### Key quotes

- **Birling's confidence**: ‘We’re in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity’
- **Birling on society**: ‘the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you’d think everybody has to look after everybody else’
- **Sheila’s recognition**: ‘but these girls aren’t cheap labour – they’re people’
- **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’
- **Sheila on the Inspector**: ‘we all started like that – so confident, so pleased with ourselves until he began asking us questions’
- **Sheila on Eric**: ‘he’s been steadily drinking too much for the last two years’
- **Inspector on guilt**: ‘I think you did something terribly wrong – and that you’re going to spend the rest of your life regretting it’
- **Mrs Birling defends herself**: ‘she was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position’
- **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’
- **The Inspector says**: ‘but each of you helped to kill her. Remember that’
- **Birling’s confidence**: ‘the famous younger generation who know it all’

### Key concepts and context

Priestley asks his audience to examine their individual and collective responsibility to society. He wants a welfare state.

- **Class**: Upper and lower social classes are segregated
- **Eva Smith**: She is the embodiment of young, working class women who were oppressed by middle/upper classes.
- **The play demonstrates that when workers do not have full employment rights they cannot fight back.**
- **Capitalism**: Business should make money no matter the human cost; we are all responsible only for ourselves.
- **Pride and Prejudice**: Capitalism criticizes the selfishness of capitalism and wants a fairer, socialist future after the horrors of two world wars.
- **The hypocrisy of middle-class Edwardian society is uncovered; appearance and reputation matter more than reality and morality.**
- **Age**: Priestley shows the older generation (Mr and Mrs Birling) to be set in their ways, while the young (Sheila and Eric) are open to change.
- **Attitudes to women are patriarchal, leading to misogyny.**

### Theatrical Stagecraft: Dramatic Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dramatic irony</td>
<td>The audience knows what the characters don’t</td>
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<td>2. Stage directions</td>
<td>Instructions for the actors; often revealing</td>
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<td>3. Setting</td>
<td>Constant throughout but subtle changes e.g. lighting</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Tension</td>
<td>Builds up throughout the play</td>
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<td>5. Cliff-hanger</td>
<td>The ending allows the audience to make up their minds</td>
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### Act 1

The family are celebrating the engagement of Sheila and Gerald. Inspector Goole arrives announcing the suicide of Eva Smith. Mr Birling threw her out after a strike; Sheila had her fired for laughing. Eva changed her name to Daisy Renton.

### Act 2

Gerald admits to the affair with Daisy. We discover Mrs Birling refused to offer Eva charity. It is revealed that Eva was pregnant. Suspicion turns to Eric.

### Act 3

Eric admits guilt and also having stolen money. The inspector leaves, lecturing the family on the need for social responsibility. Gerald discovers the inspector was a fake and there is no recorded death of Eva Smith. Then the phone rings...