The answers!

An Inspector Calls

The Opening to Act Three

1) What do the stage directions tell us and Eric at the beginning of the scene?

That the family has discovered his secret: he is the father of Eva’s child.

2) What comment half way down page 50 tells us that Eric is angry at his mother?

“You haven’t made it any easier for me, have you mother?”

3) What have the family learnt about Eric?

That he gets drunk.

4) What action by the Inspector tells us that he is in charge now, not Mr Birling?

The Inspector contradicts Mr Birling and allows Eric to have a drink.

5) Again in the stage directions on page 51, what extra information is added to our knowledge of Eric?

His manner in handling the decanter and then the drink shows that he is a regular heavy-drinker.

6) What is Eric politely suggesting that he might have done to Eva, at the top of page 52?

Raped her.

7) Why does Mr Birling send Sheila and his wife out? What does this tell us about gender roles during the period?

Mr Birling is concerned that they might start talking about sexual matters, an inappropriate topic for Edwardian women to be exposed to. Men still treated women as if they were fragile, vulnerable objects that could be ordered about.
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| 8) | What does Eric’s attitude towards Eva reveal about the way wealthy young men treat poor working class women?  
That the women are playthings, able to grant sexual favours whenever the men want them. |
| 9) | What does Eric nearly reveal about Mr Birling’s friends at the bottom of page 52?  
That some of Mr Birling’s so called respectable friends use prostitutes. |
| 10) | What do the family discover now about Eric?  
That he is a thief. |
| 11) | What is revealed about the relationship between Eric and his father on page 54?  
Eric feels that his father is not the kind of parent that he can go to when he is in trouble. |
| 12) | Why does Mrs Birling shout out “Sheila,” and later say nothing when Eric questions her?  
Because she is embarrassed and distressed about her involvement and perhaps now realises that she has some part to play in the tragedy. |
| 13) | How does Priestley use punctuation to show Eric’s distress on page 55?  
The use of hyphens shows Eric really having to think deeply about what has occurred. Perhaps this is first time that Eric has ever thought in the play. The lengthy pauses reveal his distress and anger. |
| 14) | What is now revealed about the mother/son relationship?  
That Mrs Birling has never tried to understand her son. |
| 15) | Finally, the play opens with a façade (a false image) of a perfectly happy united family. How would you summarise it now?  
It has all collapsed. |