

ASM TUITION ACADEMY

AN INSPECTOR CALL

ACT1 _____ SUMMARY

Act 1 Summary of "An Inspector Calls"

Overview: Act 1 of J.B. Priestley's play *"An Inspector Calls"* introduces the central characters and sets up the main plot. The play is set in 1912, and it revolves around the Birling family and their interactions with a mysterious inspector. The act establishes the social context and the themes of responsibility and social justice that are explored throughout the play.

Setting:

- The play is set in the comfortable dining room of the Birling family home in Brumley, an industrial city in the North Midlands of England. It is a prosperous setting that reflects the family's social status.

Characters Introduced:

1. **Arthur Birling** - A wealthy businessman and father of the family. He is confident and somewhat self-satisfied.
2. **Sybil Birling** - Arthur's wife, who is socially conscious and concerned with maintaining her family's status.
3. **Sheila Birling** - The Birlings' daughter, who is engaged to Gerald Croft. She is portrayed as naïve but also shows early signs of moral sensitivity.
4. **Eric Birling** - The Birlings' son, who is more reserved and appears to be troubled.
5. **Gerald Croft** - Sheila's fiancé, who is from an equally wealthy family. He is somewhat more progressive than the Birlings but still conforms to the social norms of the time.
6. **Inspector Goole** - A mysterious inspector who arrives unexpectedly and begins to interrogate the family.

Plot Summary:

1. **The Birling Family Celebration:**
 - The play opens with the Birling family celebrating Sheila's engagement to Gerald Croft. The mood is one of festivity and satisfaction with their social position.
2. **Arthur Birling's Speech:**
 - Arthur Birling makes a speech about the importance of self-reliance and the futility of social responsibility. He expresses his belief that individuals should look after themselves and their own families and not get involved in broader social issues.
3. **Arrival of Inspector Goole:**

- The celebration is interrupted by the arrival of Inspector Goole. He informs the family that he is investigating the suicide of a young woman named Eva Smith, who died in a local infirmary.
4. **Initial Interrogation:**
 - Inspector Goole begins his questioning with Arthur Birling. The Inspector reveals that Eva Smith had been employed at Arthur's company but was dismissed for going on strike and demanding higher wages. Arthur's dismissal of her is revealed as a significant factor in her downward spiral.
 5. **Sheila's Connection:**
 - The Inspector then turns to Sheila Birling, who is revealed to have been responsible for Eva Smith's dismissal from a clothing store. Sheila had complained about Eva's appearance, leading to Eva being sacked.
 6. **Family Reactions:**
 - The Birlings' reactions vary. Arthur is defensive and dismissive, while Sheila is distressed and feels a sense of guilt. Sybil Birling remains more composed but is unperturbed by the Inspector's accusations. Gerald Croft's involvement is hinted at but not yet fully revealed.
 7. **Inspector's Mysterious Behaviour:**
 - The Inspector's questions and demeanour create a sense of unease. His probing questions and knowledge about the Birlings' personal lives make the family increasingly anxious. The Inspector's presence seems to disrupt the family's sense of security and self-assurance.

Themes Introduced:

- **Social Responsibility:** The Inspector's arrival and his investigation into Eva Smith's death introduce the theme of social responsibility and the consequences of neglecting it.
- **Class and Inequality:** The play begins to explore the class divide and the impact of wealth and power on individuals' lives.
- **Guilt and Conscience:** Sheila's reaction to the Inspector's revelations highlights the theme of guilt and the moral responsibility of individuals.

Conclusion of Act 1: Act 1 ends with a sense of foreboding as the Inspector continues his questioning, leaving the audience and characters eager to uncover more about the Birlings' connections to Eva Smith and the broader implications of their actions.

This act sets the stage for the unfolding drama, as the Inspector's investigation into each family member's involvement with Eva Smith continues throughout the play.

ACT 2 _____ SUMMARY

Act 2 Summary of "An Inspector Calls"

Overview: Act 2 of J.B. Priestley's *"An Inspector Calls"* continues to unravel the connections between the Birling family and Eva Smith (also known as Daisy Renton). The act further explores themes of social responsibility and exposes the characters' moral failings. Tensions rise as more details about each character's involvement with Eva Smith are revealed.

Setting:

- The act takes place in the same setting as Act 1—the Birlings' dining room. However, the atmosphere is more tense and uneasy as the Inspector's interrogation deepens.

Plot Summary:

1. Inspector's Continued Questioning:

- The act opens with Inspector Goole continuing his interrogation of the Birling family. He focuses next on Gerald Croft, who is revealed to have had an affair with Eva Smith under the alias Daisy Renton.

2. Gerald's Connection to Eva:

- Gerald recounts how he met Daisy Renton (Eva Smith) during a difficult time in her life. He had offered her a place to stay and helped her financially, but their relationship eventually ended. Gerald explains that he ended the affair and had not seen her since, believing she had moved on.

3. Sheila's Reaction:

- Sheila is distressed by the revelation and feels betrayed, though she still supports Gerald. She is particularly upset by the knowledge that Gerald's involvement in her life was significant and not just a casual affair.

4. Sybil Birling's Involvement:

- The Inspector then turns to Sybil Birling, who reveals her own connection to Eva Smith. Sybil had been the chair of a charitable organization that Eva sought help from. Eva, who was now pregnant and desperate, was denied assistance by Sybil and her committee. Sybil's refusal was based on her prejudiced beliefs about Eva's character and social status.

5. Revelation of the Child:

- It is revealed that the child Eva Smith was pregnant with was Eric Birling's. Eric had had a brief affair with Eva and had stolen money from his father's business to support her. Eric's actions, combined with the family's earlier dismissals, contributed to Eva's tragic fate.

6. Tensions within the Family:

- The family's reactions to these revelations vary. Arthur Birling remains defensive and tries to downplay the significance of their actions, while Sheila and Eric grapple with guilt and shame. Sybil Birling remains unrepentant, maintaining that she did nothing wrong.

7. Inspector's Moral Message:

- The Inspector's questioning culminates in a powerful moral message about social responsibility and the interconnectedness of society. He emphasizes the need for individuals to take responsibility for their actions and their impact on others.

Themes Explored:

1. Social Responsibility:

- Act 2 further develops the theme of social responsibility by illustrating how each character's actions contributed to Eva Smith's downfall. The Inspector's message reinforces the idea that everyone has a role to play in ensuring the well-being of others.

2. Class and Inequality:

- The act highlights the class divide and the prejudices held by the wealthy. Sybil Birling's refusal to help Eva is rooted in her belief that Eva was unworthy of aid due to her social status.
3. **Guilt and Conscience:**
- The characters' varying responses to the revelations reveal their individual senses of guilt or lack thereof. Sheila and Eric show genuine remorse, while Arthur and Sybil remain largely dismissive or defensive.

Conclusion of Act 2:

Act 2 ends with the Inspector delivering a final moral lecture before leaving. The family is left in turmoil as they grapple with the full extent of their involvement in Eva Smith's life and death. The act heightens the dramatic tension, setting up for the final revelations and resolution in Act 3.

ACT 3 SUMMARY

Act 3 Summary of "An Inspector Calls"

Overview: In Act 3 of J.B. Priestley's *"An Inspector Calls,"* the final revelations and resolutions unfold. The Inspector's investigation reaches its climax, and the characters confront the consequences of their actions. The act explores themes of social responsibility and the interconnectedness of society, culminating in a dramatic twist that challenges the characters and the audience's perceptions.

Setting:

- The act takes place in the same dining room as in Act 1 and Act 2, but the atmosphere is charged with tension and uncertainty as the Inspector's questioning approaches its conclusion.

Plot Summary:

1. **Inspector's Final Questions:**
 - The Inspector continues to question the Birlings. He emphasizes the moral responsibility of each family member and the consequences of their actions on Eva Smith's life. His interrogation is intense and exposes the characters' moral failings and lack of empathy.
2. **The Inspector's Departure:**
 - After delivering a stern lecture on social responsibility and the need for individuals to learn from their mistakes, the Inspector leaves. His departure is met with a mixture of relief and confusion by the Birlings.
3. **Reactions to the Inspector's Departure:**
 - Once the Inspector leaves, the family is left to reflect on his words. Arthur Birling and Sybil Birling dismiss the Inspector's message, believing that they are not responsible for Eva Smith's death. Arthur insists that the Inspector was a fraud and that their social status will protect them from any repercussions.
4. **The Realization of the Truth:**

- Gerald Croft reveals that he checked with the infirmary and found no record of an Inspector Goole. This revelation creates doubt about the Inspector's true identity and intentions.
5. **The Phone Call:**
 - The family's sense of relief is short-lived. A phone call interrupts their discussion, and the call reveals that a young woman has just died in the infirmary from a suicide. The police have been notified, and an Inspector is on his way to the Birling house.
 6. **Confrontation with Reality:**
 - The family is shocked and disturbed by the news, realizing that their previous sense of security and dismissal of the Inspector's message was misplaced. The revelation reinforces the play's central themes about the importance of social responsibility and the inescapability of moral consequences.
 7. **Final Reflections:**
 - The play concludes with the characters reflecting on the Inspector's visit and the implications of their actions. The twist ending emphasizes that the play's moral lessons are not just about individual responsibility but also about societal accountability and the need for change.

Themes Explored:

1. **Social Responsibility:**
 - The act reinforces the theme of social responsibility and the idea that actions have consequences. The Inspector's message about the interconnectedness of society and the moral obligation to care for others is a central focus.
2. **Class and Morality:**
 - The characters' initial dismissal of the Inspector's message reflects their class prejudices and moral complacency. The act challenges the audience to reconsider the ethics of social inequality and the impact of privilege on one's sense of responsibility.
3. **Reality vs. Illusion:**
 - The twist ending blurs the line between reality and illusion, questioning the nature of the Inspector's identity and the authenticity of his visit. This twist serves as a critique of the characters and society's denial of moral and social issues.

Conclusion of Act 3:

Act 3 brings the play to a dramatic and thought-provoking conclusion. The final twist forces the characters—and the audience—to confront the reality of their actions and the moral lessons imparted by the Inspector. The play ends on a note of uncertainty, emphasizing the need for social change and personal reflection. The characters' reactions to the final revelation highlight the ongoing relevance of the play's themes and the importance of acknowledging and addressing social responsibility.