial, transitional and final portrayals of a character).

Exam tip -

A 'Topic Sentence' is the first sentence of your argument. This should convey the overall point you are making. It should reference Priestley explicitly and his ideas.



Eva quote bank by theme

Theme	Quote	Analysis
Class	<i>“There are millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths”</i>	The name ‘Smith’ has its roots in the working class, originating from <i>‘blacksmith’</i> , and arguably Priestley does this to demonstrate that her class is a fundamental part of her identity and origins, something that she can’t escape . Priestley uses the common name ‘John Smith’ to symbolise the universality of the suffering of the working classes, largely forgotten and neglected by the wealthy.
	<i>“died in misery and agony – hating life”</i>	After Sheila’s confession, the Inspector reminds her that Eva <i>“died in misery and agony – hating life”</i> . The graphic adjectives “misery and agony” encourage the audience to empathise with Eva, visualising the pain and suffering she endured at the hands of the Birlings. Priestley intensifies Sheila’s guilt as her enjoyment of life is at the expense of others.
Exploitation	<i>“Renton”</i>	Arguably, the name <i>“Renton”</i> is derived from the verb “to rent” , a euphemism for prostitution in the early 20th Century. Priestley uses this change in name to mark Eva being forced to change her approach to surviving in a hostile society . She can no longer survive by working hard and therefore she must go against her own moral principles to survive, engaging in prostitution.
	<i>“young and fresh and charming and altogether out of place down there”</i>	The adjective “fresh” bears connotations of desire and fertility , demonstrating that Gerald views her with sexual intent from the start, describing her like food, an example of misogynistic objectification . Priestley also includes connotations of purity as she is <i>“out of place”</i> , which is possibly a euphemism for her still being a virgin.
Capitalism vs Socialism	<i>“[unhappily] give thousands - yes, thousands ---”</i>	Eva is a working class woman and suffers because of it, beginning with being fired after asking for a living wage, which is a reasonable request. For the



		benefit of those who profit from capitalism, the strikers are not protected and therefore are exploited. However, Mr Birling's stinginess is soon resolved when there is a chance of criminal prosecution .
	<i>"[With dignity] we've done a great deal of useful work for deserving cases"</i>	Priestley's use of the stage direction "with dignity" suggests that Mrs Birling's role is not held out of care or compassion for the poor, but as a way to gain influence and status. Mrs Birling claims that the financial aid is reserved only for "deserving cases" , a decision made at the discretion of the upper classes, reflecting how the lives of the working classes are controlled by the wealthy.
Hypocrisy	<i>"a girl of that sort would (not) ever refuse money" // "impertinence (in claiming to be Mrs Birling)" // "one of the things that prejudiced me against her"</i>	Mrs Birling is prejudiced against Eva's story due to her class , rather than against Eva as an individual. She even admits to this when pointing out Eva's "impertinence" (in claiming to be Mrs Birling) as "one of the things that prejudiced me against her" . The use of the noun "impertinence" is loaded with connotations of class prejudice, implying that Mrs Birling sees herself as superior to Eva. Therefore, those living in poverty have no way to escape it as they cannot challenge their exploitation. Eva's attempt to strike saw her fired and even the institutes meant to help those in her position are prejudiced against her.
	<i>"a girl of that sort would (not) ever refuse money"</i>	Mrs Birling claims that "a girl of that sort would (not) ever refuse money" , as she assumes that due to her lower-class origin, she is inherently greedy . Despite this, Eva is presented as a moral force , who never takes stolen money and won't marry Eric just for his wealth. This is in contrast to Eric , who steals money, and the Birlings, who arrange Sheila's marriage for financial gain; in the name of "lower costs and higher prices" .
	<i>"very pretty" and having "big dark eyes" // "leave after a strike" and "said something about the shop too"</i>	Gerald tries to alleviate his and the other characters' responsibility by claiming that Eva was many different girls, rather than the same one. This is despite him providing the evidence they were all the same when he linguistically echoes Sheila, describing Eva "very pretty" and having "big dark



		<p>eyes". Furthermore, he recalls her telling him she had a job that she had to "leave after a strike" and "said something about the shop too". This makes it profoundly clear that the characters are denying the Inspector's accusations for their own benefit – so they can continue to live their materialistic lives without taking responsibility or trying to change.</p>
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Visualisation of the social hierarchy in An Inspector Calls

