**Moment 1: The Opening of the Play**

The play was **first performed in 1946**. However, it is **set in 1912**. This is an important detail because it means that an audience watching at the time would be able to look back on how things used to be in England and reflect on how things had changed; they would also know far more than the characters on stage.

1. What was life like in 1912?
2. What had changed by 1946?
3. Why did Priestley choose to set the play in 1912?
4. What do we learn about the Birling family from the opening stage directions?

**Moment 2: The Engagement**

The opening scene of the play shows the Birling family celebrating the **engagement** of Sheila to Gerald. The mood is relaxed and cheerful, and the soft pink stage lighting helps to create a comfortable atmosphere.

1. What clues do we get that things aren’t quite as good as they seem?
2. What makes Gerald the son-in-law that Birling ‘always wanted’?
3. How are Mrs Birling and Gerald different from the other members of the family?

**Moment 3: The Inspector Arrives**

Shortly after Birling expresses his hopes for the future, there is a ‘sharp ring of a front door bell’ and the **Inspector arrives on stage**. From this point onwards, the atmosphere becomes more tense and we start to learn about how each member of the Birling family was involved in the suicide of Eva Smith.

1. How does Priestley use staging techniques to make the Inspector’s arrival dramatic?
2. How does Birling initially react to the Inspector?
3. What do we learn about Eva Smith?

**Moment 4: The Inspector Questions Birling**

Birling is clearly **irritated** by the Inspector’s presence and he shows very little empathy when he’s told details of Eva Smith’s suicide. When later questioned by the Inspector, he becomes **increasingly defensive** and is ultimately unwilling to accept any responsibility.

1. What is Birling’s role in the suicide?
2. How does he respond to being involved in the suicide?

**Moment 5: The Inspector Questions Sheila**

At the start of the play, Sheila is **preoccupied** with her engagement to Gerald. She is ‘very pleased with life and rather excited.’ However, her **mood changes** as soon as she hears news of the suicide.

1. What is Sheila’s role in the suicide?
2. How does she react to being involved in the suicide?
3. How does her reaction differ to Birling’s reaction?

**Moment 6: Divisions Continue to Emerge**

By the start of Act Two, the **atmosphere on stage has changed**. It’s no longer comfortable and celebratory. Rather, it’s very tense and we continue to see **divisions** emerge between the ‘younger’ and ‘older’ members of the family.

1. How has the relationship between Sheila and Gerald changed?
2. How has the relationship between Sheila and Mrs Birling changed?

**Moment 7: The Inspector Questions Gerald**

Gerald’s **earlier portrayal** as a charming, agreeable ‘man-about-town’ is undermined as the first act ends and the second begins. His **affair** with Daisy Renton demonstrates that he is untrustworthy and his attempt to coerce Sheila into secrecy reveals that he is manipulative.

1. Why is the name Daisy Renton significant?
2. What does Gerald’s account of the affair reveal about the treatment of women?

**Moment 8: Gerald Leaves the Stage**

After revealing details of his affair with Daisy Renton, **Gerald leaves the stage**. He’s visibly upset and it appears that he had genuine feelings of affection for her. The extent to which we might judge him favourably because of this is entirely down to us, but we should be **cautious** about excusing or validating his behaviour.

1. What is Gerald’s role in the suicide?
2. How does he react to the news that he is involved?

**Moment 9: The Inspector Questions Mrs Birling**

Mrs Birling is the next character to be questioned by the Inspector. Like Birling, she is **uncooperative** and becomes **increasingly** **irritable**. She accepts no responsibility for the role in the ‘chain of events’ that resulted in the suicide of Eva Smith.

1. What is Mrs Birling’s role in the suicide?
2. What does Mrs Birling’s treatment of Eva Smith reveal about the lives of vulnerable women?

**Moment 10: The Inspector Questions Eric**

The final member of the Birling family to be questioned is Eric. He returns to the stage just after his mother unwittingly argues that he is ‘entirely responsible’ for the death of Eva Smith. It is an **uncomfortable**, but particularly **revealing moment** in the play.

1. What is Eric’s role in the suicide?
2. How does Eric react to being implicated?

**Moment 11: The Inspector’s Final Speech**

After Eric has been questioned, the Inspector delivers his **final speech**. He summarises the ‘chain of events’ that caused the death of Eva Smith and provides a final warning to Birling family.

1. What final judgements does the Inspector make about the Birlings?
2. What final message does he deliver?

**Moment 12: The Identity of the Inspector is Debated**

After the Inspector leaves the stage, Sheila is the first to question whether or not he was a real inspector. Either way, she believes that it **doesn’t really matter**. However, Birling is the first to argue that his **identity is crucial**.

1. How do the Birling family behave immediately after the Inspector leaves?
2. What does the uncertainty about the Inspector’s identity reveal about the Birling family?

**Moment 13: The Ending of the Play**

First Birling and then Gerald **substantiate the claim** that the Inspector is a ‘fake’ and that his investigation was ‘just a lot of moonshine’. They’re both **delighted** and, in their triumph, **fail to understand** why Sheila and Eric remain angry and distressed.

1. Who or what is the Inspector?
2. To what extent does the ending of the play offer hope?