

ERIC BIRLING from AN INSPECTOR CALLS

HOW MUCH IS ERIC TO BLAME FOR THE DEATH OF EVA SMITH?

Notes taken from ENOTES.COM

ERIC AS A WOMANISER

like Gerald Croft, he's a womaniser, frequenting The Palace Bar, an Edwardian "pick up joint"

- There is every indication he's familiar with the prostitutes of the town, using his father's money to pay for them!
 - He confesses that Eva Smith 'wasn't the usual sort' but he forces his way into her room and makes her pregnant.

ERIC'S BESTIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Inspector's verdict on Eric, or rather Eric's behaviour is that he '[used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person.](#)'

- The use of the word '[animal](#)' actually reflects Eric's own bestial behaviour,
 - forcing himself on the girl.
 - However, all the Birlings have failed to treat Eva as a fellow human being, '[as if she was.....not a person.](#)'

HOW ERIC TRIES TO MAKE AMENDS

His behaviour has been appalling but he does try to make amends

- It is when he finds out that the young lady he has been seeing is pregnant he at least tries to make a gesture to help – however feeble and inadequate.
 - [he takes money from his father's factory to give to Eva](#)
 - [However, she won't accept it when she discovers it's stolen](#)
 - Eva/Daisy had refused his help as she suspected that he was stealing the money he was giving to her to support her.
 - Also he is distraught by Eva's death and the death of his child.
 - [Perhaps we can see him as probably the least responsible for the death of Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton](#)

ERIC'S DISTRESS

When Eric discovers that his Mother and her Charity turned Eva away, in his grief and anger he blames her for the deaths;

- it is left to the Inspector to remind him and us '[each of you helped to kill her...Never forget it.](#)'
 - Unlike his parents, to his credit, Eric never will.

ERIC'S FAULTS

Eric Birling has many faults

- He steals money from his father
- is a drunkard
- and a philanderer

MR. AND MRS BIRLING'S REACTIONS TO THE REVELATIONS

Eric is an alcoholic, whose behavior has been dissolute and irresponsible, but his mother pretends that there is nothing wrong with her son.

- Mr and Mrs Birling ironically hold the father of the girl's child responsible
 - until they learn he is their son
 - an illustration of their hypocrisy

ERIC vs MR and MRS BIRLING and GERALD

Eric is different from the others in that he did attempt to make Eva/Daisy's plight a little better

- He is repentant of what happened to the girl and clearly learns a lesson from the incident –
 - He says: 'It's what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters.'
 - In the end, unlike his parents, Eric, along with his sister, demonstrates that he does possess a moral compass and a worthy conscience, by not excusing his guilt in the death of a poor young woman.

ERIC'S DEVELOPMENT

Eric Birling is first presented as the ne'er-do-well son of the wealthy and hardheaded businessman Arthur Birling

- but later he proves his worth as an honest man.

SHEILA AND ERIC

After all the inspector's revelations, Eric and his sister Sheila, who caused Eva's firing from a dress shop, admit their guilt.

ERIC'S CONFESSION AND BIRLING'S REACTION

Eric confesses to his father that he did, in fact, steal fifty dollars which he gave to Eva

- Arthur Birling's first reaction is how to cover up the loss of the fifty dollars so no one will know
 - He tells his children that "a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own."

Further, Birling says there is reason to excuse his and his wife's behavior, but he is ashamed of Eric. On the other hand

- Eric replies that he is ashamed of them, as well, as his father began her misfortunes and his mother directly caused her and his child to die
 - Nevertheless, in the end, the parents justify their actions because the inspector has performed a ruse and is not a real policeman
 - Only Eric and his sister accept their social responsibilities.