



An Inspector Calls

By

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**A Short Story for ESOL & Functional
Skills Learners**

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The Birling family are rich and live in a large house in England. One evening in 1912, they have a special dinner to celebrate their daughter Sheila's engagement to Gerald Croft.

The Birling
Dining Room



Sheila is very happy about her engagement. Her parents, Mr and Mrs Birling, are pleased too. During dinner, Mr Birling talks about life and business. He believes that people should look after themselves and their own families.



Suddenly, the doorbell rings and a man called Inspector Goole arrives. He tells the family that a young woman has died after taking poison. He is there to investigate her death.



The young woman's name was Eva Smith. The Inspector shows Mr Birling her photograph and asks if he knew her. Mr Birling remembers that Eva once worked in his factory.



Eva and some other workers had asked Mr Birling for higher wages. Mr Birling refused and fired Eva because she had helped lead the workers. After losing her job, Eva had to find another way to support herself.



Eva eventually found a new job in a clothes shop. For a short time, her life seemed to be improving, but then she met Sheila Birling.



One day, Sheila was shopping there and tried on a dress. She became angry and jealous because she thought Eva was laughing at her. Sheila complained to the manager and demanded that Eva should lose her job.



Because Sheila came from a rich and important family, the shop listened to her. Eva lost her second job. When Sheila learns what happened to Eva later, she feels very guilty about what she did.



After losing her job, Eva had very little money and her life became more difficult. She later used the name Daisy Renton. When the Inspector says this name, Gerald suddenly looks uncomfortable.



Gerald admits that he met Daisy at a time when she was alone and needed help. He found her somewhere to live and gave her money. They also began a relationship.



Daisy became very fond of Gerald, but Gerald knew that their relationship could not continue. Eventually, he ended it. Daisy was upset, and once again she was left alone.



Sheila is hurt when she learns about Gerald's relationship with Daisy. However, she can also see that the Inspector is showing them how different people's actions made Eva's life more difficult.



The Inspector next questions Mrs Birling, who helps run a charity for women in need. A few weeks earlier, Eva had gone to the charity because she was pregnant, poor and desperate for help.



Mrs Birling did not believe Eva's story and refused to help her. She tells the Inspector that the father of Eva's baby should have taken responsibility for her.



The Inspector then reveals something shocking. The father of Eva's unborn baby was Eric Birling—Mr and Mrs Birling's own son.



Eric explains that he had met Eva and later learned that she was pregnant. He tried to support her with money, but some of the money was stolen from his father's business. When Eva discovered this, she refused to take any more.



Now the whole story becomes clear. Mr Birling, Sheila, Gerald, Mrs Birling and Eric had all entered Eva's life at different times. Their choices had helped make her situation more and more difficult.



Before leaving, Inspector Goole tells the family that people must care about one another. He wants them to understand that our actions can affect other people, even when we do not realise it.



After he leaves, the family discovers that Goole may not have been a real police inspector. Mr and Mrs Birling are relieved, but Sheila and Eric are not. They understand that their behaviour was wrong whether the Inspector was real or not.



Then the telephone suddenly rings. A young woman has just died after taking poison, and a real police inspector is coming to question the family. Everyone is shocked—the investigation may now be about to happen for real.