

Mr Birling Model Paragraph (Intermediate)

Paragraph with Components Identified

Placement of
evidence in
the context
of the play



In the opening of *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Birling as a foolish individual who is out of touch with society.

← Claim

In response to Eric's question about war, Birling describes

← Evidence

the idea that war is going to break out as 'fiddlesticks'. The audience knows that the First World War occurred just after the play was set, and that less than thirty years later, the

← Link to context

Second World War broke out, so this use of dramatic irony

← Analysis

highlights how out of the loop Birling is. Moreover, his use of

← Zoom

the word 'fiddlesticks' suggests that Mr Birling does not have

← Claim

much respect for the view that war might break out. He is so

certain in his beliefs that he dismisses the idea without real consideration, saying it is nonsense. This makes his character

← Analysis

seem even more foolish. Priestley's presentation of Birling

← Impact on audience

encourages the audience to question the behaviour and views of his character from that point onwards. Indeed, it could even lead them to question the capitalist system which Birling represents.

Mr Birling Model Paragraph (Advanced)

Paragraph with Components Identified

Placement of evidence in the context of the play



In the opening of *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley presents Birling as selfish and inconsiderate in his discussions about his role as a factory owner, businessman and proponent of capitalism.

← Claim

Placement of evidence in the context of the play



The character of Birling seems to prize business and financial gain over family relationships. Birling interrupts his speech

← Claim

celebrating the engagement of Sheila, his daughter, and Gerald to discuss the business benefits such a union would bring, stating that he 'look[s] forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings ... are working together – for lower costs and higher prices'. His view here is clear – he sees not love and

← Evidence

happiness as the most important elements of this marriage,

← Analysis

but profit and personal gain. The audience realise that Birling, in a manner akin to Priestley's view of the other capitalists he represents, prizes financial connections over human ones. A critical view of him, and others like him, is formed – how can one who is so selfish when it comes to family be expected to behave considerately towards those they have no tie to?

← Impact on audience

Claim



Birling's selfish nature is reinforced by his wish to see 'lower costs' and 'higher prices'. He wants to maximise his profit,

← Zoom

whilst keeping those in the 'workforce' in their submissive position, further entrenching the class and wealth divide, and enabling the capitalists to profit at the expense of the majority.

← Analysis

Through the character of Birling, we see Priestley's aversion to rampant capitalism and, by proxy, engage with his socialist views that demand a more equal society.

← Link to context