

Circle words that apply to Sheila Birling

Capitalist Charitable Selfish

Rich Socialist Argumentative

Kind Naïve/innocent Loving

Feels Responsible Aware

Pessimistic Optimistic Proud Arrogant

Questions to answer on character

For each one: full sentences, try to prove with a quotation and analysis

Easy

- ✓ What is your personal opinion of Eric Birling?
- ✓ How did Eric react when he found out the Inspector was not real? Why did he react in this way?
- ✓ How does his alcoholism land him in trouble in the play?
- ✓ Describe Eric's change throughout the play.
- ✓ Why does Eric disappear throughout Act Two?

Medium

- ✓ How far do you agree that Eric is to blame for Eva's death?
- ✓ What is the most important moment in the play for Eric Birling? Justify this.
- ✓ How would an audience of the time (1940s) react to him? Why?
- ✓ Eric is an alcoholic. How does this affect his attitude and relationship with Eva Smith?
- ✓ Explain why Eric has a tense relationship with his parents.

Hard/challenge

- ✓ Judge Eric's responsibility in the play.
- ✓ How does Eric Birling feel about social responsibility?
- ✓ How does Priestley show the tension between the family? Link to the theme of Age.
- ✓ Eric is reckless in his youth. How far do you agree/disagree with this statement?
- ✓ What impact does the revelation of the unborn child have on the family? Why are they so affected by Eric's admission?

Eric Birling – Character Analysis

Key Quotations

Act One

(stage direction) *'not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive'*

'What about war?'

Mr Birling to Eric: 'Just let me finish Eric. You've a lot to learn yet.'

Sheila to Eric: 'You're squiffy.'

Gerald on the Inspector's arrival: 'Eric's been up to something.'

'He could have kept her on instead of throwing her out.'

'(Bursting out) Well I think it's a damn shame.'

'Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? ...I'd have let her stay.'

Act Two

'(Eric enters, looking extremely pale and distressed)'

Act Three

To Inspector: 'You know, don't you?'

'You haven't made it any easier for me, have you, mother?'

'(Miserably) Could I have a drink first?'

'In the Palace Bar...I was rather far gone by the time we had to go.'

(Going to Eva's lodgings) 'Yes, I insisted – it seems...but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that – well, I was in that state where one easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row.'

(About spending the night with Eva) 'I didn't even remember – that's the hellish part. Oh my god!'

'Told her my name and what I did.'

'Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble.'

(To Mrs Birling) 'Then – you killed her!...my child – your own grandchild'

'He was our Police Inspector all right.'

'...what happened to the girl and what we all did that matters.'

Character Development

Using the quotations, how does the character act/change?

Act One



Act Two



Act Three