

## Plan

Section 1 - Birlings representing middle/high class

Feel more important

Don't care about lower classes

Birling tries to intimidate inspector with his class and connections

Theme of judgment

Section 2 - ~~Eric~~ Inspector unintimidated as he doesn't have a class

'responsibilities as well as privileges'

Eva Smith and John Smith

Birling remains ignorant - No identity

Section 3 - Sheila and Eric change - showing

how boundaries can be broken

Daisy most honourable.

## Question 1

Priestley just explores attitudes to social class by using the different characters to represent the classes. Eva Smith represents

the lower classes, the Birling's represent the middle/high class and Gerald represents

the highest class. Priestley uses characters such as Mr Birling to show

the ignorance of the higher classes. For example, ~~the~~ tells of

how 'you'd think everybody has

to look after everybody else' and

refers to that idea, as 'community and all that nonsense'. Here, Priestley is showing that Mr Birling has a limited sense of social responsibility and didn't care nor want to know about those below him. In 1912, class distinctions were very clear and that is the time in which the play was set - so Priestley clearly shows this. He also presents the idea of class making people such as Mr Birling ~~more~~ feel a sense of social superiority and importance. As an example, Mr Birling tries to intimidate the Inspector straight from his arrival in act one - telling him of how he 'was an alderman for years & Lord Mayor two years ago - and [he is] still on the bench.' Here, not only does this show Mr Birling's attempt to intimidate the Inspector with his position, Priestley also uses social class to present irony, as Mr Birling passes judgement to others as a magistrate ~~but~~ despite his own immoral acts.

Birling continues to intimidate the Inspector with his connections also, and uses Gerald - who is of a higher social class - to further promote himself, ~~the~~ saying that he should <sup>introduce</sup> [the Inspector] to Gerald Crofts, son of Sir George Crofts - you know, Crofts

Limited?'. Birling also feels that ~~he~~ he  
~~has~~ 'ought to warn' the Inspector  
that he plays golf with his boss, again  
to intimidate the Inspector. The Inspector,  
however, remains unintimidated throughout  
the play; Priestley doesn't portray him  
as intimidated due to the fact that  
the Inspector doesn't have a social  
class. The Inspector does not represent  
any of the classes nor does he  
fit into any of them, and so  
naturally can see the ignorance and  
disregard from those of a higher class  
to those below them. In fact, the  
Inspector shows that of a socialist  
view - everyone is equal and deserves  
to be treated the same. To the Inspector  
the class distinctions mean nothing and  
so he feels the need to remind  
characters such as Mr Birling that  
he has 'responsibilities as well as privileges'  
and that there are 'millions and millions  
and millions of Eve Smiths and John Smiths  
that exist'. The Inspector's views mirror  
that of Priestley's own socialist views and  
Priestley likely shows the Inspector  
as what many would perceive as  
the protagonist in the play in order  
to show that his views and attitudes  
are morally right - and the Birlings ~~are~~ sum up  
what is wrong with the class system.

Despite this, Priestley wishes to show



That people can change from being heavily sheltered by a class system and move to a socialist viewpoint. Priestley uses Eric and Sheila to do this as Sheila almost becomes a mini-inspector at points even refers to the lower class as 'not just cheap labour, they're people'. Here, Priestley is showing the start of the realisation that ~~class boundaries~~ ~~are~~ by some of the characters, that his own viewpoint that class distinctions are ~~an~~ unnecessary and don't control ~~people~~ ~~and~~ or define people, and that those class boundaries can be broken. Priestley also shows this when the characters believe it may all be a hoax and Sheila and Eric react in the way that although they may not have killed ~~each~~ their victims had the potential to ~~and~~ they should start caring for one another.

Priestley also explores social class by changing the audience's possible perceptions of it. For example, the audience may have believed that the lower classes partook in crime and other immoral acts. Despite this, Eva/Daisy is presented as the most honest character as 'she refused to take any more money when she believed it was stolen. This may ~~not~~ surprise the audience causing us to register to them a lot more and change how they view things to almost

MIRROR Priestley's own views.