

# Never, never again

Sheila and Eric • How Sheila begins to change in Act 1

Name:

Class:

Date:

## Do Now

1. In which city is the play set?

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2. What is the family celebrating when the play opens?

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

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4. What is the name of the Birlings' maid?

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5. What kind of business does Mr Birling own?

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## Read

Act 1: Sheila and the shop girl • 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

1. Where did Eva work after Mr Birling sacked her?

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2. Why did Sheila complain about her?

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3. What did Sheila threaten to do?

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4. How does Sheila feel about it now?

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## Quotation explosion

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

**AO1** What does Sheila promise, and what does it show about her at this point?

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**AO2** Why does Priestley repeat "never"?

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**AO2** What do the words "to anybody" add?

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**AO3** Why would Priestley's first audiences care that a wealthy young woman makes this promise?

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## Writing a thesis

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.

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## The question

**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 in 8 minutes. No essay.

**My argument (thesis)**

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|---------------------|--|
| Point 1 + quotation |  |
| Point 2 + quotation |  |
| Point 3 + quotation |  |
| Context to use      |  |

### Have a go

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?**

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### 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).

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