ERIC BIRLING

Key features · development · paired evidence

THE BIG IDEA

Eric's late acceptance of responsibility separates him from his parents, but admitting wrongdoing does not erase sexual coercion or the harm done to Eva.

FOLLOW THE CHARACTER

1 Appears uneasy › **2** Conceals serious harm › **3** Faces disclosure › **4** Accepts a continuing duty

DIVIDED APPEARANCE, EXPLICIT COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

"half shy, half assertive"

Priestley's opening Act 1 stage direction about Eric

PAIRED WITH

"we all helped"

Eric, Act 3: insisting the family's conduct still matters despite doubts about Goole

METHOD → MEANING

The balanced halves make unease visible before its causes are disclosed. The later collective pronoun refuses the attempt to separate respectable appearances from consequences. His acceptance of responsibility is significant but cannot erase the coercion, exploitation and theft he reveals. Avoid treating confession as complete redemption.

TRACE THE CHARACTER THROUGH THE DRAMA

Unease before disclosure

The opening stage directions and drinking prepare the audience for a concealed problem. They do not excuse the actions later revealed.

The harm disclosed

His account exposes sexual coercion, pregnancy and stolen money. Avoid turning the relationship into an uncomplicated romance or making confession sufficient reparation.

A moral difference

His late insistence on what the family actually did contrasts with his parents' focus on the visitor's identity. Acceptance matters even when consequences cannot be undone.

PUSH THE ARGUMENT

Do not describe his conduct as an uncomplicated romance. His account includes coercion; the ethical seriousness must remain explicit.

COVER THE SHEET. CAN YOU EXPLAIN…?

How does Eric's response to the possible hoax differ from his father's?