

An Inspector Calls

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the play to answer the question.

Write about the character of Eric and the way he is presented in 'An Inspector Calls'

In your response you should:

- Refer to the extract and play as a whole;
- Show your understanding of characters and events.

Eric: (*bitterly*) You haven't made it any easier for me, have you, mother?

Mrs Birling: But I didn't know it was you – I never dreamt. Besides, you're not the type – you don't get drunk-

Sheila: Of course he does. I told you he did.

Eric: You told her. Why, you little sneak!

Sheila: No, that's not fair, Eric. I could have told her months ago, but of course I didn't. I only told her tonight because I knew everything was coming out – it was simply bound to come out tonight – so I thought she might as well know in advance. Don't forget – I've already been through it.

Mrs Birling: Sheila, I simply don't understand your attitude.

Birling: Neither do I. If you'd had any sense of loyalty-

Inspector: (*cutting in, smoothly*) Just a minute, Mr birling. There be plenty of time, when I've gone, for you all to adjust your family relationships. But now I must hear what your son has to tell me. (*sternly, to the three of them.*) And I'll be obliged if you'll let us get on without any further interruptions. (*turning to Eric.*) Now then.

Eric: (*miserably*) could I have a drink first?

Birling: (*explosively*) No.

Inspector: (*firmly*) Yes. (*As Birling looks like interrupting explosively.*) I know – he's your son and this is your house – but look at him. He needs a drink now just to see him through.

Birling: (*To Eric*) All right. Go on.

Eric goes for a whisky. His whole manner of handling the decanter and then the drink shows his familiarity with quick heavy drinking. The others watch him narrowly.

(*bitterly*) I understand a lot of things now I didn't understand before.

Inspector: Don't start on that. I want to get on. (*To Eric.*) When did you first meet this girl?

Eric: One night last November.