

To what extent can  
the tragedy of eva  
smith be blamed on  
the society in which  
she...



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In this essay I will be investigating the death of Eva Smith and the links between her and the other characters in the play, and if they show any remorse.

The first character I intend to discuss is Arthur Birling. Mr Birling is the man of the household, his relationship with Eva Smith occurred in the workplace. Eva Smith was employed by Birling and Company but was later discharged because she was refused a pay rise and caused a strike in the factory in which she worked. Mr Birling did not, and would not accept his responsibilities and did not believe that this incident affected Eva Smith's suicide, this is shown when Mr Birling is talking to the inspector, ' Still, I cant accept any responsibility.' Mr Birling is very arrogant, and is not open-minded. He believes a man has to look after himself.

Mr Birling's main priority is his profit, and the only thing he is proud of is his business. He employed girls a cheap labour and had no respect for their feelings what so ever.

Mr Birling had a part responsibility in Eva's suicide because he was the beginning of the chain of events, which eventually lead to her death. But he does not accept any guilt, but believes he had good reason to sack her, ' The girl had been causing trouble in the works, I was quite justified.'

Sheila Birling was the daughter of Arthur; she had Eva Smith sacked from her job at Millwards when she informed the manager to sack her. Sheila entered Millwards, she was an important customer there so received higher attention then other customers. Shelia had tried on an item in the shop and took

offence to Eva's reaction because it suited Eva more than Sheila. Sheila was just jealous of Eva and took her superiority in the shop to get Eva sacked.

Shelia did not feel any guilt what so ever when she had Eva sacked, she did not even think twice. However when Sheila was shown the photograph of Eva Smith she felt highly guilty and responsible, stage direction-' She looks at it closely, recognizes it with a little cry, gives a half-stifled sob, and then runs out.'

Shelia is shocked and horrified that she, personally, may have caused Eva to kill herself.

Sheila believes she is a superior and can treat people how she pleases. She is also very bitter towards people who she shows dislike towards. She believes that she has to be the centre of attention and as long as she's happy nobody should worry. I think that Sheila can only have a small part of the blame in Eva's death as she was brought up by her parents to believe she has authority over people she doesn't, but her actions cannot be justified.

Sheila was the fiancée of Gerald Croft, Gerald also knew Eva Smith, not as everyone else knew her, but as Daisy Renton.

Gerald met Daisy whilst at the Palace bar, when he saw and rescued her from Joe Meggarty. From that point onwards he befriended her, and learnt all about her life. He provided her with a place to stay and by the end she was his mistress. Their affair lasted about six months, then he realised he didn't

love her, ' I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.' Throughout the affair he was still seeing Sheila.

When Gerald realises that he is involved in Daisy's suicide he is very calm, but as he is forced to reveal more he gets more upset. In the end he is rather distressed, ' Sorry-I-well, I've suddenly realised-taken it in properly-that's she's dead-'

The fact that Gerald gave her a more pleasant life for a while and then sent her back down does not compensate for what he did. It makes it all the more worse. He used Daisy then left her when their relationship became less convenient for him. This would have made Daisy feel awful about herself, her self-esteem would have been so low as she knew she had been used.

Gerald has a lot of the blame to take as he was one of the people who made her feel worse, not about what she did, but about herself.

Eric Birling is the son of Arthur; he was also involved in Eva Smith suicide.

Eric met Eva Smith at the Palace bar, like Gerald. He was out drinking and by the end of the evening went back to her lodgings with her; she did not want him to go in. With Eric being drunk he became aggressive. Although Eric did not remember the evening ended with him sleeping with her. After this event occurred Eric met her again at the Palace bar, but this time less drunk, but again he slept with her. On there next rendezvous Eva told Eric she was pregnant Eric offered to help her out, but panicked, so stole fifty pounds off of his father to give to her.

Throughout the Inspectors questioning of the other characters, Eric is aware that he will soon be asked about his involvement with Eva Smith and that the Inspector already knows what happened between the two of them.

Eric has a drink problem therefore the additional pressure that the Inspector caused put Eric into quite a state, he feels terrible about what he has done and his involvement with her. Eric realises his guilt and responsibility in Eva Smiths suicide.

Eric does not hold as much blame as you would initially think. He tried to help Eva but she refused what he offered. He even betrayed his family to help her and he didn't want to abandon her.

When Eric finds out about his mother's involvement he is very angry at the way she treated Eva when she most needed help, ' She came to you to protect me- and you turned her away-yes, and you killed her.'

Sybil Birling was the wife of Arthur Birling. Mrs Birling was a very proud woman who was quite family orientated.

Mrs Birling met Eva when she was pregnant and alone. Mrs Birling worked for the Brumley Woman's Charity where Eva went to for help when she had nowhere else to turn. Mrs Birling felt that Eva was putting on her airs above her station, and was uncaring about her situation and made sure that the committee refused Eva.

During Mrs Birling's questioning she is very cold and untouched by the situation. Whilst recounting her involvement with Eva, Mrs Birling failed to show any emotion or regret what so ever. She basically believed that Eva got <https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-can-the-tragedy-of-eva-smith-be-blamed-on-the-society-in-which-she-lived-essay-sample/>

what she had deserved in the first place, ' I was perfectly justified...I accept no blame for it at all.'

Mrs Birling is a cold-hearted person and she behaves in an uncaring manner. I believe she is very much to blame as when Eva was feeling her lowest Mrs Birling was the person who deliberately made her life worse by refusing her into the charity.

If Eva had of been middle or upper class she would not have been treated like she was by all the characters. Sybil and Arthur Biling were both obsessed with the aspect of social class, as they liked to have some sort of authority over people. Many of the reasons that the events happened in the play come down to the society in which Eva lived in and social class.