

The playwright fought and was wounded in WW1. During the war he saw first hand how damaging class prejudice could be. He became increasingly concerned with how people were treated in society. So, he began to use his plays to criticise class inequality and promote ideas about social responsibility.

In 1945 the UK held its first general election since before WW2 began. The Labour party won by a landslide, defeating the conservative party. Labour wanted to focus on social reform and the creation of a welfare state. Priestley wrote this play before the election but the ideas in the play reflect societies desire for change at the time.

Socialism = An economic and political system where the ways of making a living (factories, offices, etc.) are owned by the workers who run them and the people who depend on them, meaning the value made belongs to the people who make it, instead of a group of private owners .

Socialism grew in popularity in the mid-20th century and Priestley sympathised with the socialist belief that wealth and power should be shared more equally in society.



The former Soviet Union is an example of a socialist system. Cuba is an example of a socialist nation. Its economy is state run and it lacks a stock exchange.



Priestley intentionally set the play in the past to show how far we've come but to get the audience to reflect on whether we need to progress further.

In 1912 men and women were expected to behave in a certain way, and were presumed to have certain characteristics and roles in society and their family.

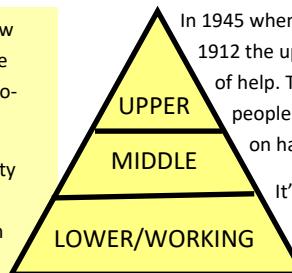
Men were often the 'breadwinners' who would earn money to provide for their families. The father was seen as head of the family and his wife and children were supposed to respect them. Children were expected to obey their parents. Women were expected to get married, have children and stay at home to look after the house and children. Working class women had to do this and work as well, often being paid less than men.

In 1918, Parliament passed an act granting the **vote** to **women** over the age of 30 who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5, and graduates of British universities. About 8.4 million **women** gained the **vote**.

Audience's in the 1940s may have been shocked by Eva/Daisy's actions. Sexual relationships outside of marriage were strongly disapproved of, and pregnant unmarried woman were often judged by society.

During WW2 many women who had not worked before had to take over men's jobs during the war. They were reluctant to give up employment once the war had ended. People had started to question gender roles.

1940s audiences might have been quite uncomfortable with Sheila's behaviour-she interrupts and challenges the male characters. Even in the 1940s women were expected to respect men's opinions.



In 1945 when the play was written the class divide was less defined but it did still exist. Whereas in 1912 the upper and middle classes categorised people living in poverty as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of help. This idea caused a dilemma for the wealthy. They believed that the 'underserving' were people who had faced hardship due to their own bad choices. Whereas the 'deserving' had fallen on hard times due to illness or old age.

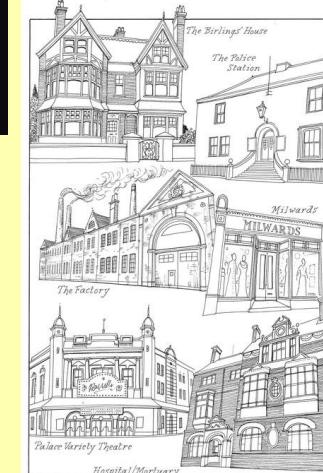
It's quite interesting that Priestley shows the men's hypocrisy towards women within the play. The family want to protect Sheila from 'unpleasant and disturbing scenes' but don't care about the unpleasant things they put Eva/Daisy through. Working Class people were discriminated against by the middle and upper class.

Gerald might be younger than Mr and Mrs Birling but at the end of the play he remains unchanged. This was Priestley communicating that a different more caring future isn't inevitable. It's a choice that people need to make for themselves. Priestley wanted to criticise the upper classes following both World Wars as from his experience with them they were more set in their ways and less likely to change.

1940s audiences were used to living in a society where there wasn't much government help available for those who needed it. This would have made them more aware of the importance of social responsibility.



## J B Priestley & His Intentions of An Inspector Calls (CONTEXT)



The different ways the Birlings and Gerald react to the Inspector's revelations reflect their different ages. This was Priestley wanting to represent the different generations of society in general.

When they are questioned the older Birlings don't accept any responsibility for their role in Eva/Daisy's death.

The younger Birlings are different. Both Sheila and Eric show remorse. Through them Priestley suggests that there is a chance for a more equal and fair society in the future.

The **intentions** of the playwright and the **context** of the time it was **written** are important. How would you communicate these 4 areas using design aspects?

- Costume
- Lighting
- Set
- Sound
- Staging
- Stage props and furniture

1945

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WHAT CONDITION ARE THE ITEMS IN? WHY? \_\_\_\_\_



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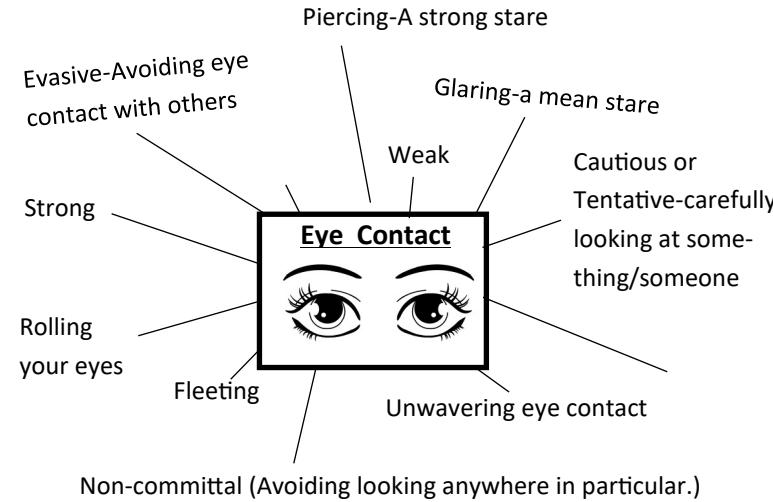
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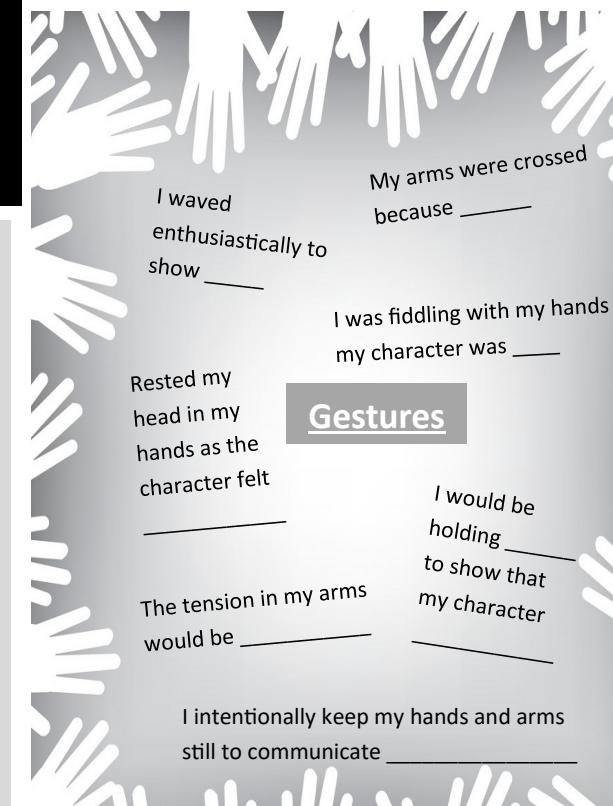
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## Voice

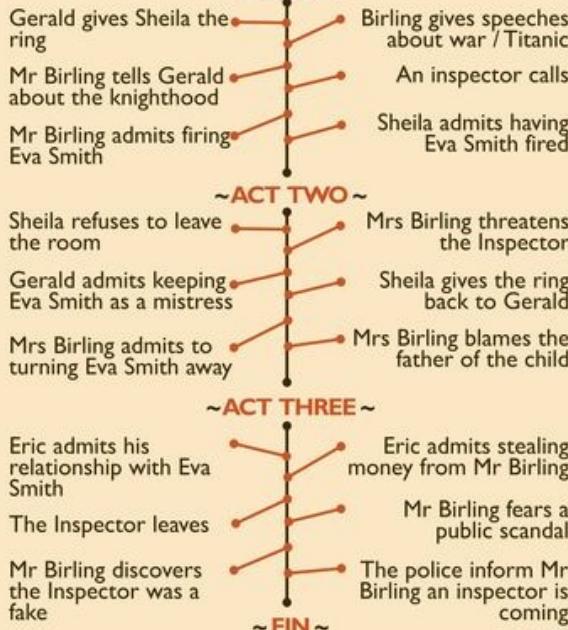
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# PLOT

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

## ~ACT ONE~



Beginning

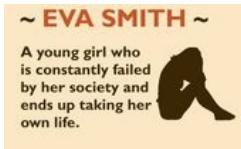
Middle

End

## The Original Performance in 1946

- performed in Russia as no theatre were available in London
- Acted in a naturalistic style (Priestley was not happy with it!)
- minimal and symbolic set design
- On a proscenium arch stage
- Simple lighting (Only colour used was a pink gel when the inspector arrived.)

Sometimes these two characters are played by the same actor to enable the performers to create flashbacks on stage.



Consider how the characters act throughout the play.



How would you reveal the **CONTEXT** and the characters through your costume design?

Labour had just come into power in the government and beaten the conservative party

Socialists vs capitalists

In the 20th century socialism was gaining in popularity, especially after WW2.

## ~ GERALD ~

The son of a wealthy family who keeps Eva Smith as a mistress while engaging Sheila.



## ~ MR BIRLING ~

A wealthy business owner and public figure that fires Eva Smith to protect profits.



## ~ MRS BIRLING ~

A self-righteous woman that turns a pregnant and desperate Eva Smith away from her charity.



## ~ ERIC ~

A young, reckless, drunk who impregnates Eva Smith and steals from his father.



## ~ SHEILA ~

A young ignorant girl who has Eva Smith fired out of jealousy. She is also engaged to Gerald.



## ~ THE INSPECTOR ~

The mysterious inspector who has each family member confess their involvement in Eva Smith's death



## Women's Rights

Women were still being treated worse than men in terms of rights

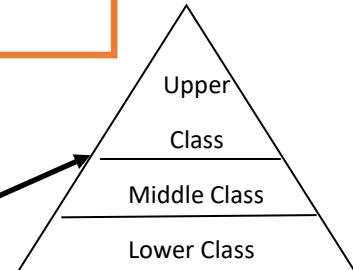
## Context Reminder

It wasn't just an issue with Class. Different age groups were being

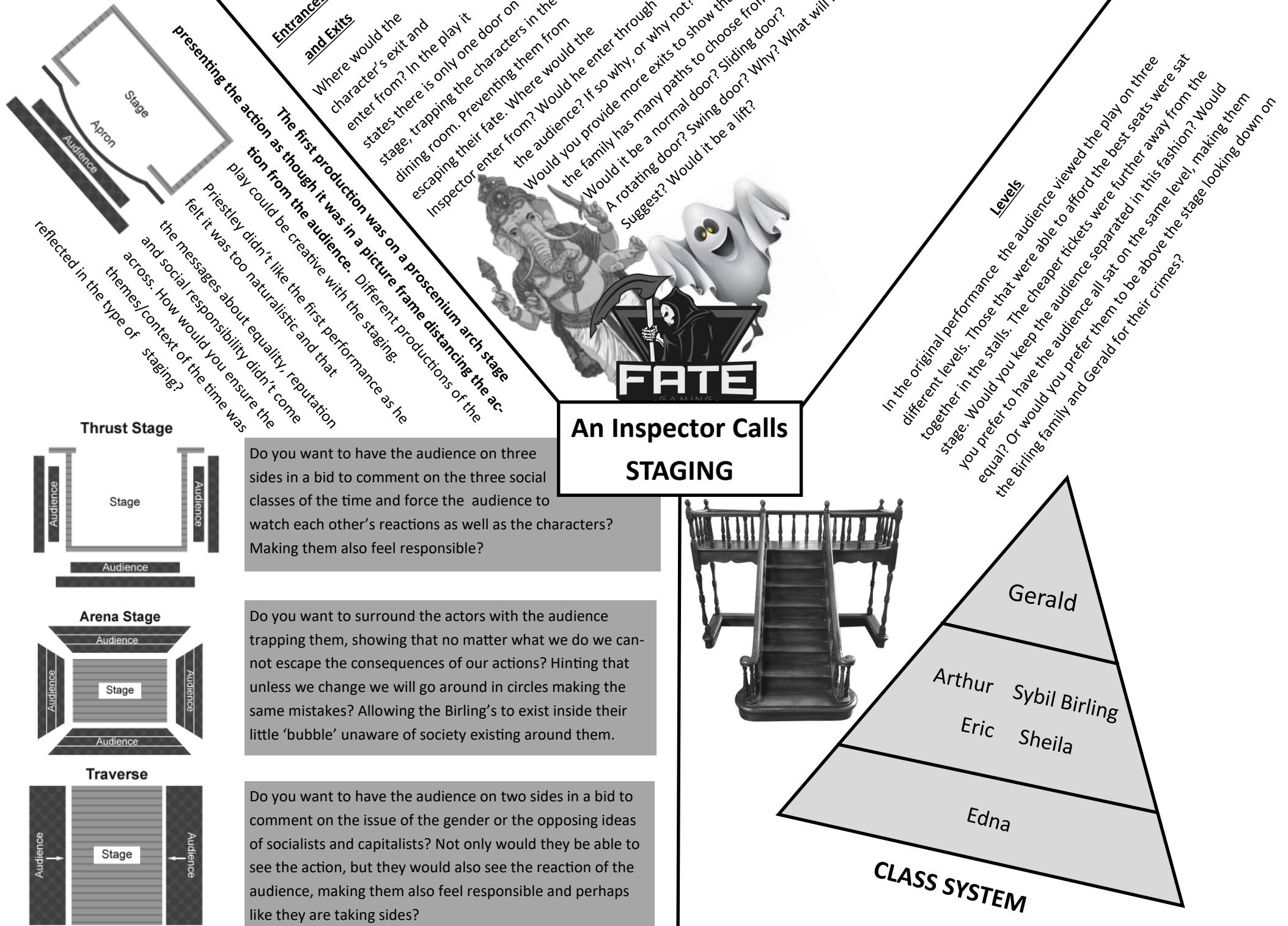
## Written after World War 2

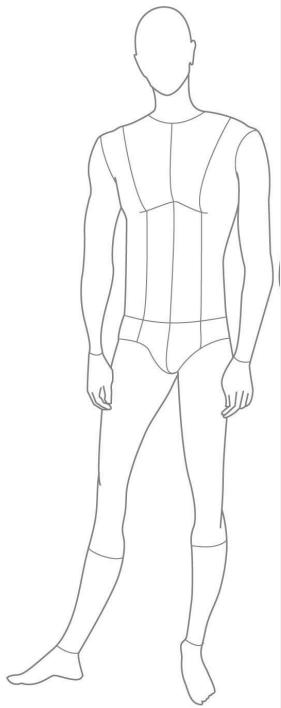
in 1945

The playwright fought in WW1 and witnessed first hand how damaging class prejudice could be.



Priestley wanted the audience to look at how far they had come from 1912 and prevent them from returning to a 1912 mind-set





### Gerald Croft

Upper Class, capitalist 'gentleman' who is newly engaged to Sheila who he has already cheated on. Remains as a Capitalist.

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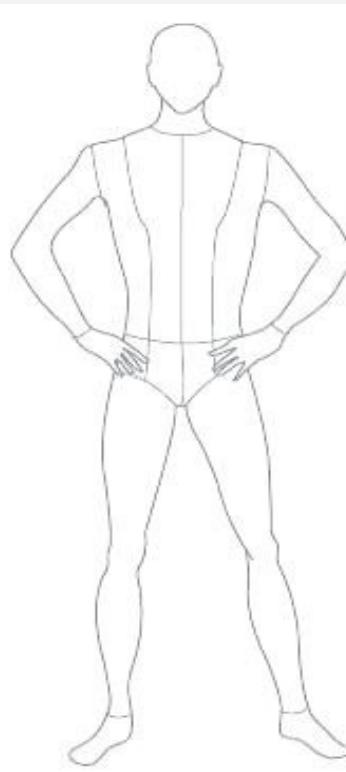
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### Arthur Birling

Capitalist, greedy , wealth orientated middle class factory owner with old fashioned values and ideals about class, gender and age.



### Eric Birling

Alcoholic who stole from his Dad's company behind his back and took advantage of a lower class girl. At the end of the play he becomes a socialist.

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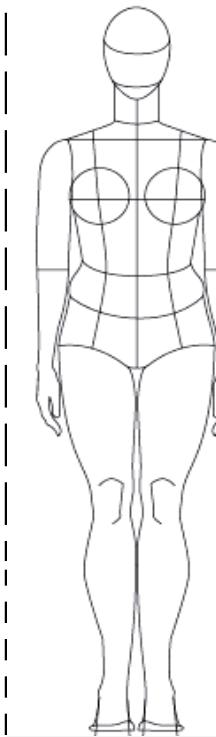
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### Cybil Birling

Previously upper class, judgmental, uptight, old fashioned and refused to help Eva/Daisy. Remains as a capitalist throughout.



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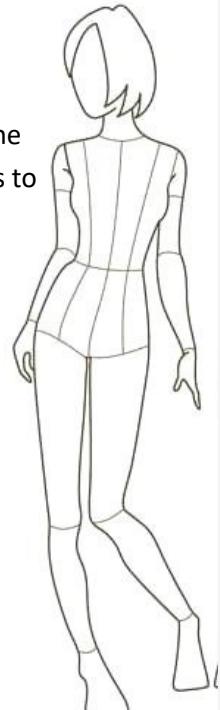
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### Sheila Birling

Immature, playful, newly engaged. Becomes a socialist at the end of the play and greatly regrets her actions to Daisy.Eva.



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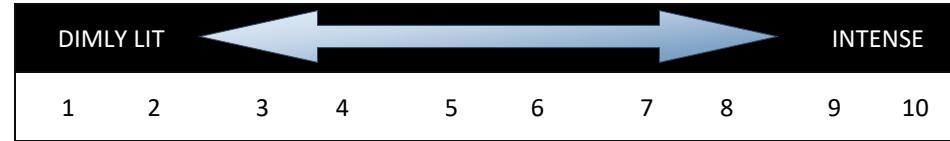






# LIGHTING

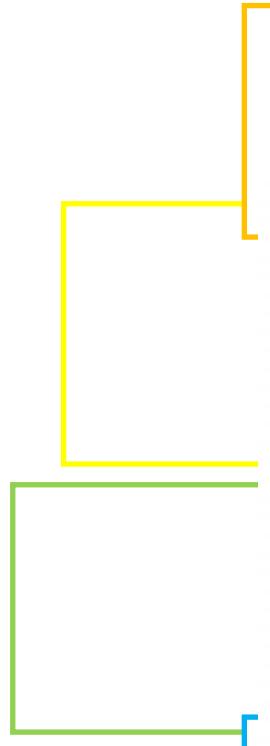
This is used to set the atmosphere, time period and help us understand more about the characters in the scene.



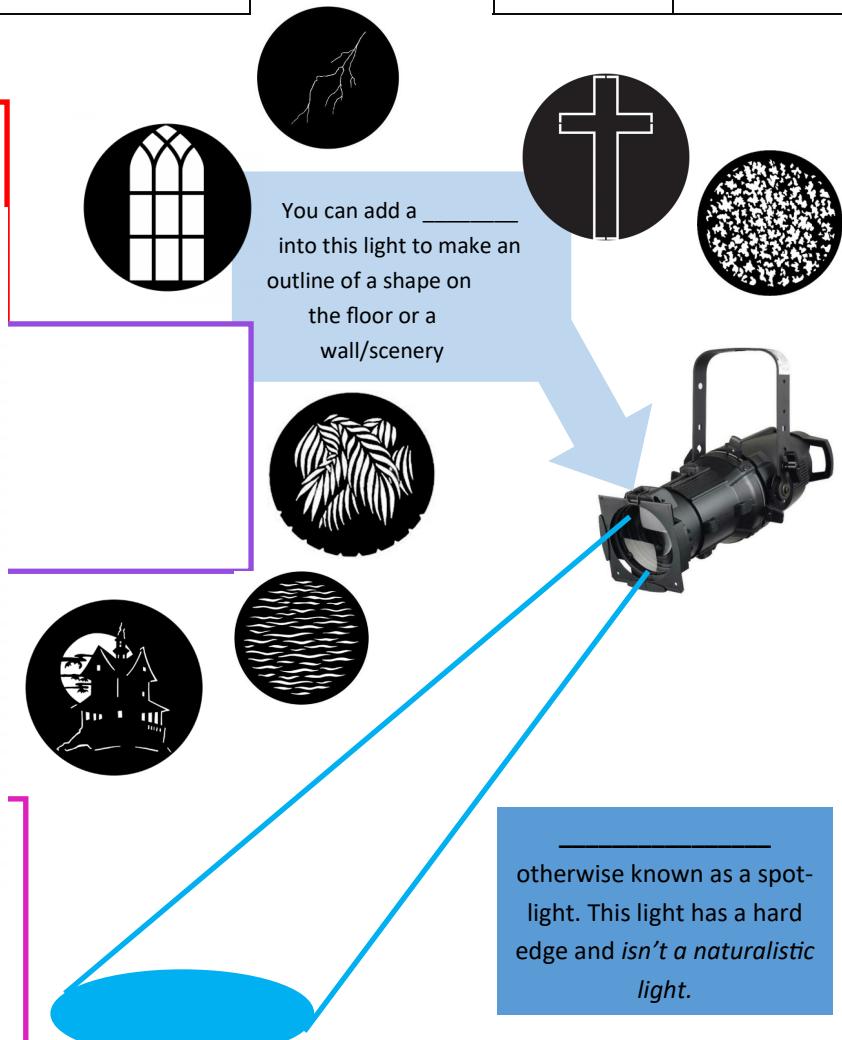
SNAP	
MEDIUM FADE	
SLOW FADE	
BLACK OUT	



Fresnel— a pool of light without a hard edge



GELS



\_\_\_\_\_ otherwise known as a spotlight. This light has a hard edge and *isn't a naturalistic light.*

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Copper



Glass



Silver



Gold



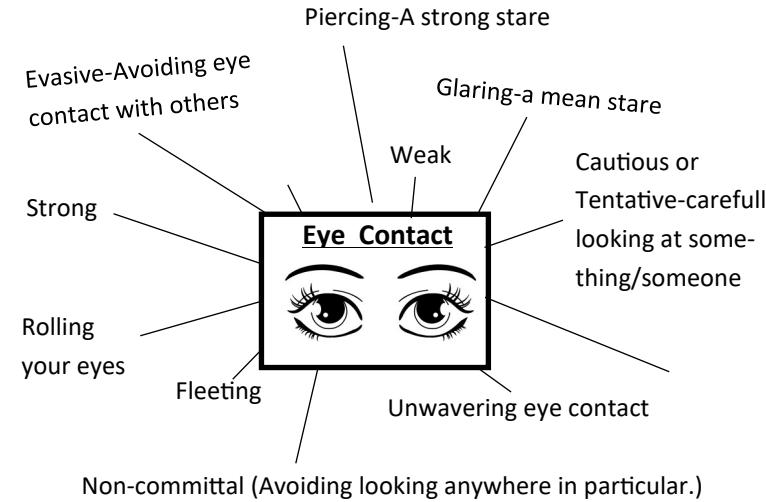
Crystal

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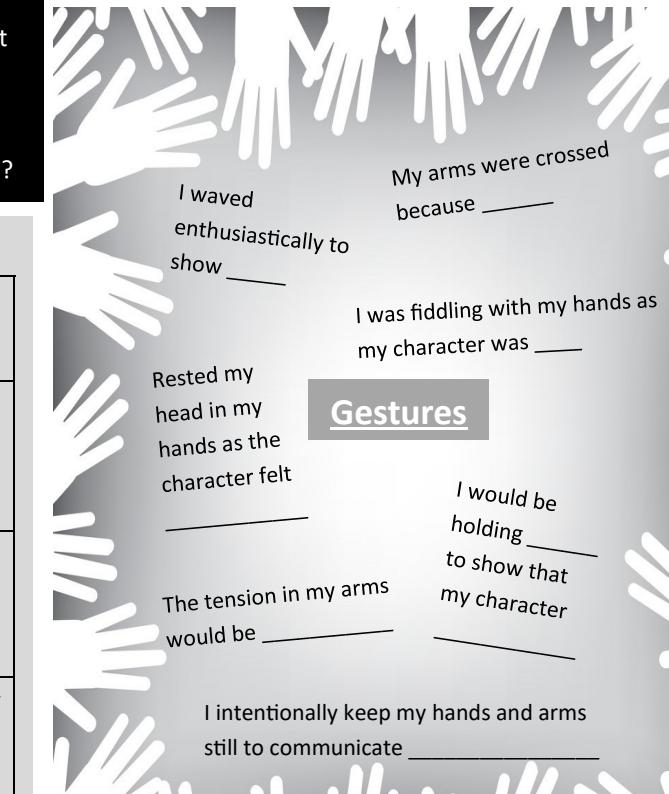
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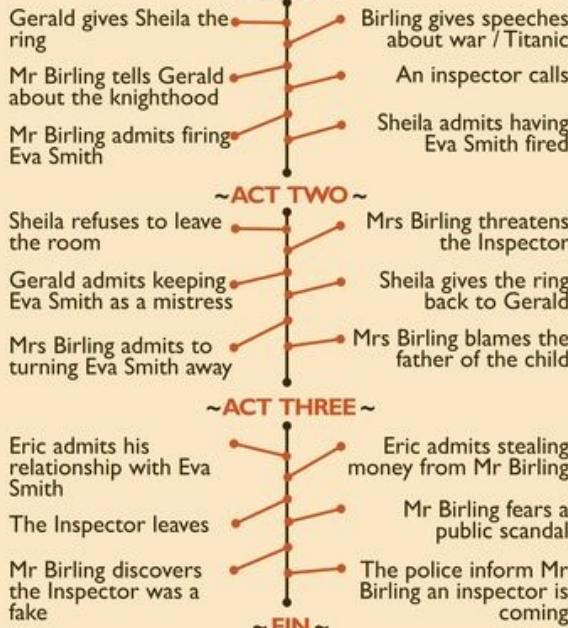


## Gestures

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AN INSPECTOR CALLS

## ~ACT ONE~



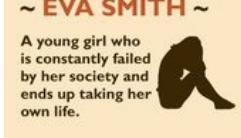
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## The Original Performance in 1946

- performed in Russia as no theatre were available in London
- Acted in a naturalistic style (Priestley was not happy with it!)
- minimal and symbolic set design
- On a proscenium arch stage
- Simple lighting (Only colour used was a pink gel when the inspector arrived.)



Consider how the characters act throughout the play.



How would you reveal the **CONTEXT** and the characters through your costume design?

Labour had just come into power in the government and beaten the conservative party

Socialists vs capitalists

In the 20th century socialism was gaining in popularity, especially after WW2.

## ~ GERALD ~

The son of a wealthy family who keeps Eva Smith as a mistress while engaging Sheila.



## ~ MR BIRLING ~

A wealthy business owner and public figure that fires Eva Smith to protect profits.



## ~ MRS BIRLING ~

A self-righteous woman that turns a pregnant and desperate Eva Smith away from her charity.



## ~ ERIC ~

A young, reckless, drunk who impregnates Eva Smith and steals from his father.



## ~ SHEILA ~

A young ignorant girl who has Eva Smith fired out of jealousy. She is also engaged to Gerald.



## ~ THE INSPECTOR ~

The mysterious inspector who has each family member confess their involvement in Eva Smith's death



## Women's Rights

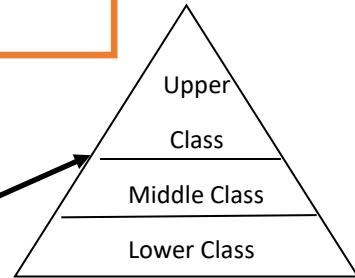
Women were still being treated worse than men in terms of rights

## Context Reminder

It wasn't just an issue with Class.  
Different age groups were being

Written after World War 2  
in 1945

The playwright fought in WW1 and witnessed first hand how damaging class prejudice could be.



Priestley wanted the audience to look at how far they had come from 1912 and prevent them from returning to a 1912 mind-set



