

Responsibility

Look carefully at these two quotations. The first is Arthur Birling giving Eric & Gerald the benefit of his philosophy on life over after-dinner drinks.

'I don't want to lecture you two young fellows again. But what so many of you don't seem to understand now, when things are so much easier, is that a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too, of course, when he has one – and so long as he does that he won't come to much harm. But the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense. But take my word for it, you youngsters – and I've learnt in the good hard school of experience – that a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own'.

List the key phrases in this speech.

Complete three bullet points that summarise Mr Birling's beliefs about responsibility.

This second quotation is the Inspector's final speech to the family immediately before he leaves.

'But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance if happiness, all intertwined with our lives, with what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish'.

Answer the questions below in complete sentences:

How would you describe the style of language in this speech?

What do you think the Inspector is referring to when he speaks of the 'fire and blood and anguish' that may occur in the future?

What is Priestley using the character of the Inspector for at this point in the play?

What is Priestley's main message to the audience in this speech?

Why do you think Priestley included this speech in the play?