

Priestley portray the differences between generations in "an inspector calls" ess...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How does Priestley portray the differences between the generations in 'An Inspector Calls'? Priestley shows us that the older generation – Mr and Mrs Birling – are less 'impressionable' (as the inspector said) than the younger generation – Eric and Sheila. This means that they are less able to learn from their actions and change their ways. In the middle of the generations is Gerald, who portrays traits of both age groups at different times during the play. The older generation, for example, is very keen to forgive themselves and forget what happened in their dealings with Eva Smith, which is where their traits are demonstrated.

We learn that Mrs Birling is very judgemental and haughty, and both she and her husband have a sense of social superiority about them. They both fail to learn anything from their experiences because they are so set in their ways, ways which Birling voiced at the start of the play during his speech, where he told them all to forget about "community and all that nonsense" and "make their own way", and even after the inspector has called and exposes what each of them has done, the older generation still feel the need to cling to this way of life, and rebuild the wall that the inspector has previously knocked down.

We also find that the older generation are not just forgetting what the inspector has said, but they are also forgetting some of the things they did themselves – they seem to be misremembering what happened to suit themselves – and Mrs Birling is a good example of this when she says "he certainly didn't make me confess – as you call it. I told him quite plainly that I thought I had done no more than my duty", which we know didn't actually

happen, and that she is making things up and selectively remembering things to make herself look better.