

RAISING ACHIEVEMENT • AN INSPECTOR CALLS • DRILL 1

Never, never again

Sheila and Eric

Today: how Sheila begins to change in Act 1

25 minutes

Do Now

Know

- 1 In which city is the play set?
- 2 What is the family celebrating when the play opens?
- 3 How many years separate the setting of the play from the year Priestley wrote it?
- 4 What is the name of the Birlings' maid?
- 5 What kind of business does Mr Birling own?

Do Now: answers

Know

1

In which city is the play set?

Brumley, an industrial city in the North Midlands

2

What is the family celebrating when the play opens?

Sheila's engagement to Gerald Croft

3

How many years separate the setting of the play from the year Priestley wrote it?

33 years: it is set in 1912 and was written in 1945

4

What is the name of the Birlings' maid?

Edna

5

What kind of business does Mr Birling own?

A factory: he is a manufacturer, and Eva worked in one of his machine shops

Focus reminder

Know

What the essay question asks you to do

There is no extract. Plan from memory, using short quotations you know by heart.

Track the change: where they start in Act 1 and where they end in Act 3.

Write 'Priestley presents Sheila as...' or 'Priestley presents Eric as...'.

Say why: Priestley puts his hope in the young. What does he want his 1945 audience to learn from them?

Act 1: Sheila and the shop girl

Read

J. B. Priestley • Act 1, Sheila's confession about Milwards. Our guide: read it in your own copy.

- 1 After Birling sacked her, Eva found work at Milwards, a smart clothes shop. The Inspector shows Sheila the photograph. She recognises the girl and runs out of the room. When she comes back, she tells the story herself. She tried on a dress that suited the shop girl better. She
- 5 thought the girl smiled at another assistant, so she told the manager to sack her, or her mother would close their account. Eva was sacked at the end of January 1911. Notice how honest Sheila is now. Find the line where she says she “felt rotten about it at the time and now I feel a lot worse”. Then find her promise.

Check your understanding

Know

1 Where did Eva work after Mr Birling sacked her?

2 Why did Sheila complain about her?

3 What did Sheila threaten to do?

4 How does Sheila feel about it now?

Check your understanding: answers

Know

1

Where did Eva work after Mr Birling sacked her?

At Milwards, a smart clothes shop in Brumley.

2

Why did Sheila complain about her?

The dress suited Eva better, and Sheila thought Eva smiled at another assistant. She was jealous and in a temper.

3

What did Sheila threaten to do?

Stop shopping at Milwards and get her mother to close their account.

4

How does Sheila feel about it now?

Worse than she did at the time. She blames herself.

Quotation explosion

Apply

"I'll never, never do it again to anybody"

Copy the quotation into the middle of your page. Explode it: answer each question around it.

Explode it

Apply

AO1

What does Sheila promise, and what does it show about her at this point?

AO2

Why does Priestley repeat “never”?

AO2

What do the words “to anybody” add?

AO3

Why would Priestley’s first audiences care that a wealthy young woman makes this promise?

Explosion: answers

Apply

AO1

What does Sheila promise, and what does it show about her at this point?

She promises never to use her power against anyone again. She is the first Birling to admit she was wrong and to feel real guilt.

AO2

Why does Priestley repeat “never”?

The repetition makes the promise sound urgent, like a vow. It also sounds a little like a child’s promise, so the audience may wonder whether she will keep it.

AO2

What do the words “to anybody” add?

They widen the promise from Eva to everyone. Sheila starts to see Eva as one of many people her class can hurt, which is the Inspector’s lesson.

AO3

Why would Priestley’s first audiences care that a wealthy young woman makes this promise?

In 1912 one complaint from a wealthy customer could cost a shop girl her job. In 1945 Labour had just won on a promise of a fairer Britain, and Sheila shows that the young can change.

Writing a thesis

Technique

A thesis is one sentence that answers the whole question: what Priestley shows, and why. Every point in your plan should help to prove it.

Priestley presents Sheila as a spoilt girl who learns to take responsibility, and uses her to show his 1945 audience that change can start with the young.

Your task Write your own one-sentence thesis on Sheila. Start with 'Priestley presents Sheila as...' and end with what he wants the audience to learn.

The question

Plan

How does Priestley present Sheila as a character who changes in An Inspector Calls?

Write about:

- **what Sheila says and does**
- **how Priestley presents Sheila.**

Today: plan your answer. No essay. About 8 minutes.

Plan it

Plan

Plan

1. Today: plan your answer in 8 minutes. No essay.
2. Write a one-sentence thesis: how Sheila changes, and why Priestley wants the audience to see it.
3. Choose three moments in play order, one from each act. Add one short quotation to each.
4. Add one piece of context to each point: 1912, 1945, class or women's lives.

Top tips

- Write 'Priestley presents Sheila as...': she is his creation.
- Short quotations you are sure of beat long ones you half remember.
- Spelling counts (AO4): Priestley, Sheila, Milwards, Inspector, responsibility.

Your turn

8 minutes

Today: plan your answer in 8 minutes. No essay.

Model plan

Master

Thesis: Priestley presents Sheila as a spoilt girl who learns to take responsibility, and uses her to show his 1945 audience that the young can build a fairer society.

Point 1 (Act 1): she admits what she did at Milwards and promises “I’ll never, never do it again to anybody”. The repeated “never” sounds like a vow. Context: in 1912 a rich customer had power over a shop girl’s job.

Point 2 (Act 2): she warns her mother, “You mustn’t try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl”. The wall metaphor shows she now sees the barrier of class. Context: the Inspector says the young are “more impressionable”.

Point 3 (Act 3): she will not forget the evening and tells her parents “it frightens me the way you talk”. Now she judges them. Context: an audience who had lived through two wars wanted change.

Ending idea: her answer about the ring, “No, not yet”, shows the change is real and still going on.

Have a go

Practise

Think about the very end of the play, when Gerald holds out the ring again. Answer in two or three sentences.

What does Sheila's answer, "No, not yet. It's too soon. I must think.", show about how far she has changed?

Green pen

Check your work and improve it in green pen.



My thesis says how Sheila changes and why Priestley shows it.



I planned one point from each act, in order.



Each point has a short quotation and a method.



I spelt Priestley, Sheila and Milwards correctly (AO4).