

Characters		Plot	
Inspector	Priestley's mouthpiece; advocates social justice	Act 1	Sheila and Gerald's engagement is celebrated
Mr Birling	Businessman, capitalist, against social equality	Act 1	Birling says there will be no war; references Titanic
Mrs Birling	Husband's social superior, believes in personal responsibility	Act 1	Inspector arrives; a young girl has committed suicide
Sheila	Young girl, comes to change views and pities Eva, feels regret	Act 1	Birling threw her out after strike; Sheila had her fired for laughing
Eric	Young man, drinks too much, gets Eva pregnant, regrets actions	Act 2	Gerald had an affair with Daisy Renton
Gerald	Businessman, engaged to Sheila, politically closest to Birling	Act 2	Mrs Birling refused to give charity to Eva; blames father
Eva	Unseen in play, comes to stand for victims of social injustice	Act 3	Eric's involvement revealed; possible rape hinted at
Key quotes		Act 3	Inspector leaves. Gerald returns; met policeman, no Inspector G
Birling's confidence	'We're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity'	Act 3	Telephone rings; an inspector is coming
Birling on society	'the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else'	Theatrical Stagecraft: Dramatic Devices	
Sheila's recognition	'but these girls aren't cheap labour – they're <i>people</i> '	1. Dramatic irony	the audience knows what the characters don't
Sheila's regret	'it's the only time I've ever done anything like that, and I'll never, never do it again to anybody'	2. Stage directions	Instructions for the actors; often revealing
Sheila on the Inspector	'we all started like that – so confident, so pleased with ourselves until he began asking us questions'	3. Setting	Constant throughout but subtle changes e.g. lighting
Sheila on Eric	'he's been steadily drinking too much for the last two years'	4. Tension	Builds up throughout the play
Inspector on guilt	'I think you did something terribly wrong – and that you're going to spend the rest of your life regretting it'	5. Cliff-hanger	The ending allows the audience to make up their minds
Mrs Birling defends herself	'she was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position'	Key concepts and context	
Eric explains	'I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that – well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row'	1912	Play is set here; just before WWI and sinking of the Titanic
The Inspector says	'but each of you helped to kill her. Remember that'	1945	Priestley wrote the play then; start of the welfare state and ideals of social equality made real
Inspector's message	'there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering, and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, with what we think and say and do. We don't live alone.'	Social responsibility	Or socialism; we must all look after each other
Birling's confidence	'the famous younger generation who know it all'	Capitalism	Business should make money no matter the human cost; we are all responsible only for ourselves
		Class	Upper and lower social classes are segregated
		Age	Old vs young; new and old ideas counterposed
		Attitudes to women	Patriarchal leading to misogyny