

English Literature: *An Inspector Calls*



WordIT

Social responsibility

Meaning: (n.) The idea that, morally, people and businesses should protect and work in the best interests of their people and their society.

Origins of the word: Derives from the Latin *socius*, meaning 'friend', and the Latin *respondere*, meaning 'to answer' or 'offer in return'.

In context: Inspector Goole thinks that the Birlings ignore their social responsibility.

Challenge: Write a short explanation about how each of the Birlings, and Gerald, shirk their social responsibility to protect others.

Class

Meaning: (n.) The grouping of society into different 'classes' often based on wealth and jobs – e.g. upper, middle and working class.

Origins of the word: Derives from the Latin word *classis*, referring to the dividing of people into groups or kind.

In context: Eva is lower class and struggling to survive.

Challenge: Discuss with a partner the views that Mr and Mrs Birling have of the lower class. How do they treat Eva, who represents lower-class people? Find three quotes that show they are prejudiced against lower-class people.

Morality

Meaning: (n.) The principles that separate right from wrong.

Origins of the word: Derives from the Latin word *moralis*, meaning 'proper behaviour of a person in society'.

In context: Inspector Goole challenges the morality of Mrs Birling's actions.

Challenge: Rank the characters in *An Inspector Calls* from the most moral to the least moral. Do you notice anything about the ranking? Is it linked to any other characteristic that the character has – e.g. gender, age, class?

Justice

Meaning: (n.) Fair and reasonable treatment. A deserved punishment or reward.

Origins of the word: Derives from the Latin *iustitia*, meaning 'righteousness' and 'equality'.

In context: Mr Birling thinks he can evade justice.

Challenge: Reread the ending of *An Inspector Calls*. Discuss with a partner whether you think the Birlings will receive justice for their actions. Use evidence from the text to support your points. If you think they will receive justice, what do you think will happen to them? Why?

Repentance

Meaning: (n.) The act of regretting and apologising for a former action. Often, repentance is linked to asking for forgiveness from God.

Origins of the word: Early 12th century. Derived from the Old French *repentir*, meaning 'to repent'.

In context: Sheila shows repentance and realises that her actions were wrong.

Challenge: Choose three characters and explain how they show their repentance. Explain how this affects your feelings about these characters.

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