

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

A CLASSIC THRILLER

by J.B. Priestley



Teacher`s Material
Comprehensive Version

Arbeitsmaterialien für den Englisch - Unterricht
(Oberstufe Gymnasium)

A Note for Users

Table of Contents

1. The Author



John Boynton Priestley was born Yorkshire in 1894 and initially rejected academia to work in the local wool industry. After serving in World War I, gaining direct experience of the ‘fire and blood and anguish’ about which **Inspector Goole** warns the **Birlings** in the play, he studied at Cambridge University and gained fame first as a novelist (*The Good Companions*, 1929) and then as a dramatist. In both his fiction and plays he draws attention to human weakness and social injustice. Through the 1930s his political and social concerns influenced him more and more, and in 1942 he helped to set up a new political party with many socialist ideas at its heart. During the Second World War, he was the presenter of *Postscripts*, a weekly BBC radio program listened to by up to 40% of the population, but eventually taken off air because it was considered critical of the government.

Later, Priestley contributed to the development of the Welfare State and was active in the early years of the United Nations. He helped to set up the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958. In terms of his strong moral and political views, one could argue that Priestley used **Inspector Goole** as a mouthpiece: in one of his broadcasts he said that we ‘must stop thinking in terms of property and power and begin thinking in terms of community and creation’ (*Postscripts*, July 1940).

2. The Play

An Inspector Calls was first performed just after World War II. It is considered to be one of Priestley's best known works for the stage and one of the classics of mid-20th century English theatre.

The play is a three-act drama, which takes place on a single night in 1912, and focuses on the prosperous middle-class Birling family—who live in a comfortable home in Brumley, “an industrial city in the north Midlands”—The family is visited by a man calling himself Inspector Goole, who questions the family about the suicide of a young working-class woman, Eva Smith (also known as Daisy Renton). Over the course of the evening, the entire family, under interrogation by Goole, are revealed to have been responsible for the young woman's exploitation, abandonment and social ruin, effectively leading to her death.

Priestley uses his knowledge of the reality of two world conflicts to cast shadows over the genteel house of the social-climbing Birlings in 1912, when the play is set. Other real historical events and ideas, such as the sinking of the Titanic, the General Strike of 1926, the rise of Fascism, technological advances and the debate over individual and social responsibility are referred to through the play and add an element of realism.

On the other hand, the enigmatic character of Inspector Goole introduces a non-naturalistic quality to the play, and yet another context is provided in the way Priestley has drawn on the detective genre for added dramatic interest.

3. Criticism and interpretation

A classic stage play and a script with plenty of twists and turns, *An Inspector Calls* has wide appeal. Written and first performed at the cusp of the modern, post-1945 period but set in 1912, the text presents opportunities to explore life before and since two World Wars, whilst its central idea of responsibility continues to engage all readers and audiences on a simple, empathic level.

Long considered part of the repertory of classic “drawing room” theatre, the play has also been hailed as a scathing critique of the hypocrisies of Victorian/Edwardian English society and as an expression of Priestley’s Socialist political principles. Highly successful after its first and subsequent London productions, the play is now considered one of Priestley’s greatest works, and has been subject to a variety of critical interpretations.

After the new wave of social realist theatre in the 1950s and 1960s, the play fell out of fashion, and was dismissed as an example of outdated bourgeois “drawing room” dramas, and became a staple of regional repertory theatre. Following several successful revivals (including Stephen Daldry’s 1992 production for the National Theatre), the play was “rediscovered” and hailed as a damning social critique of capitalism and middle-class hypocrisy in the manner of the social realist dramas of Shaw and Ibsen. It has been read as a parable about the destruction of Victorian social values and the disintegration of pre-World War I English society, and Goole’s final speech has been interpreted variously as a quasi-Christian vision of hell and judgement, and as a Socialist party manifesto.

The struggle between the embattled patriarch Arthur Birling and Inspector Goole has been interpreted by many critics as a symbolic confrontation between capitalism and socialism, and arguably demonstrates Priestley’s Socialist political critique of the selfishness and moral hypocrisy of middle-class capitalist society. While no single member of the Birling family is solely responsible for Eva’s death, together they function as a hermetic class system exploiting and neglecting vulnerable women, with each example of exploitation leading collectively to Eva’s social exclusion, despair and suicide. The play also arguably functions as a critique of Victorian-era notions of middle-class philanthropy towards the poor, which is based on presumptions of the charity-givers’ social superiority and severe moral judgement towards the “deserving poor”. The romantic idea of gentlemanly chivalry towards “fallen women” is also debunked as being based on male lust and sexual exploitation of the weak by the powerful. In Goole’s final speech, Eva Smith is referred to as a representative for millions of other vulnerable working class people, and can be read as a call to action for English society to take more responsibility for working class people, pre-figuring the development of the post World War II welfare state.

4. Describing a Production

National Theatre’s Lyttelton Theatre on 11 September 1992. (Director: Stephen Daldry)

An Inspector Calls was first performed in 1945 in two Moscow theatres, as an appropriate venue in England could not be found. (Critics have speculated that the play’s themes were considered too negative and critical for wartime British audiences). The play had its first English production in 1946 at the New Theatre in London with Ralph Richardson as Inspector

Goole, Harry Andrews as Gerald Croft, Margaret Leighton as Sheila Birling, Julian Mitchell as Arthur Birling, Marian Spencer as Sybil Birling and Alec Guinness as Eric Birling.

The play was successfully revived by English director Stephen Daldry at the National Theatre London NT in 1992. The production won the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Revival of a Play.

Edna faces the crowd as her employers receive judgement



Daldry's production was notable for employing non-naturalistic staging, set design, lighting and musical composition, drawing heavily from Expressionism as well as cinematic styles of film noir and horror films. Advertisements for the production featured the Inspector, standing in half shadow lit by a street lamp, recalling the image of Max von Sydow in the film *The Exorcist*.

Daldry and McNeil researched early productions of the play (including the Moscow première) that featured minimalist, non-naturalistic set and lighting design. McNeil's set "divides" the stage into three time zones, reflecting Priestley's own presentation of multiple time zones in his other plays such as *Time and the Conways*. The set of the Birling's house represents the time zone of the play in early 1912; the front of the stage, featuring warped floor boards, a red telephone box and street children listening to a wireless, represented London in middle of World War II, when Priestley wrote the play; and Goole's final speech is delivered directly to the audience, with the house lights turned up so that the audience are visible, representing the present day.

Daldry's production and staging placed considerable emphasis on the Birling house as a site of social exclusion, and places a number of additional characters on stage who represent those who are excluded from the Birling's world. As the play begins, the Birlings are inside their house, visible only slightly through the windows. Our attention is drawn instead to the back of the house and the cobblestoned area, where three young children in WWII dress are scavenging through food scraps thrown by Edna, the Birling's elderly (and voiceless) maidservant. The children interact freely with Goole and Edna, but are only occasionally seen by the Birlings themselves, who inevitably become disturbed by their presence and look away or else ignore them. Edna appears to share a sense of complicity with Goole, inviting him closer to the house and smiling occasionally when the secrets of the family are revealed, but she makes no comment on the action.

Crucially, the Birlings must descend from the safety and opulence of their brightly lit Edwardian drawing room and into the dimly lit cobblestoned area to engage with Goole and confess their actions. Towards the end of the play, a crowd of men women and children appear en masse, as the Birlings are judged and accused by Goole. Though their presence is never explained, these silent nameless characters have been interpreted variously as being a Greek chorus, a jury or a lynch mob, all standing in silent judgment of the Birlings and

representing the powerless working class masses that are excluded from and exploited by the Birlings' lives and working practices.



The set of the Birlings' house (set design by Ian McNeil) is raised on stilts and built in non-realistic, almost cartoonish proportions – doors are deliberately low so that the actors have to stoop to walk in and out, and windows are high above door frames, through which characters sometimes pop out like dolls. The walls of the house open like a doll's house, emphasizing that the Birlings family live in a cloistered fantasy world. The house is raised above the stage on stilts, physically looking down on a cobblestoned area lit with a street lamp.

The dramatic conflict is heightened by film noir-inspired lighting and smoke, a dissonant string orchestra score that is reminiscent of movie scores for horror films (including Bernard Hermann's scores for Alfred Hitchcock films), and the house itself, which acts as a character in the story, apparently reacting to the family's crisis. After the revelations of Goole's visit, the house is tipped forward and half-falls into a ravine in the stage floor, its contents shattering and exploding all over the stage, leaving the Birlings to walk through the wreckage of their home. When Gerald proposes that Goole's interrogation has no basis in evidence and that there is no dead woman in the infirmary, the house moves up and rights itself, suggesting the revival of the family's fortunes and their ability to withdraw from the world again. The dynamic staging was considered to be a radical break with previous UK stagings of the play (which usually adhered to a single realistically depicted Edwardian drawing room set and a static dialogue-based performance style) and emphasized the metaphorical elements of the "inspection" and the themes of social exclusion and class warfare. Many theatre

critics in 1992 read the production as a critic of Thatcherite Conservative politics, with Goole's final speech reading as a direct rebuttal of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's well-known statement "There is no such thing as society".

Daldry's production was widely praised for re-invigorating the play for a new generation of theatergoers, and for making the play involving and politically relevant for a modern audience. The production is often credited with single-handedly rediscovering Priestley's works and "rescuing" him from the reputation of being obsolete and class-bound. The success of the production since 1992 has led to a critical reappraisal of Priestley as a politically engaged playwright who offered a sustained critique of the hypocrisy of English society.

5. Production History

5.1 Looking back: **October 1, 1946: the first night of JB Priestley's play left critics bored and stifling groans** by Samantha Ellis, The Guardian, Wednesday 7 May 2003

"Bang! Bang! Mr Priestley lets drive with both barrels," was the Times's verdict on An Inspector Calls, when it was performed at London's New Theatre. JB Priestley had already established himself as an astonishingly prolific writer, churning out poems, essays, novels and, from the 1930s, plays. During the war his patriotic radio broadcasts were more popular than anyone's except Churchill's.

He had also found a favourite actor: Ralph Richardson, who had appeared in Priestley's *Eden End* in 1934. The following year Priestley wrote him a play, *Cornelius*, and was full of praise for Richardson's performance, writing: "He can be a bank clerk, an insurance agent, a dentist, but very soon mysterious lights and shadows, tones of anguish and ecstasy, are discovered in banking, insurance and dentistry." This made Richardson perfect casting for the sepulchral Inspector Goole.

The chosen director was the fearsome Basil Dean, famed for his slick, glittering productions but also for his temper; some called him "Bastard Basil". He certainly didn't see eye to eye with his star. Dean wrote in his memoirs: "I found Ralph Richardson unexpectedly reluctant to take direction, perhaps in unconscious rebellion after the years of wartime restraint." Richardson's five-year stint as a pilot in the second world war was less the problem, however, than his strong views as to how the play should be staged. He and Priestley wanted an impressionist production; Dean's idea of impressionism was a realistic box set lit in lurid green. After the dress rehearsal, Richardson fired Dean and redesigned the lighting.

Richardson also clashed with his cast, including Alec Guinness, who one night found his shoes immersed in a bucket of water. Richardson, it seems, had found it irritating that they squeaked throughout the show. The water didn't help, as Guinness later recalled: "I squelched noisily through the last act and then missed two performances through near pneumonia." Despite this, the actors stayed friends.

Reviews were mixed. The Observer's JC Trewin felt that the play, which found a family responsible for the death of a young girl, was somewhat heavy. "[It] could have been stripped to half its length: though their offence is rank we feel that the Birlings are hardly

worth this prolonged clatter of skeletons." Lionel Hale, writing in the Daily Mail, declared: "Only severe self-control prevented hollow groans rising throughout the last act from seat No. E1 in the stalls: my seat. It was early on in this act that Mr Priestley disclosed that his moralising play had no theatrical ethics ... the stage demands a theatrical solution." Instead of closure, he wrote, came "a fatal dead-end". As for the actors, "Mr Richardson, looking for something to act in a nebulous part, paraded like some dummy in the tailoring section of a 'Britain Used to Make It' Exhibition. A pitiful sight."

Not everyone was so vitriolic. The New Statesman's Stephen Potter praised Priestley's "beautiful craftsmanship" and called the ending "the best coup de théâtre of the year". Echoing Priestley, he wrote that Richardson "suggests the unearthly by his very ordinariness". The Sunday Times's James Agate admired the acting: "Guinness makes of the tragic libertine something that is a long way from being wholly vile," he wrote, while Richardson "gives the Inspector a stern, unangry poise far more effective than all the thunder he obviously has up his sleeve". But he closed his review with the observation: "It is not until you leave the theatre that you ask yourself by what magic dullness has been kept away from this modern morality in which nobody does anything but talk."

The play wasn't the success it might have been, and the criticisms that it was sententious and stodgy stuck. But Stephen Daldry's 1992 revival changed all that. His staging of the play in an Edwardian doll's house set on top of post-Blitz rubble was so shiveringly powerful that one critic credited him with "reclaiming JB Priestley's play from the realms of banal period whimsy".

5.2 A famous Production revisited

Novello Theatre, London, 2009 [Brian Logan guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), Monday 28 September 2009



Nicholas Woodeson in "An Inspector Calls"

When [Stephen Daldry's](#) An Inspector Calls appeared at the National Theatre, it was lauded for its three-way timeframe. This expressionist refit was set in 1912 (when its action takes place), 1944 (when [JB Priestley](#) wrote it) and 1992 (when it was performed). So how many

timeframes does it have now? The production itself has passed into history, with 1992 feeling as strange to us as the earlier eras Daldry sought to evoke.

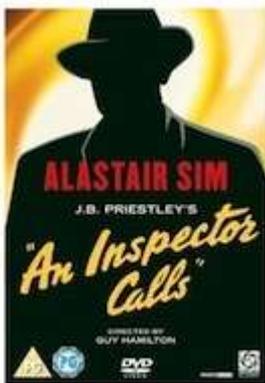
Well, its critique of I'm-all-right-Jack individualism is as relevant as it was shortly after Thatcher, even if Daldry's production threatens to let the present day off the hook. The action, in which an industrialist and his family confront their complicity in the suicide of a destitute local woman, is staged within a doll's house on stilts, perched above some blackened, Blitz-blasted street. But, by playing it before a crowd of 1940s witnesses, Daldry implies that these Edwardian toffs will soon get their comeuppance. "The time will come," warns Inspector Goole, "when they will be taught [their lesson] in fire and blood and anguish." But, two world wars notwithstanding, the world's Mr Birlings haven't learned that lesson yet.

Maybe this revival will help. It's still brilliantly accusatory, bracing and strange. With Ian MacNeil's warped set and Stephen Warbeck's Hitchcockian score, Daldry conceals the play's creakier contrivances in glowering melodrama. It's as if justice itself is ghoulishly abroad – though Nicholas Woodeson's *Inspector* gives it very human dimensions. Marianne Oldham's Sheila speaks the most potent lines when she expresses relief, at last, to meet an inspector prepared to bring the elite to account. The rich and powerful, argues Priestley, must be saved from themselves. His era's Labour government knew that. Does ours?

6. How to perform the play today

This is a play that has been very successful in performance: how might the way in which the play is performed draw the audience's attention to the main ideas in it?

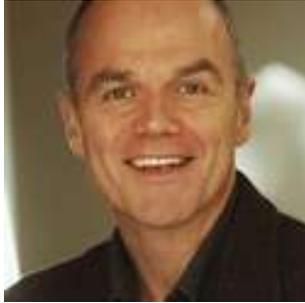
This task will work best if you are able to consider the play in the version that you have seen at **THE ENGLISH THEATRE FRANKFURT**, a production directed by Simon Green as well as the 1954 film version, directed by Guy Hamilton.



6.1 [Review by Philip French](#) , *The Observer*, Sunday 2 May 2010

[JB Priestley's](#) powerful play, written as the Second world war was coming to an end and just before the election of the first majority Labour government, combines his socialist convictions with his fascination with time. The setting is Priestley's favourite time and place - middle-class Yorkshire, 1912 – where a suave, somewhat sinister plain-clothes cop intrudes on a wealthy burgher's complacent family dinner party and with considerable relish exposes the rats beneath the floorboards, showing how the family is collectively responsible for the destruction and suicide of an innocent working-class girl. In Guy Hamilton's well-acted claustrophobic film version (produced by a company set up by Priestley and his longtime agent), Alastair Sim is formidable as the inspector, now less resonantly called Poole, and in a series of flashbacks Jane Wenham (Albert Finney's first wife) plays the mysterious girl who doesn't appear in the stage version.

6.2 Interview with Simon Green (director the English Theatre Frankfurt Production):



Q: "Inspector" was written in 1945 and Priestley has set it in the Edwardian past. Costumes and Set in your production indicate our contemporary society. Why did you choose this clear-cut modern approach?

S.G.: The main reason I have chosen this approach because certainly in England there was an old performance tradition, it was an old fashioned sort of Edwardian play before Stephen Daldry reinvented it 15 years ago and put it back on the syllabus. I don't want an audience to sit back behind a window, curtain's up and they see an Edwardian set with white dinner jackets and long dresses and are immediately removed from the play. It isn't just a comedy of manners, it's not about a single period at all – No, the domestic political, social and cultural issues of Priestley's script are absolutely relevant till today and are happening in our society in England and I am sure in Germany too. People are falling through the net to the bottom of society and the social services f. ex. do not catch them any longer.

Q: Would you agree that we live in an age where people more and more just tend to look entirely after themselves, quite contrary to the Inspector's creed that we are members of one body?

S.G.: Absolutely. We live in a very greedy atmosphere. People are in such a grab, grab mood.

Q: The experience of the two World Wars had a heavy impact on influence

S.G.: Yes,

Write a review of the ET Frankfurt production, if you like in comparison with the 1954 film version.

Consider:

- Acting - how the actors should play particular episodes
- Casting - who would be suited to the various roles
- Set - what kind of stage set would work best for this play
- Lighting, sound and music - what effects (FX) of lighting, sound and music would help make the play's ideas more clear?

7. Themes

7.1 Guilt, A Useful or Useless Emotion?



Andrew Harrison and Connie Walker in the The English Theatre Frankfurt (2011) production

*We learn wisdom from failure
Much more than from success:
We often discover what will do
By finding out what will not do:
And probably he who never made a mistake
Never made a discovery
-Samuel Smiles-*

Guilt - who is to blame?

Who is to blame for Eva's death?
Consider how each of the Birlings
and Gerald Croft influences what
happens to Eva - what part does
each play in the chain of events
leading to her death?

Guilt seems to be an emotion that we all seem to have. It can be a useful or useless emotion depending on how we use it. I will attempt to “deconstruct” guilt and locate ways that it can work for us not against us. Guilt is like any other emotion something to take notice of and learn from not give in to its oppression.

It seems that North American and British cultures are immersed in guilt. For example we hear about Catholic guilt and Jewish guilt. The “protestant work ethic” dictates that we will get nothing in life unless we work hard. We are surrounded by messages that instill guilt in most everything we do. There is parental guilt, survivor guilt, helper’s guilt, prosperity guilt, relationship guilt, adultery guilt, food guilt, and even pet guilt. Guilt speaks to us about not being good enough, about being a failure (in our own eyes) because guilt becomes a way that we can beat up on ourselves. It can be used to manipulate, to accuse and blame. Guilt pushes us to make poor decisions, decisions that are not thought through. Guilty parents including overburdened single parents and absent fathers can assuage their guilt feelings by providing their children with material goods.

Adler (1956) considers guilt an aggressive behavior that serves to put distance between others and us. It is a way of withdrawing and retreating into self-flagellation and self-pity. Furthermore Adler sees guilt feelings and regrets as an excuse for not doing anything “it is not the guilt feelings, however, that bring about distance; rather the defective inclination and preparation of the whole personality find such feelings advantageous for preventing any advance”, “an excellent excuse for not cooperating” (p, 273). An example is an alcoholic who sits at the bar lamenting about how much he/she loves and misses his/her children.

Adler (1956) suggests that if guilt does not bring a change in behavior it is a useless feeling. This makes a lot of sense because focusing on feelings without allowing them to teach and motivate us usually makes us feel worse and can, in the end, debilitate and depress us. Eventually we want to escape from feeling bad and this is a recipe for being seduced into destructive behaviors. It can end up in a wholly oppressive situation and now Guilt now becomes our Master and we are the slaves to the feeling.

Culturally, organized and fundamentalist religion tends to keep its flock in check by instilling guilt for not following the tenets of the faith; for not being a good Christian, Muslim, or Jew. Parents control their children by instilling guilt for not behaving like they should, for causing grief or stress and for just being children. We see someone homeless on the street and feel guilty that we have a roof over our head and they don’t. Someone dies and we live we feel survivor guilt or someone gets fired and we keep our job, we feel guilty. As long as we feel bad we are controlled by the guilt. Once we stand up to it and use it as a way to change our behavior we have won over it.

When we make decisions that are based on sound thinking not fuelled by the emotion of Guilt; we have control not Guilt. What children need is our attention and love, structure and sound discipline and understanding not presents and giving in to their every wish. Otherwise we risk raising irresponsible and pampered children. When we do things for our partners out of Guilt we are controlled by it not by our love and understanding. Worst of all when we beat ourselves up because we think we are ‘not good enough’ or we have made a mistake we are giving in to Guilt and allowing ourselves to be controlled by it.

Financial organizations use Guilt to get us to buy RRSP’s and make sure we pay our bills on time. There are many societal purveyors of Guilt controlling us. Advertising is particularly adept at using Guilt to buy products. It is embedded in our consumer culture; our home is not clean enough, we don’t have the right clothes, the right look, bright and shiny teeth, we

don't give enough to charity, and we don't own property or have spent our money on things others disagree with. All this instills Guilt and we really need to stand up to it and decide for ourselves what serves us and what doesn't.

Many of us are helpers and helpers are besieged by Guilt because after all our whole purpose in life is to help others. If we aren't able to make a difference we blame ourselves and it can even cause us to cross the boundaries and enable others rather than help them to become independent and responsible for their actions. If we do something for others that they can do for themselves out of Guilt we are controlled by it. If we are feeling guilt feelings but not doing anything about it can lead to our blaming the very person we are trying to help or we can become stuck in our feelings and not see things clearly in terms of responsibility for change. We don't help others very well if we are not clear about our feelings and run ragged by Guilt.

In our relationships we are controlled by Guilt when we are afraid to tell people the truth because we are afraid that we will hurt them when in fact in most cases not telling them the truth is far more destructive. We are again controlled by our Guilt feelings. Guilt is destructive and we allow it be so if we do not address it and learn from it. We will then honour others with our truth in a loving and supportive way.

We can no longer stay stuck and mired in our Guilt feelings now we know what Guilt is and what it does. We now have the power in our hands to stand up to it. If we change our behaviour and/or come to an understanding we now have the power over our lives and we are not letting Guilt or Regrets to govern what we do. Eileen Caddy states it well "Regrets can hold you back and prevent the wonderful taking place in your lives".

by **Denise Hall** First published 5.5.2010 Source:
<http://www.dragonflycounselling.com/therapy-and-change/item/4-deconstructing-guilt.html?tmpl=component&print=1>

Assignment:

Give an account of the chain of events in the order in which each event occurs (see dates above).

- Say how far each character is at fault for what he or she has done to Eva.
- Then judge how far each is right or wrong in his or her attitude now to what was done - admitting or denying guilt.
- In conclusion, try to assess how responsible, and how ready to admit responsibility, each of the five is.
- Is there any connection between the age of each character and his or her readiness to accept blame?

7.2 The Social status of women today

7.2.1 Definition: Gender Discrimination

Represented by Sybil and Sheila Birling, and the invisible but omnipresent Eva/ Daisy, women are seen variously as innocents, social climbers, victims and suspects.

Discrimination is the cognitive and sensory capacity or ability to see fine distinctions and perceive differences between objects, subjects, concepts and patterns, or possess exceptional development of the senses. Used in this way to identify exceptional discernment since the 17th century, the term began to be used as an expression of derogatory racial prejudice in the 1830s from Thomas D. Rice's performances as "Jim Crow".

Assignment:

How are issues of gender played out and do they enrich or detract from the moral and political messages?

Since the American Civil War the term 'discrimination' generally evolved in American English usage as an understanding of prejudicial treatment of an individual based solely on their race, later generalized as membership in a certain socially undesirable group or social category. Discernment has remained in British English as a term denoting elite status in perception and insight, often attributed to success in investment finance, or anyone with admirable choice in style, often high society leaders.

Discriminatory laws such as redlining exist in many countries. In some places, controversial attempts such as racial quotas have been used to redress negative effects of discrimination.

Within sociology, 'discrimination' is the prejudicial treatment of an individual based solely on their membership in a certain group or category. Discrimination is the *actual behavior* towards members of another group. It involves excluding or restricting members of one group from opportunities that are available to other groups.

The United Nations stance on discrimination includes a statement that: "Discriminatory behaviors take many forms, but they all involve some form of exclusion or rejection."

Sex, Gender and Gender Identity discrimination

Though gender discrimination and sexism refers to beliefs and attitudes in relation to the gender of a person, such beliefs and attitudes are of a social nature and do not, normally, carry any legal consequences. **Sex discrimination**, on the other hand, may have legal consequences.

Though what constitutes sex discrimination varies between countries, the essence is that it is an adverse action taken by one person against another person that would not have occurred had the person been of another sex. Discrimination of that nature in certain enumerated circumstances is illegal in many countries.

Currently, discrimination based on sex is defined as adverse action against another person that would not have occurred had the person been of another sex. This is considered a form of prejudice and is illegal in certain enumerated circumstances in most countries.

Sexual discrimination can arise in different contexts. For instance an employee may be discriminated against by being asked discriminatory questions during a job interview, or because an employer did not hire, promote or wrongfully terminated an employee based on his or her gender, or employers pay unequally based on gender.

In an educational setting there could be claims that a student was excluded from an educational institution, program, opportunity, loan, student group, or scholarship due to his or her gender. In the housing setting there could be claims that a person was refused negotiations on seeking a house, contracting/leasing a house or getting a loan based on his or her gender. Another setting where there have been claims of gender discrimination is banking; for example if one is refused credit or is offered unequal loan terms based on one's gender.

Another setting where there is usually gender discrimination is when one is refused to extend his or her credit, refused approval of credit/loan process, and if there is a burden of unequal loan terms based on one's gender.

Socially, sexual differences have been used to justify different roles for men and women, in some cases giving rise to claims of primary and secondary role.

While there are alleged non-physical differences between men and women, major reviews of the academic literature on gender difference find only a tiny minority of characteristics where there are consistent psychological differences between men and women, and these relate directly to experiences grounded in biological difference. However, there are also some psychological differences in regard to how problems are dealt with and emotional perceptions and reactions which may relate to hormones and the successful characteristics of each gender during longstanding roles in past primitive lifestyles.

Unfair discrimination usually follows the gender stereotyping held by a society.

The United Nations had concluded that women often experience a "glass ceiling" and that there are no societies in which women enjoy the same opportunities as men. The term "glass ceiling" is used to describe a perceived barrier to advancement in employment based on discrimination, especially sex discrimination.

In the United States in 1995, the Glass Ceiling Commission, a government-funded group, stated: "Over half of all Master's degrees are now awarded to women, yet 95% of senior-level managers, of the top Fortune 1000 industrial and 500 service companies are men. Of them, 97% are white." In its report, it recommended affirmative action, which is the consideration of an employee's gender and race in hiring and promotion decisions, as a means to end this form of discrimination. In 2008, women accounted for 51% of all workers in the high-paying management, professional, and related occupations. They outnumbered men in such occupations as public relations managers; financial managers; and human resource managers.

Source: Wikipedia

7.2.2 A new report on incomes, jobs and professions show women still have a long way to go.

From: The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) Toronto, Ontario, Canada. (It conducts research, education and advocacy on issues of equality and democracy. It works to strengthen movements for social justice globally.)

The gender gap is much wider than is commonly believed - women's incomes are 61% of men's, despite years of trying to close the gender gap. Two decades of women's progress has resulted in marginal improvements. Women's average incomes have risen by less than \$3,000 – significant perhaps, but still far short of men's. In 1998 (the most recent data available), women have average (or median) incomes of \$13,806 while men's incomes average at \$22,673. The study reveals that this income gap persists across age, educational attainment, labour market situation and family type.

Women are over-represented in the ranks of the poor and under-represented among upper income earners. They are segregated by occupation, having too few good jobs and too many contingent jobs. They are additionally marginalized if they are women of colour, aboriginal, with disabilities, younger or older. For women raising children alone, they bear tremendous poverty rates. When examining how many women make it to the ranks of the wealthy, the study reveals that not many do. Women are under-represented by almost a 3-fold factor in the top 20% of Canadian earners. Only 11% of women get into the top 20%, whereas 29% of men access upper incomes of \$32,367 and beyond. Strongly related to this trend is occupational segregation. Women also are still denied access to many of the prime high paying professions and jobs. Women made up only 5% of skilled trades, 10% of fire and police forces and a meager 21% of senior managers. The barriers to women's employment must be significant to have such results. One such barrier is access to post secondary education where skyrocketing tuition and erosion of scholarships means women are denied such access.

Not surprisingly, women are over-represented among the contingent work force. This is the fastest growing sector for women's employment, where the wages are low and the work is part-time, non-unionized and insecure. Women in this category earn median incomes of less than \$11,000. This category also includes self-employment where women have median incomes that are only 59% that of men's.

One bright spot in terms of women's equality is in the results found for women who work in unionized environments. Women make 82% of men's incomes in such environments – even when comparing full time, full year employment. When assessing the impact of unionization, the study reveals that non-unionized environments create a wider gender gap – women make only 72% of men's incomes in such environments.

Unionized settings do much for women's equality – and, as such, are a recommended strategy for reducing inequality. Other policy recommendations include improving the minimum wage to levels above the poverty line, implementing a national child care strategy and providing free post-secondary tuition. Underlying these initiatives is the building of a core commitment to actively prohibit discrimination. Policies such as pay equity and employment equity are fundamental requirements.

Additional startling statistics:

- The poverty rates for women in general is 20%, for women of colour is 37% and for aboriginal women 43%
- Women in couples with children under 16 had median incomes that were only 48 per cent of their male partners. Their median incomes were \$13,153.
- Women aged 45-64 made only 51 per cent of their male counterparts. Their median after-tax income was only \$14,779. As retirement income is a function of lifetime earnings, women's low income in this age group means they will be at great risk of poverty in retirement.
- Thirty-five per cent of Canadian women have not completed high school and 72 per cent of these women had median after-tax incomes under \$13,786.

Statistical studies of low income generally focus on the family. Using the family as the unit of measure hides the rate of women's economic inequality as men's higher incomes (due in part to men's greater likelihood of having higher paid, full year, full-time jobs) is likely to raise the total family income above the Statistics Canada measures of low income. This report looks at the frequency with which women, whether they are in relationships or not, earn lower incomes in comparison with men.

7.3 Responsibility

The most important theme of the play, it could be argued, is responsibility.

At the beginning of the play Mr. Birling gives his (limited) view of responsibility in a long speech. Mr. Birling's definition of responsibility is immediately followed by the arrival of the Inspector. The Inspector gives his (very wide) explanation of responsibility immediately before he leaves.

Assignments:

- See how often the words "responsible" and "responsibility" appear, and in what senses.
- Is Mr. Birling a "hard-headed" businessman, as he claims, or a "hard-hearted" character?
- Does Mrs. Birling, in her work for the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation act out of a sense of responsibility or a desire to be seen to be charitable?
- Where does she claim the responsibility for Eva Smith and her unborn child lies?
- How is she shown to be wrong?
- What are the "fire and blood and anguish" he refers to in his final speech?
- How is our view of the Inspector's statements affected by his apparently supernatural character?

Consider how Mr. Birling's comments reveal his views:

In 1912 there was no welfare state in Britain. Poor people often depended on charity. But wealthy people, such as Mrs. Birling, in the play, usually controlled the charity.

7.4 Who or what is the Inspector?

Who or what is the Inspector? In the text there are many clues. Examine each of these and try to interpret it. Write an essay, discussing how these clues and the Inspector's general behaviour contribute to the audience's idea of who he is and how correct his statements are.

Consider the idea that the Inspector, by his visit, gives the family a second chance.



Jules Melvin, Harry Long and Tara Godolphin in the The English Theatre Frankfurt (2011) production

Assignment:

Write an essay discussing the character of the Inspector, his method of discovering the truth, the effect he has on each of the other characters, both while he is with them and after he has gone. Give your view of who (or what) he is, and why you think this.

Sheila is worried earlier in the play by her mother's self-righteous denial of blame. After the Inspector goes she is worried by the attempt to dismiss his visit as a mere practical joke.

In the 1954 film of *An Inspector Calls*,

the Inspector does not leave the Birlings' house as in the play: he is left alone in Mr. Birling's study; Birling returns to ask him a question, and finds the room empty. Is this too blatant a way of suggesting that the Inspector is some kind of supernatural or angelic being? Some commentators on the play have suggested that his name contains a pun - it sounds like "Ghoul". A "ghoul" is an evil demon, which eats the flesh of the dead, or, metaphorically, a person obsessed by, or who profits by, another's death. After he has gone the Inspector is said by Birling to have exploited Eva's alleged death to frighten the "victims" of his supposed practical joke. Is it more important to know who the Inspector is, or what he has to say? Should Priestley (the playwright)

have made him more obviously spooky?

Assignment:

Show how the Inspector demonstrates by bringing out Eva's dealings with the Birlings and Gerald, that his view, not Birling's is right. The Inspector's identity may affect how we view his comments.

After he leaves, says the Inspector, the Birlings and Gerald can divide responsibility among themselves.

Possible clues:

- His method of working: "one person and one line of enquiry at a time" (A policeman would not insist on this. A real policeman would interview people alone. This Inspector already knows; he wants the others to see what they have done.)
- His asking Birling why he refused Eva's request for a pay rise.
- His statement that it is his duty "to ask questions".
- His saying that he never takes offence.
- His statement that he does not see much of the chief constable.
- His failure to be alarmed by Birling's threats.
- His concern for moral law not for criminal law.
- Authority and supernatural knowledge - as shown in her warnings to Gerald and to her mother.
- His final speech.

7.5 Identity Over Time (from: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)

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Irving Copi once defined the problem of identity through time by noting that the following two statements both seem true but appear to be inconsistent:

1. If a changing thing really changes, there can't literally be one and the same thing before and after the change.
2. However, if a changing thing literally remains one and the same thing (i.e., retains its identity) throughout the change, then it can not really have changed.

Traditionally, this puzzle has been solved in various ways. Aristotle, for example, distinguished between “accidental” and “essential” changes. Accidental changes are ones that don't result in a change in an objects' identity after the change, such as when a house is painted, or one's hair turns gray, etc. Aristotle thought of these as changes in the accidental properties of a thing. Essential changes, by contrast, are those which don't preserve the identity of the object when it changes, such as when a house burns to the ground and becomes ashes, or when someone dies. Armed with these distinctions, Aristotle would then say that, in the case of accidental changes, (1) and (2) are both false—a changing thing can really change one of its “accidental properties” and yet literally remain one and the same thing before and after the change.

Of course, this solution to the puzzle depends on there being a coherent distinction between accidental and essential changes, and between accidental and essential properties. Some philosophers find this distinction problematic and have developed other solutions that don't require this distinction. In what follows, we discuss these solutions to the puzzle, along with other puzzles that arise when considering the identity of objects over time.

Personal identity is perhaps the most extensively discussed special case of identity. What is it for a person existing at one time to be identical to a person existing at another? This question was first clearly posed by John Locke in his celebrated discussion of personal identity in the *Essay* (Locke 1975). Locke distinguishes between being the same man and being the same person. To be the same man is to be the same member of the species human being. For Locke what is crucial is that having the same consciousness is not sufficient for being the same man, but is sufficient for being the same person.

Assignment:

Considering the dramatic use of time

- Create a timeline for the play, using symbols and icons to represent characters and their key Actions (including action which occurs both on and off stage).
- Compare the timescale of Eva/Daisy's story compared to that of the other characters.
- How does Priestley use time in different ways, and to what effect?

Famously Locke calls the concept of a person a forensic concept. For Locke much of the importance attaching to being the same person is that moral responsibility for past deeds goes with being the same person, rather than being the same man or even the same immaterial substance, as a past person. In his view it is enough to be morally responsible for some deed that one is the same person as its performer. It is not required that one be the same man or the same immaterial substance as the one who performed the act in question.

What then, according to Locke, is it to have the same consciousness as some past person? He is customarily interpreted as holding that person *A* is the same person as earlier person *B* just in case *A* is able to remember enough of what happened to *B*. This is sometimes referred to as the memory criterion of personal identity.

Source: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-time/>

8. Discussion points and Creative Work

8. 1 Topics for Discussion

Social vs. individual responsibility

'We don't live alone. We are members of one body.' So states Inspector Goole in his final speech.

His character can be seen as a device to voice Priestley's views about social responsibility. To what extent do the other characters learn from their encounter with Goole, and how far do members of the audience agree with him?

Older vs. younger generations

Why are Mr and Mrs Birling so much more concerned about the potential for "public scandal" than the consequences of their behaviour? Sheila and Eric Birling represent the future: surely there is still time for them to change and adapt to the new order? Can their relationships with the other characters, more entrenched in their views and social positions, survive?

Staging

Detailed stage directions are provided, but Priestley himself makes clear that "an ordinary realistic set" may not do the play justice. What staging decisions can enhance the drama and tension, and how can recent productions inform our understanding of the lasting significance of this play?

Status and power

At first, the main characters are united in their desire for social status. The arrival of Inspector Goole undermines the natural paths of authority within the household, so how does power shift as the action progresses?

The place of women

Represented by Sybil and Sheila Birling, the servant Edna and the invisible but omnipresent Eva/Daisy, women are seen variously as innocents, social climbers, victims and suspects. How are issues of gender played out and do they enrich or detract from the moral and political messages?

8.2 Creative approaches

At the end of the play there are many possibilities, and we cannot say with certainty what might happen.

- Will the Birlings try to persuade their children to conceal the truth from the real Inspector who is coming?
- Will Sheila and Eric insist on openness?
- Where will Gerald stand now? (After his clever theory has been disproved - will he realise that Daisy Renton told him of her two sackings? He knew that at least Mr. Birling, Sheila and himself had all influenced the same girl!)
- Continue the story either as a play-script or as a third-person narrative with conversation. You may, if you wish, continue beyond the arrival of the real police officer. He or she, of course, is not likely to exert the same power over the Birlings and Gerald as the Inspector of the play has.

Priestley's use of character to engage the audience

Whole class creates a 'conscience corridor' for Eric, voicing the thoughts – criticisms, doubts, anxieties, anger – of the other characters towards him at the end Act Two.