Birling's speech making

During the opening of the play, Birling’s speech-making dominates the dialogue, and reveals a great deal about his attitudes and beliefs. Birling is clearly established as politically and socially naive and Priestley uses Birling’s speeches to discredit him as a character.

Make detailed notes on what the audience learns about the following:

- Birling’s capitalist ideology
- Birling’s social and political views
- Birling’s business ethics
- Birling’s world view and ideas about the future.

Write in detailed paragraphs and use quotations to support your points.

The Inspector’s investigation begins

The Inspector enters and tells everyone that a girl named Eva Smith is in the mortuary having completed suicide. After questioning, Mr Birling admits that she had been in his employment eighteen months ago but was sacked for leading a strike in his factory. He refuses to take any responsibility for her death.

The Inspector’s entrance

All entrances and exits are significant in a play. The Inspector’s arrival is signified in the play by ‘the sharp ring of a front door bell’.

Make detailed notes on the way in which Priestley stages the entrance of the Inspector. Write a paragraph for each of the following:

- the announcement at the door
- the ‘banter’ between Gerald, Eric and Birling when they hear of the Inspector’s arrival
- the stage directions describing the Inspector
- the Inspector’s refusal of a drink
- the Inspector’s curt replies to Mr Birling.

The Inspector questions Mr Birling

When the Inspector starts to ask questions, Birling realises he is not the sort of Inspector he is used to. Look carefully at the questioning of Birling and list examples of exchanges between the two characters which are interesting or unusual.

Complete the table on the next page to start you off and then answer the following questions.

- What do we learn about the Inspector’s methods and questioning techniques?
- How does Mr Birling cope with this questioning? Make detailed notes on how he responds to the Inspector’s questioning techniques, considering what else we learn about his business ethics and attitudes to responsibility and community.
### Method/technique

Pursues a single line of inquiry, dealing with one person at a time. Only lets the character he is questioning answer questions or see the photograph.

### Purpose/effect

Allows him to examine the characters individually, and later we see that this is part of his plan to question them in reverse chronological order.

### Evidence/example

‘It’s the way I like to go to work. One person and one line of inquiry at a time. Otherwise there’s a muddle.’
Defensive and moralistic quotations in *An Inspector Calls*

Compile a list of all the defensive comments made by Mr Birling and the moralistic comments made by the Inspector.

- What do these exchanges reveal to the audience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defensive comments</th>
<th>Moralistic comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘There’s nothing mysterious - or scandalous - about this business - at least not as far as I’m concerned ... it has nothing to do with the wretched girl’s suicide.’</td>
<td>‘What happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened to her afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.’</td>
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</tbody>
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