

# An inspector calls extract – act one essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In *An Inspector Calls*, Mr Birling represents Capitalism and is everything Priestley wants to eradicate in 1945. His ideology is apparent throughout the entire extract, stating, " You'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these Capital versus Labour agitations... " At the time the play premiered two weeks after the war had ended in the Soviet Union in 1945 when the Labour party was becoming more and more predominant in the United Kingdom.

The second ever Labour Prime Minister, Atlee was elected and Priestly was likely influencing the unconvinced that socialism is a better ideology. There is also dramatic irony because audience know that Labour was not forgotten as the century progressed it in fact popularised. Mr Birling makes many incorrect predictions and therefore is much dramatic irony such as " there isn't a chance of war and " absolutely unsinkable" when he refers to the Titanic which the audience of course knows sank the week following the engagement party and that two years following this the First World War began.

This proves that Priestley thinks capitalism is an act of egotism Priestley is annoyed about the fact that the upper-class businessman, such as Birling, had no outlook on others and particularly the working class. He is blind to the issues of the day and has a false optimism for the future because he has the inability to analyse the world around him. He states, " you can ignore all this silly pessimistic talk... " The speech is employed as a device by Priestley to show Mr Birling's naivete and ignorance.

Through this, a stereotypical image of a capitalistic businessman with inherent heartlessness is created. Furthermore, Birling's dislike for socialism and his belief of how inferior those who hold this ideology are illustrated when he states, "there will be peace and prosperity everywhere-except in Russia which will always be behind naturally." At the time in Russia, Lenin and the revolutionary social movement, communism was appearing for the first time and in 1940 there was no peace anywhere as the world had entered the Second World War.

Birling clearly believed that socialists cannot be successful and affluent in the world. He believes to be successful one has to be selfish. Many of his statements also seem to be ways of impressing Gerald who is his way of building his business through Crofts Ltd which was likely an older and even more prosperous business than his own. Gerald says, "I believe you're right, sir." He then continues to repeat himself by saying "hard-headed, practical man of business." This also shows this is the way he likes to view himself.

He is proud that he is a capitalist and his prime concern is his business. Birling sees even his daughter's engagement as a beneficial business partnership between two families because he imparts about himself in a speech that is supposed to concern Sheila and her engagement, however, is about what he believes will happen in the business world in the imminent future. Even when he does eventually mention his daughter and son-in-law-to-be, ("you may be giving a little party like this - your son or daughter might be engaged...") he immediately links it back to his ideology of capitalism by saying you'll be in a world that'll have forgotten all these

Capital... ” Birling is used to expose the evil and inhumanity of capitalism in a pre-war society.

His failure to accept responsibility and consistent reliance on the power of money to solve any issues contrasts with the more humane and socialist outlook of Sheila and Eric and ultimately Priestley. Birling states, “ You’ll be marrying at a very good time. Yes, a very good time... His use of the word ‘ yes’ leads the audience to believe he is forming these opinions as he gives the speech. His caesura that makes the speech fragmented also reinforces the fact he is thinking as he speaks and subsequently what he says is mindless opinion reasoning.

The reference to the Titanic can also be interpreted as a symbol of the Birlings because on the surface it was luxurious, more superior and believed to be unsinkable over every other ship. The Birlings held this idea of themselves, however, when the Inspector entered their household he acted as the iceberg that sank the Titanic.