Birling: *(giving him a drink)* Yes, he didn't keep you on the run as he did the rest of us. I'll admit now he gave me a bit of a scare at the time. But I'd a special reason for not wanting any public scandal just now. *(Has his drink now, and raises his glass.)* Well, here's to us. Come on, Sheila, don't look like that. All over now.

Sheila: The worst part is. But you're forgetting one thing I still can't forget. Everything we said had happened really had happened. If it didn't end tragically, then that's lucky for us. But it might have done.

Birling: (*jovially*) But the whole thing's different now. Come, come, you can see that, can't you? *(Imitating Inspector in his final speech.)* You all helped to kill her. *(pointing at Sheila and Eric, and laughing.)* and I wish you could have seen the look on your faces when he said that.

*// Sheila moves towards door.//*

Going to bed, young woman?

Sheila: (*tensely*) I want to get out of this. It frightens me the way you talk.

Birling: (*heartily*) Nonsense! You'll have a good laugh over it yet. Look, you'd better ask Gerald for that ring you gave back to him, hadn't you? Then you'll feel better.

Sheila: *(passionately)* You're pretending everything's just as it was before.

Eric: I'm not!

Sheila: No, but these others are.

Birling: Well, isn't it? We've been had, that's all.

Sheila: So nothing really happened. So there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn. We can all go on behaving just as we did.

Mrs Birling: Well, why shouldn't we?

Sheila: I tell you – whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke. You knew it then. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way.

Birling: *(amused)* And you're not, eh?

Sheila: No, because I remember what he said, how he looked, and what he made me feel. Fire and blood and anguish. And it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it.

Eric: And I agree with Sheila. It frightens me too.

Birling: Well, go to bed then, and don't stand there being hysterical.

Mrs Birling: They're over-tired. In the morning they'll be as amused as we are.

Gerald: Everything's all right now, Sheila. *(Holds up the ring.)* What about this ring?

Sheila: No, not yet. It's too soon. I must think.

Birling: *(pointing to Eric and Sheila)* Now look at the pair of them – the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke-

*// The telephone rings sharply. There is a moment's complete silence. Birling goes to answer it.//*

Yes?. . . .Mr Birling speaking. . . .What? - here-

*//But obviously the other person has rung off. He puts the telephone down slowly and looks in a panic stricken fashion at the others.//*

Birling: That was the police. A girl has just died – on her way to the Infirmary – after swallowing some disinfectant. And a police inspector is on his way here – to ask some – questions -----

*// As they stare guiltily and dumbfounded, the curtain falls.//*

**END OF PLAY**

Read the extract above then complete the following questions in your book:

1. Find two quotations that suggest Mr Birling has not been changed by the events of the last hour.
2. ***‘Going to bed, young woman?’*** What are Birling’s reasons for calling Sheila this? What does it suggest about their relationship?
3. ***‘And I must say, Gerald, you’ve argued this very cleverly and I’m most grateful.’*** What does this quotation reveal about Mrs Birling’s attitude to change?
4. Why do you think Mrs Birling finds it so hard to accept what she did was wrong?
5. Look at the Birlings’ last words to their children. What do these tell us about what they have learned from the Inspector’s visit?
6. Gerald only says one line in this extract. What does it suggest about the effect the Inspector’s visit has had on him?
7. Sheila says she wants to ***‘get out of this’.*** What does this line reveal about the thoughts that are going through her mind?
8. Sheila uses the words ***‘fire and blood and anguish’*.** Why do you think Priestley has given her these words?