

REEL TO REAL TEACHERS' RESOURCE

An Inspector Calls

*Understand more about the world of the film
Key Stage 3–5: English, Drama and History*

INTO
FILM

V&A

Reel to Real: An Inspector Calls

Key Stage 3–5: English, Drama and History

Introduction

This resource is intended for teachers to use with their students onsite at the V&A. It was created as part of a partnership with education charity Into Film.

The resource explores the film *An Inspector Calls*. It guides students to objects in the Museum that provide historical context for the film, and suggests activities and topics for discussion. The resource aims to immerse students in the world of the film.

Film summary

A policeman drops in on a wealthy family to question them about the suicide of a young woman they knew. Is the inspector who he says he is, or is something much stranger going on? Alastair Sim plays the all-knowing visitor in this 1954 adaptation of J.B. Priestley's most famous play.

At the Museum

The following V&A galleries can provide a context for *An Inspector Calls*. Use this resource in conjunction with the V&A map.

Britain 1760–1900, Level 4, Room 125

The film is set in 1912, and some of the objects in this gallery shed light on its world.

Would the objects and décor in the gallery be to the taste of the Birlings? If not, why not?

Find the text panel [Arts and Crafts 1860–1900](#). Arts and Crafts designers 'opposed large, impersonal factories'. How does this idea link to the themes of the film?

Find the text panel [Shopping 1860–1900](#). Note the last paragraph and the reference to women and employment. How might this relate to elements of the film?

Find the wood-panelled ante-room from [The Grove, Harborne, Birmingham](#). Take photos. How does this interior compare to the Birling's house? What does the house communicate about the status of the characters?

Fashion, Level 1, Room 40

Find the case [Couture and Commerce 1870–1910](#). Although the film is set in 1912, the Birling family appear to inhabit an earlier era. Read the text panel and look at the garments. Which would suit members of the family?

Theatre & Performance, Rooms 103–106

In these galleries you can see iconic costumes and props, as well as scripts, set designs and posters from the history of theatre and performance. Download self-guided resources to direct your group around the galleries: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/teachers-resource-theatre-and-performance/>

Follow-up activities/find out more

Search the V&A's collections online:
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Visit the V&A Arts and Crafts hub page:
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/a/arts-and-crafts/>

Visit the V&A 20th-Century gallery hub page:
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/o-9/20th-century/>

Find out more about political theatre of the 20th century:
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/p/political-theatre-in-the-early-20th-century/>

The app 'Played in Britain. Modern Theatre in 100 Plays' contains background material to *An Inspector Calls*:
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/p/played-in-britain-modern-theatre-in-100-plays-1945-2010/>

The National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP) is a collection of recordings of live UK theatre performances. These can be viewed by groups free of charge at the V&A. The archive includes a recording of a 1994 production of *An Inspector Calls* at the Aldwych Theatre, London. Contact bookings.office@vam.ac.uk to make an appointment. A full list of recordings is available here: www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/nvap/

Continue learning through film by setting up a free Into Film Club at your school. www.filmclub.org/register. Access a catalogue of over 4000 film titles including those in the Reel to Real programme, as well as curriculum-linked resources created in partnership with the V&A. <http://www.intofilm.org/>