



In the opening stage directions of the play Mrs Birling is described as: **"about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior."**

Q: Why does the writer use the word "cold" to describe her? What does it tell the reader about her character?

Q: Why is it significant that she is described as 'her husband's social superior'?

She is a **snob**, very aware of the differences between social classes. She is irritated when Mr Birling makes the social gaffe of praising the cook in front of Gerald and later is very dismissive of Eva, saying **"Girls of that class."**

Q: What does she mean by 'Girls of the class'?

She has the least respect for the Inspector of all the characters. She tries - unsuccessfully - to intimidate him and force him to leave, then lies to him when she claims that she does not recognise the photograph that he shows her.

She sees Sheila and Eric still as **"children"** and speaks down to them.

She **tries to deny things** that she doesn't want to believe: Eric's drinking, Gerald's affair with Eva, and the fact that a working class girl would refuse money even if it was stolen, claiming **"She was giving herself ridiculous airs."**

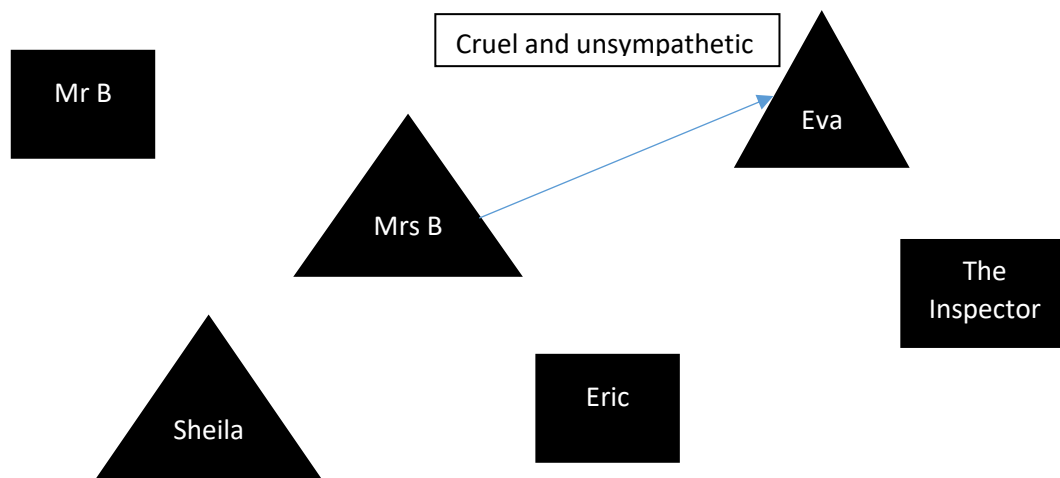
Q: Why does it annoy Mrs Birling that Eva / Daisy said her name was Mrs Birling?

She admits she was **"prejudiced"** against the girl who applied to her committee for help and saw it as her "duty" to refuse to help her. Her narrow sense of morality dictates that the father of a child should be responsible for its welfare, regardless of circumstances.

At the end of the play, she has had to come to terms that her son is a heavy drinker who got a girl pregnant and stole money to support her, her daughter will not marry a good social 'catch' and that her own reputation within the town will be sullied. Yet, like her husband, she refuses to believe that she did anything wrong and doesn't accept responsibility for her part in Eva's death.

Q: What is your opinion of Mrs Birling?

What relationship does Mrs Birling have with each of the characters below? Draw arrows to link the characters to one another and label those arrows with words to describe how she behaves towards them.



Detailed Quote Analysis:

Directly challenges the Inspector 'of course' is an attempt to make the Inspector feel stupid – how could he not know that this is an 'important' family

'You know of course that my husband was lord Mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate.'

Attempts to threaten the Inspector – Mr B is a powerful man.

Add annotations to the quote below to explore Mrs B's character; especially her thoughts regarding whether or not she is to blame.

"First, the girl herself. ... Secondly, I blame the young man who was the father of the child... He should be made an example of."