

# Who is to blame for the death of eva smith



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The name of the play is 'An Inspector Calls' and was written in by J. B.

Priestley. It was written in 1945 but set in 1912, the reason for this is that World War I was ending, there were worker strikes, the sinking of the Titanic and there was class difference. Other reason for why it was set in 1945 is that 1912 was the period of the Russian revolution, the holocaust and the atom bomb. The play is based on a harsh, interrogating police inspector, inspecting the suicide of a young working class woman.

The truth unfolds and every member of the family turns out to have a secret which links to her death. Priestley conveys his message of collective responsibility through the characters Sheila Birling and Arthur Birling through the use of dramatic character changes in the play. Mr Birling first came into contact with Eva Smith when she came to work in his factory. Mr Birling started off the chain of events which lead to Eva's death by firing her from her job for asking for a pay-rise but Mr Birling refused for organising a strike. Mr Birling is a very strong character in the family.

He is described at the start as a 'Heavy looking, rather portentous man in his middle-fifties but rather provincial in his speech.' He is very proud of his achievements. He boasts about having been major and tries but fails to impress the inspector. He is very selfish but wants to protect himself, his family and Birling and Co. He can't see that he did anything wrong when he fired Eva Smith and said that he was just looking after his business. He wants to protect his reputation because as the inspector inspects he gets selfish and worried about the press and what they would say.

Sheila Birling was the second person to be questioned by the inspector. She is the daughter of the family and is described as ' A pretty girl in her early twenties very pleased with life and rather excited'. She most probably never worried about the conditions of the workers. She shows her remorse for them when she hears about how her father treated Eva Smith as she says ' These girls aren't cheap labour-they're people'. Sheila first came into contact with Eva Smith when Eva received a job at Milwards, which was a well known department store. Sheila and Mrs Birling bought things from there regularly.

Eva worked at the shop and Sheila got Eva fired from her job when she lost her temper at her for looking better than her for looking better in a dress than she did so she used the power she had and told the store if they didn't get rid of her she would never shop there again. So they did. Sheila can be compared to her father as she helped to cause her death by getting her sacked from her job. When she heard about Eva's death she automatically blamed herself for it. She felt very guilty when she didn't really do anything.

I believe that Sheila is partly to blame. Gerald is the next character to be questioned by the inspector. Gerald is a calm person and is also described as ' An attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred man about-town. Gerald's involvement in Eva Smith or as known Daisy Renton was a short-term romance. It all started when Gerald spotted her at a bar being harassed by a drunken man. Gerald became acquainted with her in his concern he offers her a flat to live in for the time.

He gave Eva/Daisy everything she could have wanted at that point, a home, food and money/ Gerald could be seen as a user by stringing her along but he did provide her with happiness for a long time. The relationship could have done some good for Eva/Daisy. Gerald felt upset at the news of Eva/Daisy's death. He cared for her and felt guilty when he knew who she was. I feel that Gerald is only partly to blame; however he is more to blame than Sheila as he seemed to care for her even more when he learns that he knew her. He fails to care after he finds out that Eva/Daisy did not really die, instead of feeling guilty for what he had done to her.

After Eva/Daisy met Gerald, she then met Eric Birling who was single. He is described as " in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy and half assertive". He seems quite embarrassed and awkward from the start. Eric is seen as immature and that there is something blocking him from the real world.

Eric met Eva/ Daisy at the palace bar, a place owned by women who wanted to find men. The relationship between Eva/ Daisy and Eric was a serious one and there to be nothing wrong with it apart from the pregnancy. Eric continuously sees her for some time before she told him she was pregnant. Eva/ Daisy refused to take money from Eric as she knew he had stolen it from his fathers business and she refused to what at that time was a decent thing and marry Eric because she knew that he did not love her really. Eric continued to feel guilty after knowing that there was no Eva Smith, just like his sister did. This shows that Eric despite all of his irresponsible actions did try and do what was right and should not have all the blame put on him.

Mrs Birling met Eva/ Daisy when she came to the Brumley women's charity organization appealing for money for her unborn child. Abortion was out of the question as it was not legal at the time. As Eva conceived her child with Eric she decided to take his surname. Mrs Birling took it offensively thinking that the girl meant to be rude and lost her temper which led to Eva/ Daisy losing her case from the start. Mrs Birling is described at the start as "about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior".

She tries to deny things that she does not want to believe, for example, Eric's drinking, Eric's relationship with Eva and the fact that a working class woman would refuse money even if it was stolen by claiming 'she was giving herself ridiculous heirs'. It becomes noticeable as the story progresses that Mrs Birling knows little about her family and there lives with other people outside their household. Mrs Birling does not feel any remorse for the girl's death and her views fail to change during the duration of the play. She remains cold and stone-faced even when every other member of the family has been accused and has accepted the blame she sees Sheila as immature and naive throughout the play as she constantly puts her down telling her to stop being a hysterical young girl.

My main reason for thinking that Mrs Birling is responsible is because not only was she the last step before Eva/ Daisy ended her life but because in my eyes she was the most powerful one. Eva/ Daisy was at a time where she was most emotional and she must have been feeling desperate as her life had progressed in a downward spiral ever since she lost her job fighting for what she believed in. However she got through, determined to keep herself going instead of living off nothing. When she brought her case to Mrs

Birling's attention, she didn't expect a miracle but she did expect a little bit of help. When Mrs Birling refused Eva/ Daisy she must have felt that was her last chance gone. Eva had pushed all the bottoms she could to any life improvements and felt she had no other option but to end her life which to her was an on going misery. Mrs Birling carried out her actions with no thought to what effect it would have on Eva and continued to deny her mistake after her death for these reasons I feel that if anyone is guilty then it is Mrs Birling.