

The characters i am  
going to focus on are  
mr birling, sheila and  
gerald croft



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Mr Birling seemed to be quite fond of Eva Smith in his description. " She was a lively good looking girl, country bred, I fancy. " This quotation also tells me that Mr Birling's contribution towards the death of Eva Smith could be a strong one, since they a year working together. The inspector accused Mr Birling of contributing towards Eva Smith's suicide as he refused to give her a raise in salary.

This could have been part of the reason why she was driven to do this. For example she may not have had enough money for food or clothes, and knew she may not get another opportunity. In the text it shows Mr Birling is quite aggressive and is very fixed on how much he pays his workers. " Well it's my duty to keep labour costs down and if I'd agreed to this demand for a new rate we'd have added about twelve percent to our labour costs.

Does that satisfy you? " This also shows the manner in which Mr Birling addresses the inspector, and could have been the attitude and tone he used towards Eva Smith, causing her to feel small, a failure and extremely depressed. The inspector believes Sheila Birling had contributed towards the death of Eva Smith as well, due to her encounter with her at a shop; although Shelia adopts a different approach from her father. She may have been quite vile towards Eva Smith but is trying to put across to the inspector that she didn't mean what she did. The quotation supports this.

" I felt rotten about it at the time and now I feel a lot worse". When Sheila reveals what actually happened between her and Eva Smith, her tone and mood changes. This attitude could have been the one she used in the presence of Eva Smith, and it may have possibly made her even more

depressed. “ I went to the manager at Milwards and I told him that if they didn’t get rid of that girl I’d never go near the place again and I’d persuade mother to close our account with them”.

As she continues to explain about the incident I can see from the text why this may have had some effect on Eva. “ When I was looking at myself in the mirror I caught sight of her smiling at the assistant, and I was furious with her. I’d been in a bad temper anyhow”. The last sentence of this speech shows that Sheila likes to play the sympathy card when she feels it is appropriate, possibly hoping that the inspector will sympathise with her.

Sheila gives the impression that she became very jealous of Eva Smith during the time she was at Millwards. This could have affected Eva and her decision to take her own life. “ Miss Francis had asked her something about it, this girl, to show us what she meant, had held the dress up as if she was wearing it. And it just suited her. She was the right type, just as I was the wrong type”.

This also indicates to me that Sheila was snobbish and gave Eva Smith dirty looks as she was doing what Sheila explains in the speech. Sheila may have “ gone overboard” unnecessarily with Eva Smith. However she may not have realised who Eva was, what problems she’d already had, as Sheila explains in this quotation. “ I caught sight of this girl smiling at Miss Francis as if to say: doesn’t she look awful and absolutely furious.

I was very rude to both of them, and then I went to the manager and told him this girl had been very impertinent”. She then goes on to explain it wasn’t her fault she behaved this way towards Eva Smith. “ How could I  
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know what would happen afterwards? If she had been some miserable plain creature, I don't suppose I'd have done it. But she was very pretty and looked like she could take care of herself. I couldn't be sorry for her". Even though Sheila is to implying she didn't mean it, this and the previous quotation indicates to me that she may have been quite vile and wicked when she was in the presence of Eva Smith.

This shows that it could have lowered her moral and self-esteem, which may have taken her one step closer to suicide. At the beginning of the play and during the Inspector's encounter with Mr Birling and Sheila, Gerald Croft did not really look like he was in the picture. Until page 34 of the play when he describes where he first met Eva Smith. " I met her first, some time in March last year, in the stalls bar at the Palace". I think it is the influence of the Inspector on Gerald that brings him more into the picture. The way the text is written gives me the impression that it is something pretty bad and it is aimed at Sheila; because I don't think he really wants her to hear it.

You're obviously going to hate this, so why on earth won't you leave us to it". Gerald shows a desperate side to his character in this quotation. It seems he really wanted to meet someone and Eva Smith happened to be there at the time Gerald walked in. He tells the inspector " I happened to look in, one night, after a dull long day, and as the show wasn't very bright, I went down into the bar for a drink.

It's a favourite haunt of women of the town". Gerald's participation in Eva Smith's death begins to take shape with this next quotation. For the first time he shows he may have had feelings for her and even had strong

connections with her. “ I noticed a girl who looked quite different. She was very pretty – soft brown hair and big dark eyes – My god! ” As he begins to describe her, the reaction of “ My god” shows there was a strong connection between Gerald and Eva.

“ Sorry – I – well, I’ve suddenly realised – taken it in properly – that she’s dead”. Gerald tries to give the impression that he was doing Eva favour. The next quotation shows that Gerald believed Eva wanted him to rescue her. The girl saw me looking at her and then gave me a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help”.

Gerald responds to this assumed cry for help, and encourages her to go with him to a quiet hotel. “ We went along to the country Hotel, which I knew would be quiet at that time of night, and we had a drink or two and talked”. Gerald presents himself as a hero, when actually what he is talking about to the inspector, made Eva Smith grow fonder of him. He explains he was looking after some rooms and he knew that Eva Smith was going to be turned out from where she was currently living. Gerald said he did it because he only felt sorry for her. “ I want you to understand that I didn’t install her there so that I could make love to her.

I made her go to Morgan Terrace because I was sorry for her, and didn’t like the idea of her going back to the Palace bar. I didn’t ask for anything in return”. The quotation makes Gerald sound like a big shot, a real generous and caring person, which he may well be. However Eva Smith took it further and the mistake Gerald made was he let it happen, and that’s where his part in Eva Smith’s suicide reveals itself. How Gerald contributed to driving Eva

Smith to death was when he broke up with her. A man who had obviously cared for her, but lead her into an illusion that she had feelings for Gerald and then he breaks off; out of her life forever.

He says he felt bad about it but look what it resulted in. These two quotations from the text support what I have said. " I had to go away for several weeks then - on business - and by the time Daisy knew it was coming to an end. So I broke it off definitely before I went".

There is a slightly more caring side to Gerald at the end of his explanation. She told me she'd been happier than she'd ever been before. She didn't blame me at all. I wish to god she had now. Perhaps I'd feel better about it". I think out of the three characters I have discussed, Gerald has to be the one who had the strongest connection with Eva Smith because he gave the impression of loving her.

It also didn't help matters that he let her down following her dismissal by Mr Birling and her incident with Sheila. This may have been the last straw for Eva Smith because of the unfortunate sequence of events.