

Gerald Croft

Gerald is described as an 'attractive chap,' 'too manly to be a dandy,' and the 'well-bred young man-about-town.' 'Well-bred' shows that his family is important and well off, very much the stereotypical upper-middle-class family of the time. This also shows the importance of his background in relation to the play, as this is what Mr Birling finds to be the best thing about Gerald. 'Too manly to be a dandy' suggests that he is not like all of the other young men of his class, as he is more interested in other things than his clothing and things of that nature. 'Attractive man' is important as it is another one of the superficial attributes that is weighted so heavily throughout the play. Sheila, for example, is obsessed with how things and people look at the beginning of the play, and so it would make sense for her to choose a partner based on something as shallow and superficial as attractiveness. Gerald knows the importance of his family and business and is very much like Mr Birling in this regard.

Gerald's relationships with other characters do not change a dramatic amount over the course of the play. Gerald and Sheila start the play madly in love, flirting and joking with each other at the table like any newly engaged couple would do. Gerald gets her an engagement ring at the beginning, which shows how serious they are about each other. There are hints that the relationship isn't as perfect as they make out, as Sheila mentions that he didn't go anywhere near her last summer. After Gerald's confession, Sheila gives him the engagement ring and tells him to leave, showing that she cannot trust him after finding out about what he did. At the very end of the play she hints that she may take him back, but they would have to start again in learning to trust each other. Gerald and Eric never really get along, and they both make jokes and quips at each other throughout the play. Gerald and Mr Birling maintain a good relationship throughout the play, even during hearing what Gerald had done to Sheila. This is because Mr Birling sees the potential in a marriage between Sheila and Gerald, and so is willing to forgive him for breaking his daughter's heart just to ensure his business success. Mrs Birling and Gerald get along also. At the start of the play she is seen to be sucking up to Gerald, and she too is quick to forget all that Gerald had done.

Themes explored through Gerald

- Social Class- 'Perhaps I ought to explain first that this is Mr Gerald Croft- the son of sir George Croft- you know, Crofts Limited.' ~ Mr Birling to Inspector
- Responsibility- 'Everything's all right now, Sheila.'
- Truth- 'No. I wasn't telling a complete lie when I said I'd been very busy at the works all that time.'