

## The inspector analysis

The Inspector is in his fifties, dressed in a plain dark suit. He initially seems to be an ordinary Brumley police inspector, but (as his name suggests) comes to seem something more ominous, perhaps even supernatural. J. B. Priestly writes The Inspector "need not be a big man, but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness." The precise nature of his character is left ambiguous by Priestly, and it can be interpreted in various ways.

The Inspector knows is aware that Sheila feels guilty, and had underlined that before she realised, and lets her feel guilty and admit she cannot bare to be responsible for the girl's death. She is struck by the truth of what the Inspector says, showing that he is a powerful, manipulative, and interesting character. Priestley describes him as speaking "carefully, weightily ... and [he] has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before he speaks."

Goole is allegedly a police officer who has come to investigate the potential involvement of the Birlings in the recent suicide of a girl by the name of Eva Smith. Throughout the play, he conducts himself in a manner unsuitable for a police inspector: he takes moral stances throughout his interrogation, usually in support of labor rights, and in the end, he universalizes Eva Smith's case to the cases of many such disadvantaged lower class citizens throughout the country. In the end of the play, it turns that he is not an Inspector after all, and is suspected instead to be a person from the town with socialist tendencies and a grudge against Mr. Birling. The final revelation—the call from the infirmary that there really was a suicide—renews suspicion about the Inspector's identity, as it makes it seem that Inspector Goole did somehow know what was going to happen, and was not merely seeking to make the Birlings cognizant of their moral wrongs.

### **Priestley's message about the inspector (an intended effect on the audience):**

The Inspector is really Priestley's voice – he represents Priestley's strong moral views. His job is to make the characters change their attitudes, face up to what they have done and start taking responsibility for each other.

He heightens drama – his entrances and exits are well timed to create maximum tension (e.g. at the end of act 1 when he walks in on Gerald and Sheila's conversation).

He controls the structure of the play – each revelation moves the play one step forward.

### **Inspector Goole's character development/changes**

Inspector Goole's character doesn't change. He always remains assertive throughout the play. However, he seems to gain more control over the characters as the play progresses.

Inspector Goole's quote bank:

He arrives at a critical time – to interrupt Mr Birling and his selfish views: 'a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own – and – We hear the sharp ring of a front doorbell.' The Inspector's role is to show that this is not the case.

He is described in the stage directions as giving 'an impression of massiveness, solidity, and purposefulness'. He takes charge immediately and remains in control throughout. He remains solid as each of them breaks down and nothing distracts him from his purpose.

He is clearly there to challenge and investigate. He has a habit of 'looking hard' at the person he is interrogating before starting to speak. This unnerves the characters.

He directs the investigation carefully, dealing with 'one line of enquiry at a time'.

Therefore, he is controlling the structure of the play.

He is a teacher – to teach each character (and the audience) of the importance of social responsibility.

He uses aggressive, shocking language to make the characters feel guilty for the part they played in Eva Smith's death: 'she died in misery and agony'