

“...as if we were all mixed up
together like bees in a hive”
(Mr Birling, Act One)

REVISION

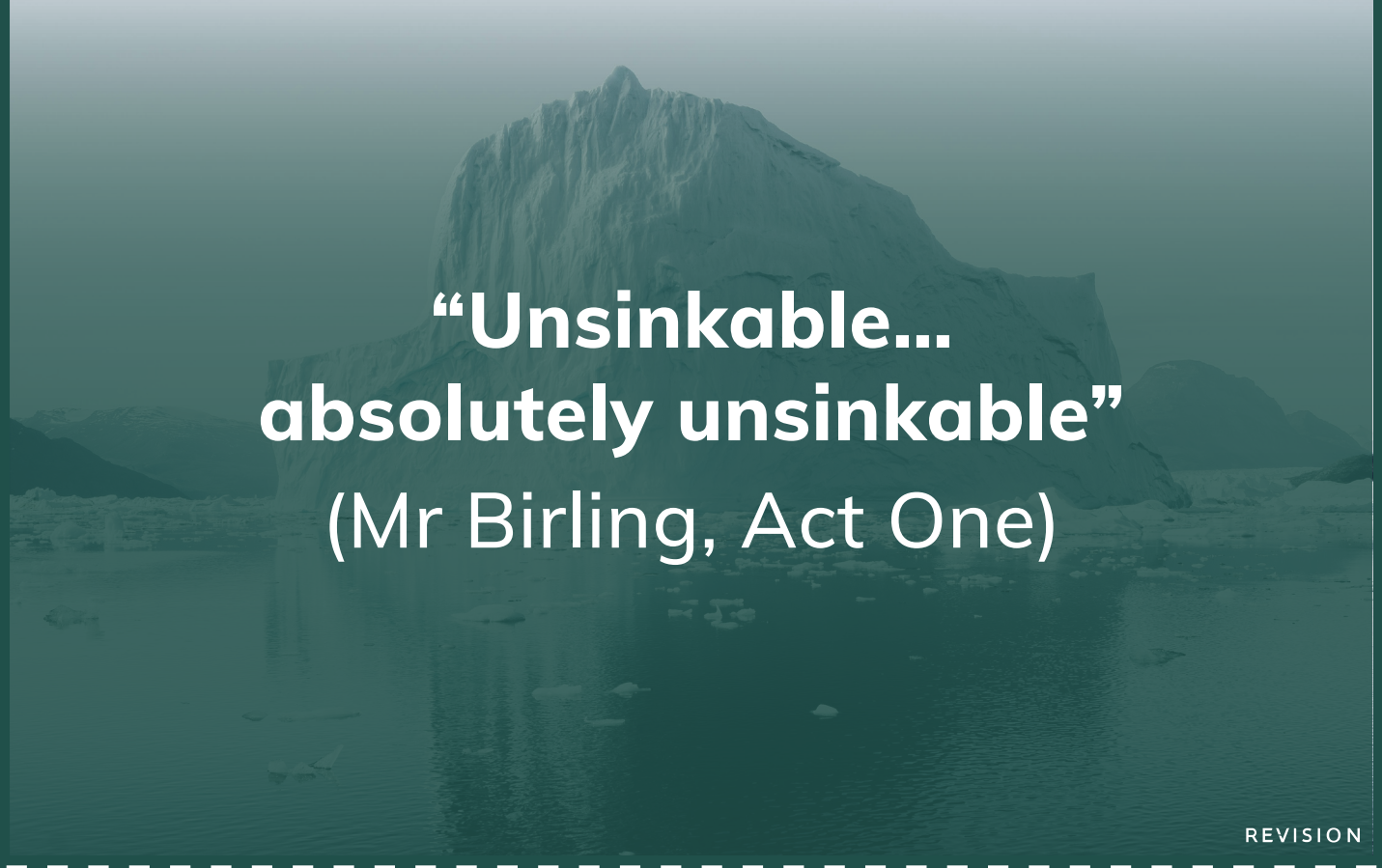
Explanation:

Mr Birling is patronising about socialist thinking and the idea of communities looking out for each other. The **simile** suggests everyone working productively together (which you would think is a positive thing) but it shows he does not want to associate himself with the ‘worker bees’ or the working classes. As a metaphorical Queen Bee, Mr Birling wants to rule!

Themes:

Collective Responsibility, Class Privilege,
Capitalism vs Socialism, Prejudice

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**“Unsinkable...
absolutely unsinkable”
(Mr Birling, Act One)**

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Explanation:

Mr Birling is characterised as someone whose judgement cannot be relied upon. He gives his verdict on the Titanic but the fact that Priestley has set his play in the past enables the audience to know that Mr Birling is wrong because the ship did sink. This is an example of **dramatic irony**. It encourages us to ignore the things he is saying, which Priestley wants us to do because he is anti-capitalist.

Themes:

Capitalism vs Socialism, Class Privilege (the audience would know that most of those who died on the Titanic were in the cheap cabins below deck), Progress

REVISION

“Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages?” (Eric, Act One)

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Explanation:

Mr Birling is trying to justify his decision to sack Eva Smith to the Inspector by saying he had to let her go because she was causing trouble, encouraging other workers to strike for higher pay. This comment shows there is some hope for Eric as he reflects Priestley’s socialist ideals. The **question mark** highlights that Eric, unusually, is challenging his father’s decisions although the word ‘they’ reminds us that there is still a divide between the owners and the workers.

Themes:

Capitalism vs Socialism, Class Privilege, Age Differences,
Collective Responsibility

REVISION



**“But these girls aren’t cheap
labour - they’re people.”**
(Sheila, Act One)

Explanation:

Sheila reacts to her father’s attempts to justify the sacking of Eva Smith by showing moral superiority – unlike her father, she doesn’t see the workers as a commodity. This shows she is part of a forward-thinking younger generation that has not been brainwashed by the capitalist system. Her words here are spoken on behalf of Priestley. Sheila displays the sense of responsibility that people of her class should have. The **hyphen** adds emphasis to the announcement that follows it.

Themes:

Capitalism vs Socialism, Morality and Fairness,
Collective Responsibility, Power



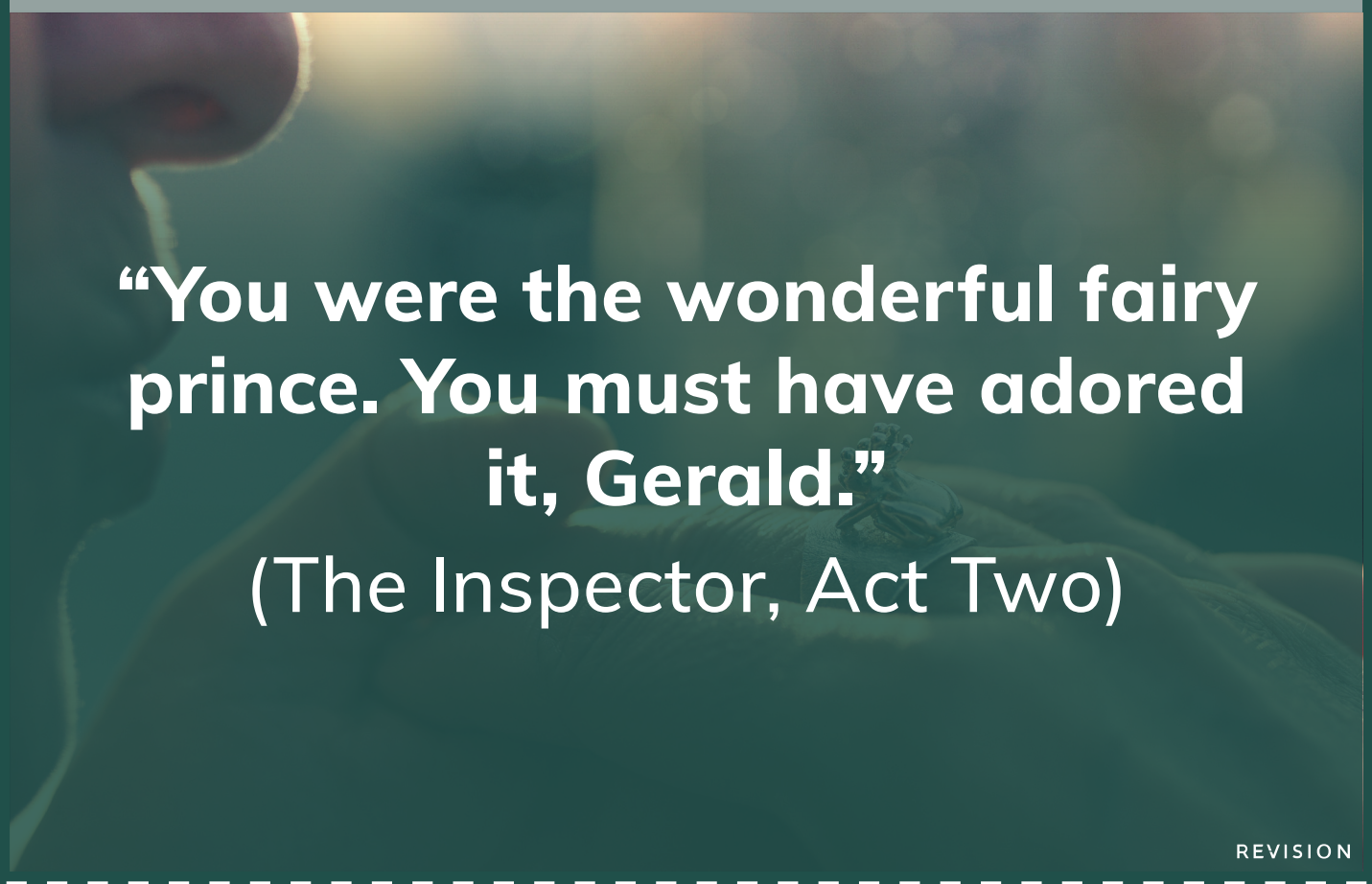
“(massively) Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.”
(The Inspector, Act Two)

Explanation:

This line emphasises Priestley’s message of social responsibility and highlights that those in power have a duty to others: power and responsibility go together. Mr Birling thinks the idea of social responsibility is nonsense and calls socialists ‘cranks’. The Inspector does not care about Mr Birling’s importance in the town as a wealthy magistrate. The **stage direction** ‘massively’ is important as it demonstrates someone standing up and challenging the status quo.

Themes:

Patriarchy, Power, Collective Responsibility



“You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.”
(The Inspector, Act Two)

REVISION

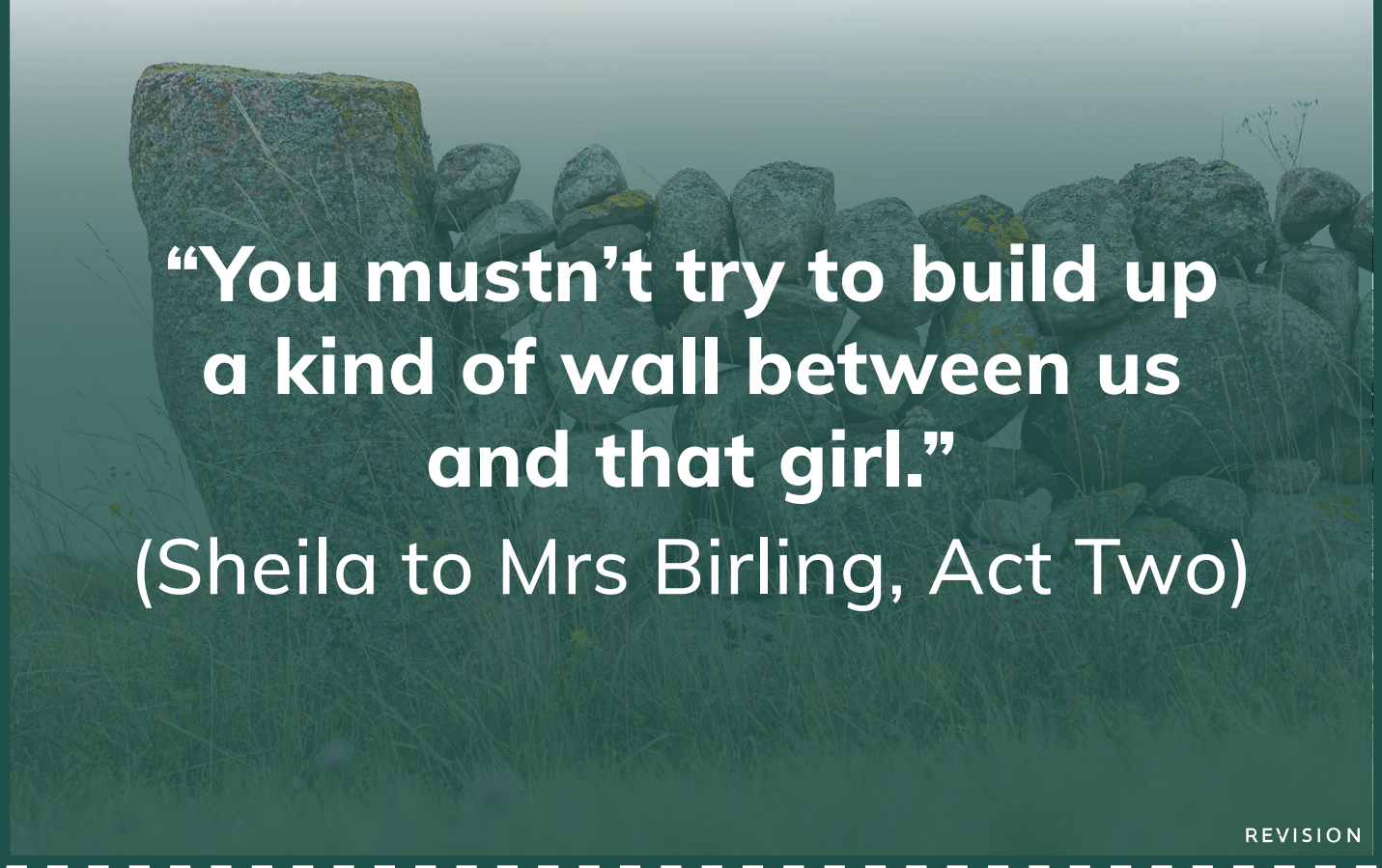
Explanation:

Gerald has reluctantly confessed his affair with Eva Smith, in front of Sheila. On the one hand, it appears he genuinely wanted to help Eva but, on the other, he clearly took advantage of her vulnerability. Sheila believes Gerald fed his ego by keeping Eva as his mistress. The **metaphor** of the ‘fairy prince’ suggests he enjoyed rescuing Daisy from her troubles.

Themes:

Power, Gender Roles, Morality and Fairness

REVISION



**“You mustn’t try to build up
a kind of wall between us
and that girl.”**
(Sheila to Mrs Birling, Act Two)

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Explanation:

Mrs Birling is dismissive of the Inspector and anything that her children have understood about the message he is trying to teach. She sees him as impertinent and refuses to acknowledge that she has had anything to do with Eva Smith’s death. The wall is **symbolic** of a barrier between the wealthy and the workers, the capitalists and the socialists.

Themes:

Capitalism vs Socialism, Age Differences, Collective Responsibility

REVISION

“...you killed them both -
damn you, damn you...”
(Eric to Mrs Birling, Act Three)

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Explanation:

Eric angrily accuses his mother of inadvertently killing Eva and their unborn baby, his mother's grandchild, through her wilful refusal to grant help when it was asked for. The strong **verb** 'killed' shows the cruelty of her decision and implies she did it on purpose. 'Damn you' links Mrs Birling with Hell and eternal punishment. The **repetition** of the phrase shows how frustrated and upset Eric is and separates him from the uncaring views of the older generation. The **hyphen** adds power to the curse that follows. The phrase could be read metaphorically as a judgement of how a capitalist society has negatively impacted working people.

Themes:

Collective Responsibility, Power, Prejudice, Capitalism vs Socialism

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**“...there are millions and millions
and millions of Eva Smiths
and John Smiths...”**
(The Inspector, Act Three)

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Explanation:

The Inspector makes a dramatic exit with a final speech in which he reminds the Birling household that Eva Smith is just one example of the vulnerable in society being manipulated and mistreated by those who control their lives. The **repetition** of ‘millions’ reminds the audience that there is much work to be done to achieve the socialist aim of equality. The names mentioned are simply **symbols** of the working classes.

Themes:

Collective Responsibility, Morality and Fairness, Capitalism vs Socialism

REVISION



“What about this ring?” (Gerald, Act Three)

REVISION

Explanation:

Once the Inspector has left, Gerald thinks everything can go back to the way it was and asks Sheila to take back her ring so that they may remain engaged. He excuses himself for his behaviour but fails to appreciate that Sheila has changed during the course of the evening and has re-evaluated some of her values. The ring **symbolises** Gerald's dominance over Sheila as he chose it. She is not the same person and, as such, cannot re-enter her engagement to Gerald lightly.

Themes:

Relationships, Patriarchy, Morality and Fairness, Gender Roles, Power

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