

Act 1: The Inspector's arrival



This sample project links to the listen live/download audio clip

Essentials

Discuss in class or make notes about what suicide means to you.

- Is it an act of cowardice or bravery?
- What do you understand about the morality of suicide and how it is viewed in different societies?



This discussion may be more useful for students who have already heard or read the play, but for those new to the story it can be a good grounding exercise in the general concept of suicide and its morality.

Begin a character study of Eva Smith based on how she's described by others. Consider:

- Why she was sacked
- The type of worker she was (one of the 'ringleaders')
- The type of person she was

Begin a character study of Inspector Goole based on your first impressions.

Update your character study of Mr Birling. Consider:

- The charge the Inspector makes against him
- His attitude to the workers
- The effect the strike had upon him and how he ended it
- His reaction to Eva Smith's fate and his part in the 'chain of events'
- The moral failing or 'sin' he revealed in his inconsiderate treatment of the workers and Eva Smith in particular

Update your character studies for Mrs Birling, Sheila, Eric and Gerald. Consider:

- How they act, particularly how they interact with others
- How they speak and what they say
- How do you feel about them?

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3



- How does the atmosphere change when the Inspector enters?
- How does Mr Birling try to intimidate the Inspector?
- How does the Inspector respond to Mr Birling's manner?



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Make notes about why the Inspector arrives at this exact point in the play and the importance of Mr Birling's speech.



Mr Birling has just been hubristic (the pride which comes before a fall) as the Inspector arrives immediately after his 'community and all that nonsense' comments.

Most productions of the play – audio or stage – use dramatic effects to mark the arrival of the Inspector.

- Describe the effects you've just heard in the audio.
- Make notes about effects you could use on stage – light, sound, set, staging, costume, other media (film, photography).



In the audio, students should notice the use of echoed lines, eerie music, Eva Smith's last moments, and the silenced clock – the sound effect of ticking in the room doesn't return until the Inspector leaves.

Make notes on the Inspector's manner. Consider:

- How he speaks to the family and how they respond to him
- If he'd been less forthright and more deferential (or respectful) to Mr Birling would the interview process have been any different?



Divide the class into small groups to devise and perform a short improvised scene at Birling's factory, in which workers are holding a meeting to debate the pros and cons of going on strike. Before the improvisation begins, students should decide whether they are actively keen to strike, or are loyal to Birling based on the following types of argument:

- You have no protection because Birling doesn't allow unions
- You are living in poverty now, but there is no social welfare system should you lose your job
- You won't get another job in Brumley if you lose this one – other owners would support Birling and not employ you
- If you don't make a stand, things may never improve
- Other workers, like the miners, are going on strike

Divide the class into small groups to hotseat the character of Mr Birling, at this point in the play. Allocate the role and have other students question him about:

- How things have changed over the course of the evening so far
- His feelings of responsibility or guilt
- His view of the future



Repeat this exercise at the end of the play to gauge if Mr Birling and the students' perception of him have changed.

