



An Inspector Calls

By

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Priestley**



AQA GCSE English Literature

Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry

The Exam

Time: 2 hours 15 minutes.

Marks: 96

Weighting: 60% of the English Literature GCSE

You must answer four questions in total: one from **Section A**, one from **Section B** and two from **Section C**. This is a closed text exam, so you will not be able to use the texts.

Section A - 'An Inspector Calls'. (30 marks plus 4 marks for SPaG = 36 total)

You have a **choice of two questions**. Pick **one** to answer. One question will usually focus on character and the other on theme. You should spend **50 minutes** on this response.

Section B - Power and Conflict Poetry. (30 marks)

There is no choice of tasks. The question will name a poem and provide a copy of this poem, as well as a list of the other poems you've studied in that cluster (along with their authors) that you can use for comparison. You should spend **45 minutes** on this response.

Section C - Unseen Poetry. (32 marks)

You will be given **two unseen poems** in this section and **two tasks**. **You must complete both tasks**. The first task will ask you to analyse a poem and comment on how particular ideas are developed. The second task will ask you to compare and contrast the methods used in your first unseen poem with another unseen poem. Spend **30 minutes** on the first task (**24 marks**) and **15 minutes** on the second task (**8 marks**).

What the examiners are looking for...

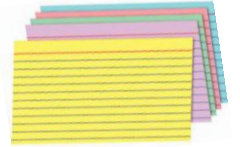
Assessment Objectives

You are assessed on the following in your responses:

- **AO1:** respond to texts critically and develop an informed personal response using textual references and quotations – **line of argument**
- **AO2** analyse how language, structure and form are used by writers to create meaning and effects. Use relevant subject terminology – **points of analysis and evaluation**
- **AO3** show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written – **context and comparisons across text/time/audience**
- **AO4:** Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures with accurate spelling and punctuation. (*only tested in Section A for both papers*)

Revising for this exam

- **Re-read** the play. You will notice far more details and remember more quotes on a second or third reading.
- Make revision pages or revision cards! In particular, focus on the characters and themes. On these cards, include summarised details of this theme or the role of each character. For example:
 - Words to describe the character/theme and their relationship with others
 - Their role/response to Eva Smith's/Daisy Renton's death (plot and events)
 - Link to context – who/what do they represent?
 - What do we learn about them through the staging/directions?
 - Do they change? (Structure)
 - Language they use/used about them – key quotes
 - How do they link to the playwright's message overall?
- Practise exam style questions and attempt these with notes initially, and then without notes.
- Practise planning – have a go at planning for an example question. Try and do this using your knowledge and then consult your notes afterwards, develop your plan and identify gaps in your learning.
- Reverse planning – look at example answers and have a go at writing that pupil's essay plan. What do you think they included in their actual response?
- Timed essay writing.
- Explore and test yourself using revision websites – BBC Bitesize, GCSEpod



Revision Checklist

	<i>Characters</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Plot</i>	<i>Writer's Craft</i>
<i>Focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inspector • Mr Birling • Mrs Birling • Sheila • Gerald • Eric • Eva Smith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity • Greed • Poverty • Social Injustice • Class Divide • Age vs Youth • Gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialism • Capitalism • Women's Rights + suffrage • 1912 & pre-war • 1945 + post-war fallout • Welfare State 	<p>General story as well as the progression of characters, themes and settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreshadowing • Archetype • Dramatic Irony • Foil • Entrances • Exits • Stage Directions • Irony • Juxtaposition
<i>What you need to know</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who they are • What they do and when they appear in the play • What their purpose is in the story/what they represent • Why Priestley chose to present them in this way/the effect it has on us (the reader) • How this character links to central themes/messages • At least 5 key quotes to support your understanding of this character, fully annotated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do we see them in the play • Which characters or ideas link to that theme and why • Priestley's intention and message about that theme • How the context affects his reasoning for that theme • The effect the theme has on the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do they appear in the story • What effect do they have upon the characters • What was Priestley's opinion on this • Why did this aspect affect Priestley so much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens • Which event is revealed at which point • Why Priestley chose to structure his writing in this way • How the characters or themes evolve over the course of the play • The dramatic significance of each act and key events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it used • What effect does it have on the structure or layout of the text • How does it develop the central message or idea
<p><i>Writer's message is crucial and should be interwoven throughout each element of the story (character/theme etc...) as the whole purpose of writing a play is to get the message across!</i></p> <p><i>Using techniques to support your comments is also a key element of strong revision</i></p>					

Context

Timeline of events

Year and Month	What happens?	Person involved
September 1910	Eva is sacked by 'Birling & Co.'	Mr Birling
December 1910	Eva is employed by Milwards	
Late January 1911	Eva is sacked by Milwards	Sheila Birling
March 1911	Eva (now Daisy Renton) becomes Gerald's mistress	Gerald Croft
Early September 1911	Gerald ends the affair	Gerald Croft
Eva leaves Brumley for two months		
November 1911	Eric meets Eva	Eric Birling
December 1911/ January 1912	Eva discovers that she is pregnant	Eric Birling
Late March 1912	Mrs. Birling turns down Eva's request for charitable help	Mrs Birling
Early April 1912	Eva commits suicide and the Inspector visits the Birlings	All

Priestley's Intentions

- He wrote the play to warn people to learn from past mistakes and not to repeat them
- The play is set in 1912 – Edwardian England – two years before the start of WW1
- The play was written in 1945 – just after WW2 – when the world had become more fragmented and the population disillusioned with society and traditional practices.
- The audience know that the characters are about to experience some of the terrible experiences and tragedies that they have lived through – WW1, the Great Depression, WW2, labour strikes
- The play uses dramatic irony to ridicule the views of people like Birling (capitalists). It exposes these views as ignorant and self-centred and encourages the audience to side with the Inspector who expresses socialist ideals.
- The moral message of the play is a socialist one – that society and individuals have a responsibility to work together, support each other and treat everyone equally.
- The play is set in the fictional northern town of Brumley, based on the city of Bradford – an industrial town with factories owned by wealthy capitalists.
- Society in 1912 had extreme class divides with the vast majority of the population living on very low wages - 8 million people were living on £1.25 per week. People of different classes did not mix or associate with each other and class divide was fixed – there was very little social mobility.



Capitalism

- Capitalism: the belief that people should only look after themselves and do not have to share their wealth with others. The focus of capitalism was on accumulating wealth and power.

- In 1912, capitalists who believed that each person had a responsibility to 'look after themselves and their own' ran the country – this resulted in inequality and the unequal treatment of different groups in society.

Labour and Socialism

- Socialism: the belief that as a society, we have a duty to look after each other. Socialists believe that the rich have a responsibility to look after the poor by, for example, paying higher taxes.
- When Labour first came to power in 1924, they established the idea of socialism and socialist thinking. This encouraged people to think of others, not just themselves, and encouraged society to work together for the greater good. They also asserted the view that everyone in society should be treated equally.
- In 1912, there was no welfare system in England and there was no minimum wage.
- There was no dole or benefits system, and no government handouts were available for those in need
- The number of hours worked was 65 hours per week.
- Employers could treat workers in whatever way they wanted – workers had few rights, as there were no unions or laws to protect employees.

Men and Women

- Women had fewer rights than men and were considered socially inferior and vulnerable.
- Women had no right to vote so could not assert their voice or opinion to enforce change.
- Only working class women worked, while middle and upper class women were expected to marry an upper class man and rely on him to sustain her.
- Women were subservient to men and had few rights to argue or have any control/decision making powers. The eldest male in any home was the head of the household with authority and power over others in the house.

Equality and Division in 1912

- Upper, middle and lower class system in place.
- 87% of all the wealth in the country belonged to only 5% of the population.
- The upper classes did not want to change the way that capitalist leaders ran the country.
- Divisions: rich and poor, employed and unemployed, men and women, adults and children.

Priestley's Life:

- John Boynton Priestley was born into a working class family in 1894.
- He knew early on that he wanted to become a writer, but decided against going to university as he thought he would get a better feel for the world around him by working.
- He became a junior clerk with a local wool firm at the age of 16.
- During the First World War, Priestley joined the infantry
- He was seriously wounded during the war and only just escaped death on a number of occasions.
- After the war, he gained a degree from Cambridge University, and then moved to London to work as a freelance writer.
- Much of his writing was ground-breaking and controversial.
- He included new ideas about possible parallel universes (Ouspensky and Dunne's Theories of Time) and strong political messages.

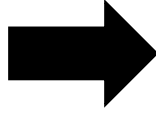
- During the Second World War he broadcast a massively popular weekly radio programme which was attacked by the Conservatives as being too left wing.
- The BBC eventually cancelled the programme, as it was too critical of the Government.
- He continued to write into the 1970s, and died in 1984.

Society in 1912 (<i>play set</i>)	Society in 1945 (<i>play written</i>)
WW1 would start in two years' time.	WW2 ended in 1945 and people were recovering from years of warfare, shortages, danger and uncertainty.
Strong distinctions between the upper and lower classes.	Class distinctions had reduced because of two world wars and the necessity to fight alongside others.
Women were subservient to men. No significant role in society except as a wife and mother for the higher classes.	Because of the wars, women had earned a more valued place in society and the right to vote.
Women could not vote – suffragettes were protesting for suffrage	Women were able to vote and had become equal to men in terms of voice
The ruling classes felt that nothing needed to change politically.	Socialism grew more popular after WW2 and this led to the creation of the welfare state.

Plot

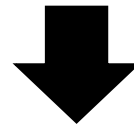
Act 1, Part 1

- Spring evening 1912; the Birling family celebrates Sheila and Gerald's engagement.
- Mr Birling gives a pompous speech about his views on business and the economy
- Gerald presents Sheila with an engagement ring
- The evening is interrupted by an Inspector.



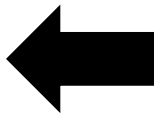
Act 1, Part 2

- Inspector Goole is enquiring about the suicide of a young girl
- He questions Mr Birling about his treatment of Eva as his factory worker.
- Sheila admits she treated Eva badly.
- Gerald reveals to Sheila that he knew Eva by the name Daisy Renton



Act 2, Part 2

- Mrs Birling is forced to admit that she knew Eva.
- Eva was pregnant and Mrs Birling refused to help her
- Mrs Birling says the father of the unborn child is to blame. Sheila tries to stop her speaking.
- There is a realisation that Eric is the father. Eric enters



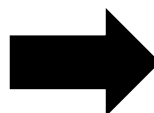
Act 2, Part 1

- Gerald and Sheila argue
- Mrs Birling enters and tries to bully the Inspector. Gerald gives details of his affair with Eva/Daisy
- Sheila expresses shame for the way she treated Eva
- Sheila gives the ring back to Gerald



Act 3, Part 1

- Eric confesses that he got Eva pregnant. Mrs Birling is distressed
- Eric reveals that he stole money to give to Eva
- Eric learns that his mother refused to help and accuses her of killing her grandchild.
- The Inspector give a monologue on social justice, then exits



Act 3, Part 2

- Mr and Mrs Birling refuse to accept responsibility for Eva's death. Sheila and Eric acknowledge their part in it.
- Gerald returns, having discovered there is no evidence of An Inspector Goole on the force
- the family works out that the Inspector was an imposer and there was no suicide
- The phone rings - a police inspector is on his way to talk to them about a suicide.

Act 1 (part 1)

Summary of events:

- The Birlings are celebrating Sheila Birling and Gerald Croft's engagement - they are in a happy and celebratory mood.
- Mr Birling lectures Eric and Gerald on his ideas about society and needing to look after others – he is a firm capitalist.
- The Inspector interrupts their celebration with news of the suicide of a young woman called Eva Smith.
- The Inspector begins questioning the characters and it is revealed that Eva was sacked from Mr Birling's factory two years ago.
- The discussion of the suicide causes conflict between the characters: Mr Birling defends his actions and doesn't accept responsibility, while Eric and the Inspector are more critical of his actions.

Key points from the scene:

The setting

- The play is set in 1912, in the fictional city of Brumley, North Midlands.
- The opening stage directions reveal that the play takes place in the large suburban house of a wealthy businessman.
- The stage directions create an impression of a substantial, wealthy house but not a home, showing a lack of warmth in the family

The situation

- The Birling family (Arthur Birling, Sybil Birling, and their two children, Eric and Sheila) have just finished dinner. The atmosphere is warm and celebratory.
- The Birlings' guest is Gerald Croft, Sheila's wealthy fiancé, and they are all celebrating the couple's engagement.

The characters

- The audience are briefly introduced to all the characters, but the main focus is on Arthur Birling.
- After congratulating the young couple, he makes a speech about the political and social climate of society in 1912.
- Birling is adamant that there will not be a war and that the miners' strike will end soon.
- He also speaks of the technological advances, and references the Titanic, which he says is 'absolutely unsinkable'
- Gerald and Arthur Birling are left alone and Arthur reveals his social aspirations – to be knighted.
- It is clear that the Birlings and Gerald are pleased with their lives and view themselves as good people.
- When Eric returns, Mr Birling continues to talk to the young men about his experience of the world and how there won't be any wars.
- He is part way through speaking about how capitalism is important and men must look after themselves and their families only, but he is interrupted by the doorbell and the Inspector's arrival.

AO2
The Inspector's arrival interrupts Mr Birling - this is **ironic** as we learn that the Inspector is going to 'interrupt' their beliefs and teach them about responsibility

The changing mood

- Inspector Goole arrives and the audience and characters are told about the suicide of a young woman called Eva Smith.
- Despite Mr Birling's status, the Inspector is confident, abrupt and mysterious.

- We learn Mr Birling sacked Eva from his factory two years ago, in September 1910. She led a group of women to ask for a pay rise in line with other factories in the area.
- Mr Birling refused to give them a pay rise, instructing them to work elsewhere if they didn't like what they were currently being paid.
- This resulted in an unsuccessful strike, after which the ringleaders (including Eva Smith), were sacked.
- Mr Birling finds himself defending his actions and Gerald supports him.
- Hearing Eva's story, Eric feels sorry for her, which causes him to argue with his father.
- The Inspector is clearly on Eva's side and this angers Mr Birling. He tries to intimidate the Inspector by listing who he is friends with and that he was once Lord Mayor.
- The Inspector is not intimidated by Mr Birling, he ignores his comments.
- At this point, Sheila enters the room unaware of what is going on.

In the same year Eva Smith was striking, Philip Snowden published 'The Living Wage' about the minimum amount of money a person needs to live on. This is something we still campaign for today.

Key quotations to learn:

- Arthur Birling:
 - 'It's one of the happiest nights of my life'
 - 'It's my duty to keep labour costs down'
 - 'I say there isn't a chance of war'
 - 'community and all that nonsense'
 - 'She'd had a lot to say, far too much, so she had to go'
 - 'You'll hear some people say that war is inevitable. And to that I say – fiddlesticks'
- Gerald:
 - '(laughs) You seem to be a nice well-behaved family'
 - 'You couldn't have done anything else'
- Inspector:
 - 'I'd like some information, if you don't mind'
 - 'It's better to ask for the world than to take it'
- Mrs Birling
 - 'Men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business'

Exam Practice:

Using one or more of the key quotations above, write a paragraph analysing how Priestley starts the play by establishing a happy, contented mood on stage.

Act 1 (part 2)

Summary of events:

- Sheila feels sorry for Eva Smith. When she sees the photo, she becomes distressed and confesses that she knew the girl
- Stella reveals that she complained about the girl, assuming she was laughing at her and mocking her. Her complaints got Eva Smith sacked from Milwards.
- Eva Smith changed her name to Daisy Renton. Gerald reacts to this name and the act ends with the audience realising Gerald knew her somehow.

Key points from the scene:

The focus shifts to Sheila

- Sheila is upset by the news of the girl's suicide, particularly as the Inspector reveals she was both young and pretty.
- The Inspector reveals that the case involves more than just Mr Birling.
- The Inspector gives some background details to Eva Smith's life and her situation.
- Sheila agrees with him that the girl led a pitiful life and that she needed compassion.
- The Inspector reveals that Eva took a job at Milwards in December 1910, but she was then sacked in the January after a complaint by a customer. Sheila recognises the girl's picture and runs out of the room upset.
- When she returns, Sheila admits that it is her fault that the girl was sacked.
- She explains that she was in a bad mood and felt that the girl was laughing at her. She also admits that she was jealous because Eva was a pretty girl. She is clearly upset, partly for herself, but also for the role she has played in the death of Eva Smith.

AO2

Both Sheila and Eva Smith are the same age but live dramatically different lives: Sheila's is affluent, whilst Eva lives in loneliness and isolation. Priestley uses this to show just how much Eva suffered and therefore make us feel more sympathetic.

The shift to Gerald

- When Sheila leaves the room upset, Mr Birling departs to speak to her and his wife.
- Eric and Gerald are left with the Inspector. Eric gets angry and tries to leave the room, but the Inspector insists that he stays.
- After Sheila returns and confesses, the Inspector tells the three young people that Eva Smith then changed her name to Daisy Renton. From Gerald's reaction to the news, he is clearly disturbed by this information.
- The Inspector and Eric go to the drawing room to speak to Mr and Mrs. Birling, leaving Gerald and Sheila alone.
- Sheila realises that Gerald knew Daisy during the previous spring/summer of 1911 and he had been having an affair with her.
- Gerald thinks that he can keep this news hidden, but Sheila realises that the Inspector knows everything already.
- The Inspector returns to the dining room and the act ends with his line: 'Well?'

Key quotations to learn:

- Sheila:
 - ‘but these girls aren't cheap labour- they're people'
 - ‘What do you mean by saying that?’
 - ‘You talk as if we were responsible – ‘
 - ‘(miserably) So I’m really responsible?’
 - ‘she was very pretty and looked as if she could take care of herself. I couldn't be sorry for her.

- Birling:
 - Why the devil do you want to go upsetting the child like that?

- Gerald:
 - ‘So – for God’s sake – don’t say anything to the Inspector’
 - ‘After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.’

- Inspector:
 - ‘A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it.’
 - ‘Sometimes there isn't much difference as you think. Often, if it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line.’

Exam Practice:

Using one or more of the key quotations above, write a paragraph analysing how Priestley portrays Sheila’s change.

Act 2 (part 1)

Summary of events:

- Gerald still hopes to hide his involvement with Eva/Daisy
- The Inspector tells Gerald and Sheila that they are all responsible for her death
- Mrs Birling behaves in a superior and condescending way to the Inspector
- Gerald reveals details of his affair with Daisy, and Sheila breaks off the engagement

Key points from the scene:

The presentation of Mrs Birling

- Continuing from the end of Act 1, Gerald tries to get Sheila to leave so that he can hide his involvement. Sheila refuses.
- The Inspector explains that Sheila wants to stay because she doesn't want to nor should she have to shoulder all of the blame for Eva's death
- As the Inspector talks about their joint responsibility, Mrs Birling enters the room in a very confident manner. Sheila is immediately alarmed as she, Gerald and Arthur Birling all initially behaved in the same way.
- Mrs Birling is condescending and patronising towards the majority of the characters: she refers to Eva's lower class status, talks down to Sheila and tries to undermine the Inspector by boasting of her husband's high status in the community. Despite this, the Inspector remains calm and blunt when speaking to her.
- When Sheila reveals that Eric drinks too much, also confirmed by Gerald, Mrs Birling is shocked and annoyed, refusing to believe this could be true.
- Sheila repeats her warning that her parents are making the situation worse and they are shocked to discover that Gerald knew Eva/Daisy as well.

Gerald and Daisy's relationship

AO2
Gerald uses **euphemism**, referring to prostitutes as 'women of the town' - this is due to social expectations. In the Edwardian society even this wouldn't have been said in front of women, so Gerald is forcing the family to face the realities of Eva Smith's life

- Gerald reveals he met Daisy in March 1911 in a bar. Sheila's parents don't want her to hear this story, but she refuses to leave. The audience begins to recognise the juxtaposition between the protected life led by Sheila and the harsh existence and treatment of Eva Smith.
- The reality of Daisy's death suddenly hits Gerald and he becomes visibly distressed.
- He describes taking Daisy for a drink to take her away from an upsetting encounter with Alderman Joe Meggarty (a city councillor who Gerald describes as a womanising drunk).
- Mrs Birling is shocked by this revelation and the audience can see that she is blinded to the faults of those of a similar class/status to her.
- Gerald explains to the Inspector that Daisy had no money and was hungry. He innocently moved her into his friend's empty apartment, and they became lovers.
- Mrs Birling is disgusted by his behaviour.

- Gerald reveals that he didn't love Daisy, but he enjoyed the love and attention from her. He broke off the relationship in September 1911. The Inspector discloses that Daisy then went to the seaside as she was so upset; she wrote in her diary that she wanted to be alone to pretend that her time with Gerald was continuing.
- Gerald asks to go for a walk. Before he goes, Sheila returns the engagement ring. She says that she respects his honesty, but they are now both different people as reality has removed any illusions.

AO3

It was common for upper-class and wealthy middle class men to have mistresses during the Edwardian era, provided it didn't become public knowledge.

Key quotations to learn:

- Inspector:
 - 'We'll have to share our guilt'
 - 'We often do on the young ones. They're more impressionable'
- Mrs Birling:
 - 'Girls of that class'
- Sheila:
 - 'You mustn't try to build a kind of wall between us and that girl',
 - he's giving us the rope – so that we'll hang ourselves.
 - I don't dislike you as I did half an hour ago, Gerald. In fact, in some odd way, I rather respect you more than I've ever done before.
 - 'and now, at least, you've been honest'
- Gerald:
 - 'All she wanted was to talk – a little friendliness'
 - 'women of the town'
 - I didn't install her there so that I could make love to her

Exam Practice:

Using one or more of the key quotations above, write a paragraph analysing how Priestley presents the different feelings that the characters have about Eva/Daisy.

Act 2 (part 2)

Summary of events:

- Eva was pregnant and asked Mrs Birlings charity for help.
- Mrs Birling didn't like the girl because she was a lower class woman, and used her influence to have her claim rejected.
- The Inspector manipulates Mrs Birling into stating that the father of Eva's child is entirely to blame for her death.
- The audience and the characters on stage start to realise that Eric was the father.

Key points from the scene:

Mrs Birling's role in Eva Smith's death

- Mrs Birling says she doesn't recognise the photo of Eva. Both the Inspector and Sheila know that she is lying.
- The Inspector reveals that Mrs Birling is a prominent member of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation – as part of this charity, she is meant to offer help to women in need
- Eva appealed to the charity for help two weeks ago, because she was pregnant, alone and had no money.
 - Mrs Birling reveals Eva was using the name 'Mrs Birling', which she found insulting as she was a lower class girl. This prejudiced Mrs Birling towards her.
 - Mrs Birling states that Eva only had herself to blame and says that it was her duty to use her influence to have the girl's claim refused. Eva Smith left the charity with no help or support.
 - The Inspector clarifies that the father wasn't Gerald.
 - Mrs Birling states that she told the girl to look for the child's father as it was his responsibility.
 - Sheila says that her mother's behaviour was terrible, while Arthur is merely concerned that her actions will look bad on them.
- In response, she points out that it was Arthur sacking Eva 'which probably began it all'.

The focus switches to Eric

- At this point it has not been made explicitly clear that Eric was the father of Eva Smith's baby, but the audience are beginning to work this out.
- As Mrs Birling begins to be questioned, there is the sound of Eric leaving the house, but the Inspector states that he will be needed. This creates clear tension.
- As the Inspector continues to question Mrs Birling, he pushes her into criticising the father of the illegitimate child. She calls Eva a liar for claiming that the man had offered her money but she thought it was stolen so didn't want to take it, as Mrs Birling believes someone like her would never refuse money.
- Mrs Birling refuses to accept any blame, saying it is the girl's fault first and the lover's second.
- She says that the man should be made an example of and accepts that if the girl's story about stolen money is true then the lover is entirely to blame.
- Sheila realises that the young man is Eric and tries to stop her mother from saying anything else.

AO3

There was no NHS or welfare/state benefits at this time! If people needed help, the only place they could go was to charities set up by wealthy members of society. It was up to them whether they chose to offer help or not

AO2

Priestley's stage directions give the Inspector authority and power over Mr and Mrs Birling. Examples such as 'calmly', 'angrily', 'massively' and 'severely' reveal the inspector to be in charge

- As Mr and Mrs Birling begin to realise the truth, Eric returns to the dining room.

Key quotations to learn:

- Mrs Birling:
 - 'I'm very sorry. But I think she only had herself to blame'
 - 'As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!'
 - I accept no blame for it all
 - She was giving herself ridiculous airs
 - She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position
 - Unlike the other three, I did nothing I'm ashamed of
 - 'I used my influence to have it refused'
- Inspector:
 - you're not even sorry now, when you know what happened to the girl?
 - She needed not only money but advice, sympathy, friendliness
 - Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.
- Sheila:
 - '(with sudden alarm) Mother – stop! – stop!'

Exam Practice:

Using one or more of the key quotations above, write a paragraph analysing how Priestley presents Mrs Birling's attitude towards Eva Smith.

Act 3 (part 1)

Summary of events:

- We learn that Eric met Eva and forced himself on her.
- Eric is revealed to be the father of Eva's child.
- Eric accuses his mother of killing Eva and the baby, and says that his father is unapproachable.
- The Inspector reminds the Birlings that they are all responsible for Eva Smith's death.
- The Inspector states his belief that all members of society need to look after each other.

Key points from the scene:

Eric and Eva

- The story picks up from the end of Act 2 and Eric realises that everyone knows the truth.

- AO2** Eric now uses Euphemism! He says Eva 'wasn't the usual sort', meaning the prostitutes at the Palace Theatre bar. The connections between prostitutes and theatres is one going back a long time, at least to Shakespeare's time
- The family argue over Eric's drinking and he retells how he met Eva in a bar.
 - Eric had been drinking a lot on the night they met.
 - After he turned aggressive, she let him stay at her flat where they had sex. At this point, Mr Birling orders Sheila to take her mother out of the room. Again, this highlights the contrast between the sheltered lives of the Birling women with the treatment and suffering of Eva.
 - Eric continues his confession. He met Eva again, by accident, and they slept together. Eva revealed that she was pregnant, but knew that Eric didn't love her. To help her, he stole money from Arthur Birling's office but when she found this out, she refused to take it.

Mr Birling's reaction

- Arthur loses his temper several times before Eric's confession: first with the Inspector, who refuses to be intimidated by him, and then with Sheila when she doesn't want to leave the room.
- He also reveals his aggression during Eric's confession. When Eric points out that some of Birling's supposedly respectable friends have affairs, the Inspector has to stop Arthur from interrupting. He has another angry outburst when Eric admits to stealing. This action is what really makes Mr Birling angry
- Arthur also comes across badly when Eric explains that he has a poor relationship with his father, feeling that he couldn't have asked him for help.
- Mr Birling still wants to cover the events up and avoid a public scandal.
- It is particularly damning when he says that he would give thousands of pounds to make the problem go away, showing his capitalist values rather than any genuine regret.

The Inspector's final message

- When Sheila and Sybil return, the Inspector tells Eric how Eva was rejected by his mother's committee, causing Eric to accuse Sybil of killing Eva and her own grandchild.
- The Inspector sums up, telling them that they all killed Eva Smith. He goes through the family members, one

AO3 Some critics have said the Inspector's final speech is unnecessary as it comes across as preaching at the audience. Others have said this speech is deliberately designed to make the audience think about their own responsibilities

by one, finally reminding Arthur that he destroyed a girl over two-and-a-half shillings.

- The Inspector focuses on the state of the county and reveals J.B. Priestley's key messages. He points out that there are 'millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths' who are similarly mistreated. Talking to the Birlings (and the audience) he says, 'We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other'. He leaves with a warning that change will have to come or society will be forced to learn to change their behaviour through 'blood and sweat'. The irony of this statement would be evident to an audience who had just experienced two world wars.

The climax of the play (Eric learning about his mother's involvement) prepares the way for the Inspector's final, powerful polemic

AO2

Key quotations to learn:

- Mr Birling
 - '(furious, intervening) Why you hysterical young fool – get back – or I'll –'
 - '(very sharply) You heard what I said!
- Eric:
 - 'You're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble'
 - I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty
 - I wasn't in love with her or anything – but I liked her – she was pretty and a good sport—
- Inspector:
 - 'You made her pay a heavy price for that.'
 - 'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other'.
 - One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do.
 - And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and bloody and anguish. Good night.

Exam Practice:

Using one or more of the key quotations above, write a paragraph analysing how Priestley presents Arthur Birling in the first half of Act 3.

Act 3 (part 2)

Summary of events:

- Gerald returns and reveals that the Inspector was not a real police officer.
- They find out that there is no dead girl at the infirmary.
- Arthur, Sybil and Gerald relax, thinking that everything can be covered up and forgotten.
- Sheila and Eric still feel guilty and cannot understand the others' behaviour.
- The play ends with a phone call from the police saying that a girl has died and an inspector is on his way to the house.


Key points from the scene:

Reactions after the Inspector leaves

- Arthur's reaction to the Inspector and his revelations continues to be fear of the scandal. He also states his belief that he and Sybil can excuse their actions.
- Sheila shows more guilt, pointing out that her parents haven't learnt anything and criticising them for not focusing on the actual victim.
- Sheila and Sybil begin to suspect that the Inspector was not a real police officer. Sheila doesn't however, really think that this matters because they still killed Eva Smith. However, Mr and Mrs Birling focus on the possibility of the whole affair remaining private if the police don't actually know.

Gerald's return

- When Gerald returns, Arthur tries to stop Sheila from telling him about Sybil and Eric's involvement in Eva's death.
- Gerald reveals that the Inspector was not a real police officer.
- Mr and Mrs Birling are relieved and believe the secret can be kept amongst them. Arthur telephones the chief constable and it is confirmed that Inspector Goole doesn't exist.
- While Gerald agrees with Arthur and Sybil, Sheila and Eric still feel guilt for what has happened.
- Gerald, Arthur and Sybil begin to think the whole evening may have been a hoax. They ring the infirmary and find that there is no dead girl.



When Gerald discredits the Inspector, he conveniently forgets his involvement with Eva and the deception of Sheila! This is a pattern of his - he likes to avoid unpleasant truths, much like Eric.

The end of the play

- Arthur and Gerald relax and are pleased that their experience is over. Arthur raises a toast to the family but Sheila and Eric refuse to take part.
- Arthur feels that everything is back to normal. He laughs about the evening's events and suggests that Sheila asks Gerald for her engagement ring back.
- Gerald offers her the ring but she refuses.
- Sheila and Eric realise that the others haven't learnt anything. She and Eric have been affected by the Inspector's words of warning before he left.
- Arthur laughs at his two children as the phone rings. It is the police: a girl has died after swallowing disinfectant and an inspector is on his way.

Key quotations to learn:

- Sheila:
 - 'Everything we said had happened really had happened'
 - 'You began to learn something. And now you've stopped'
 - Between us we drove that girl to commit suicide.

- Mr Birling:
 - '(heartily) Nonsense! You'll have a good laugh over it yet'
 - 'there'll be a public scandal...and who will suffer from that more than I will?'
 - 'the famous younger generation who know it all'
 - There's every excuse for what both your mother and I did
 - Probably a socialist or some sort of crank
 - a police inspector is on his way here – to ask some – questions –

- Eric:
 - And it doesn't alter the fact that we all helped to kill her.
 - The fact remains that I did what I did.

- Gerald:
 - Everything's all right now, Sheila. What about this ring?

Exam Practice:

Using one or more of the key quotations above, write a paragraph analysing how Priestley presents the differences between Mr and Mrs Birling and their children.

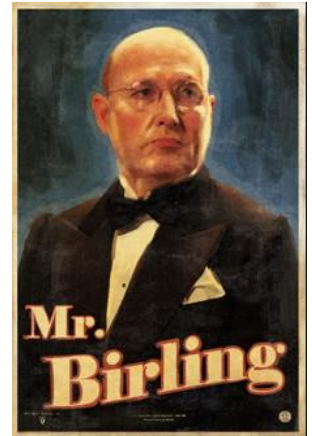
Characters

When examining characters, you should consider and understand the following:

- How is this character involved in the main **events/plot** of the play?
- What is this **character** like? What do we learn about this character through their relationships with others?
- Which major **themes** in the play could you associate with this character?
- How does this character fit into the **background/context** of society at this time? Do they represent a particular social group?
- What do we learn about this character through the **staging**/stage directions?
- What do we learn about this character through the **language** they use/the things they say? What language do others use about them?
- Does this character change during the play? **Structure**
- Why does Priestley include this character? How do they help the **playwright to convey his messages** in the play?

Mr Arthur Birling

- Birling is the pompous, cruel patriarch of the family.
- He makes speeches which reveal his selfish, arrogant and **myopic** (*prejudiced*) view of society and his indifference towards others.
- He is a social climber and extremely socially conscious
- His wife is higher up the social scale than him, as are the Crofts – Gerald’s parents.
- He is keen to improve his own social standing through his boast of a potential ‘knighthood’
- He wants to raise his own status through the marriage of Sheila and Gerald.
- He attempts to intimidate the Inspector by mentioning his previous role as Lord Mayor, emphasising his connections with the Crofts and his friendship with the Chief Constable.
- He never admits responsibility for Eva Smith’s death



Mr Birling’s role in the play:

- Birling represents a **stereotypical capitalist businessman**: he is more interested in making money than in the well-being of others. He represents the viewpoints and ideals that Priestley is criticising and as such, Priestley uses dramatic irony to undermine and ridicule this character.
- Priestley wants to ensure the audience believe in, and share the knowledge of, the Inspector, while mocking the views and statements of Arthur Birling. His declarations about the Titanic being unsinkable, his economic predictions on the 1940s being prosperous, and his statement about the impossibility of war, are designed to make him look foolish in the eyes of the audience, who would have lived through these.

Mr Birling’s beliefs

- Everyone is responsible for themselves and their family only.
- Denies any collective or social responsibility.
- More worried about profit, scandal and his reputation than other people’s feelings or well-being.
- Displays a callous and unsympathetic attitude towards Eva Smith.
- His desire for social progression is so great that he tries to convince Sheila that Gerald’s affair is normal behaviour.

Example exam question:

Explore how Priestley uses the character of Mr Birling to criticise the views and values of capitalism

Example analysis for Mr Birling:

Birling is made to seem dominant, particularly before the arrival of the Inspector. This is evident in the way he controls conversations, ‘Now you three young people, just listen to this –’. He comes across as a traditional patriarch, with the use of imperatives and commands to indicate that he is in charge. This is emphasised by the use of the discourse marker ‘Now’

which reveals his demanding nature and how he is used to being listened to immediately. Furthermore, Birling’s use of patronising language – ‘young people’ also suggests that he is trying to emphasise his superiority and wisdom, adhering to the common stereotype of age and wisdom being directly linked. For a post WW2 audience, his arrogance and patronising further portray him as a character whom the audience dislike and distrust.

Birling's quotes

Mr Birling is described as "a heavy-looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech." He is proud that he has built up his business and made so much money himself.

'I look forward to a time when Croft's and Birling's are no longer competing but working together – for lower costs and higher prices.' Mr Birling may only want Gerald to marry his daughter for business purposes.

'The Germans don't want war... the Titanic, she sails next week... and unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.' Mr Birling is wrong about the war and the Titanic. This is how the playwright tells us he is wrong in the way he treats people too – dramatic irony to 1945 and modern audience. This links to pages 9/10 and his views, which the audience will also see as wrong

'The way some of these cranks talk now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else.' Mr Birling can only ever think of looking after himself.

'But it doesn't convey anything to me.' Mr Birling doesn't even remember sacking Eva Smith until he is reminded about it.

'Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.' Inspector suggesting that Mr Birling has a 'duty of care' to his employees – something we take for granted in the 21st century

Birling attempts to bribe the Inspector to hush up the investigation: 'Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands...'

'It's my duty to keep labour costs down'



Why is Mr Birling important?

- He represents middle class men who have made money via capitalism.
- He refuses to accept responsibility for anyone else except himself.
- He represents capitalism and its ideals.
- He also represents an older generation that is less likely to be influenced by ideas of socialism.

AO3

Trade Unions weren't well established in 1912 and many employers didn't take them seriously. This is why Mr Birling could so easily sack Eva Smith

AO3

Priestley was a socialist so, to him, Birling stands for everything that is wrong with Edwardian society.

Mrs Sybil Birling

- She is described as a ‘cold woman’ and ‘her husband’s social superior’.
- She is narrow-minded and judgemental about the lower classes and has no real concept of how other people live. She has no insight into those around her
- She tries to use her influence and standing to intimidate the Inspector
- Her life is governed by her notion of correctness
- She is head of a charitable committee but is not motivated by any desire to help those less fortunate than herself – it was the ‘proper’ thing to do
- She treats Eric and Sheila like children throughout the play
- She blames Eva Smith’s ‘condition’ on the father, without realising this is Eric, thereby pinning the blame on her own family
- She never admits responsibility for Eva Smith’s death



Mrs Birling’s role in the play:	Mrs Birling’s beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Priestley uses Mrs Birling to represent the cold and callous selfishness of the indulged upper classes. The audience recognises how she is blinded to the faults of her social equals, yet hypocritically passes judgements and makes assertions about the lower classes, who she has no experience of. She expresses no empathy or remorse during the play and only reacts to the Inspector’s criticisms when they directly relate to her son, Eric. ○ She is the last character to make the connection that Eric is the father of Eva’s baby, which again highlights her ignorance. Her arrogant and patronising attitude towards the Inspector means that she falls victim to his questioning style, despite several warnings from Sheila. ○ The audience are also encouraged to be critical of Mrs Birling as we are aware that she is the only other character in the play who is a mother herself, therefore we could perhaps expect that she would have some empathy for Eva’s plight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Her views and ideas are always correct, evident in her reaction to Sheila ➤ She is not a charitable person and views the lower classes as lazy and idle. ➤ She is smug and self-satisfied and only serves on the committee as this was considered to be ‘correct’ ➤ She finds it insulting that a common girl has chosen to adopt her name as she is so far beneath her socially. ➤ She links class to morality. ➤ She is delighted when it seems that the Inspector is a fraud because she feels that she is the only character who didn’t give in to him. ➤ She does not change her attitude, has no sense of empathy and shows no remorse for her role in Eva Smith’s death

Example exam question:

Consider how Priestley presents the character of Mrs Birling through her treatment of others

Example analysis for Mrs Birling:

Sybil’s lack of social responsibility is shown throughout the play by her refusal to accept any responsibility for what happened to Eva Smith, ‘So I was perfectly justified in advising my committee not to allow her claim’. She repeats the adjective ‘justified’ several times in Act 2 to excuse her actions. She emphasises her social status by referring to the committee using the pronoun ‘my’. She is reminding the Inspector of her status and also implies that she could have helped Eva if she had chosen to.

Mrs Birling's quotes

- She is initially describes as being "about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior" suggesting Mr Birling may have married her for her social standing.
- 'Girls of that class...' Mrs Birling looks at everyone as members of various classes, not as human beings.
- 'Alderman Meggarty... we are learning something tonight.' Mrs Birling realizes that people she thought were civilised are corrupt and immoral. Suggests the wealthy are remote from reality? Link to today?
- 'She seemed to me to be not a good case – and so I used my influence to have it refused.' Mrs Birling admits turning the girl away but refuses to accept that this was wrong. Very matter of fact language.
- 'Some drunken young idler, then that's all the more reason why he shouldn't escape.' Mrs Birling doesn't yet know that the drunken idler is her own son. As a hypocrite, she doesn't say the same when she finds out!



Why is Mrs Birling important?

- She represents many of the upper and middle class attitudes from the time: arrogance, sanctimony, snobbishness and selfishness.
- She is part of the older generation that refuses to change or accept new ideas. She is happy to live in the **status quo**.
- She uses her influence to hurt other people rather than help them – it is difficult for the audience to do anything but dislike Mrs Birling, as is the case with her husband

AO3

Without the NHS, Eva Smith couldn't afford healthcare and had nobody to turn to for help. This is similar to healthcare in the USA where everything costs – sometimes a routine hospital visit can cost thousands of dollars

AO3

Mrs Birling is her husband's 'social superior' – this reflects Gerald and Sheila's relationship so could it be implying that the future for Gerald and Sheila is just as emotionless and empty as Mr and Mrs Birling's?

Miss Sheila Birling

- At the beginning, Sheila is naïve, sheltered and spoilt, representing upper middle class girls.
- She is initially pleased with herself, despite the world she lives in being shallow and narrow.
- She is engaged to Gerald Croft and at the beginning of the play they are celebrating this engagement
- She speaks in a childish way; calling her mother ‘mummy’
- Dramatically changes when her role in Eva Smith’s death is revealed
- She is the only character who immediately accepts responsibility for her role in Eva’s death



Sheila’s role in the play:

- Sheila is probably the most **sympathetic** character in the play as she is the character who is most transformed by the Inspector’s visit and his words of warning. Through her Priestley shows that society has the potential to change and he implies that hope for a better society may rest with the younger generation, who do not have the fixed mind-set of their parents.
- Sheila serves a dramatic purpose: the audience draw comparisons and contrasts between her life and the life of Eva Smith. We recognise that they have similarities, but the major difference between them is class. Sheila has led a life of privilege and protection, Eva has been abused and mistreated.
- She represents the hope that people can change.

Sheila’s beliefs

- She has more of a conscience than any of the other characters and we believe her when she says that she will never do anything like it again.
- She has **empathy** for Eva and she comes to recognise her as a person, not just as a worker.
- She is nearer to the Inspector in terms of her social conscience. As such, at the start of the play her relationship with her parents is a relatively harmonious one, yet as the play develops we witness this becoming more problematic and fractious.
- Sheila is the most changed by the Inspector’s visit. She is more honest and outspoken than at the beginning of the play, often shocking her mother with her remarks.

Example exam question:

Explore how the character of Sheila is changed by the Inspector’s visit.

Example analysis for Sheila:

Sheila realises the family’s position long before the others and tries to warn her mother, ‘(urgently, cutting in) Mother, don’t – please don’t. For your own sake, as well as ours’. Sheila’s tone of voice creates tension on the stage, which is highlighted by her repetition of the imperative ‘don’t’.

Interrupting and calling Sybil ‘Mother’, instead of the previous ‘mummy’, also indicates a more serious mood and a growing distance between these characters.

Sheila's quotes

- Sheila begins the play very much as childlike: "a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited." She is innocent and naïve, living in a world where her biggest concerns are engagement rings and dresses.
- 'She was a very pretty girl too... and that didn't make it any better.' 'I couldn't be sorry for her.' Sheila admits to being jealous of Eva Smith.
- '...talked about building up a wall that's sure to be knocked flat.' As one of the more intelligent characters, Sheila suspects that it is useless to try and fool the inspector.
- 'I don't care about that, the point is that you don't seem to have learnt anything.' Sheila reveals her generous nature and that she knows that whether the girl died or not, the sins they committed are still with them / have taken place.
- 'I suppose we're all nice people now.' As above. Ironic tone.



Why is Sheila important?

- She shows how gender roles are clearly defined at the start of the play: she is meant to be the sweet, innocent and naïve girl that gets married.
- As the play progresses, her character changes and she becomes far more determined, confrontational and aware.
- By the end of the play she represents a younger generation that is far more willing to take responsibility for the people around them

AO3

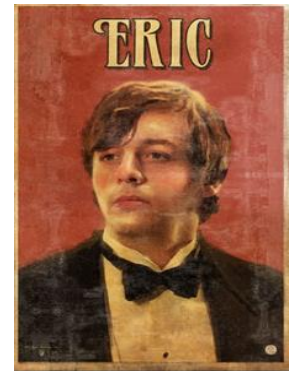
Edwardian middle and upper class parents encouraged (or forced) their children to marry for money. Sheila and Gerald are a love match, however Mr Birling does have a business interest, with a focus on the financial rewards it could bring

AO3

Sheila could reflect the suffragette movement as she presses for equality throughout the play, refusing to be moved out of the room and 'talking back' to her father. She is trying to break the societal barriers.

Mr Eric Birling

- At the start Eric is presented as an outsider.
- He is rather awkward and ill at ease with himself and others.
- He is presented as a drunk who does not stand up for himself against his father.
- Neither of his parents appear to know him well, or understand him, and their relationship appears to be a cold and distanced one.
- He did not treat Eva well and was aggressive in his sexual advances.
- He steals money from the family company to look after Eva
- He shows genuine remorse about Eva and he is horrified with the way she was rejected by the charity



Eric's role in the play:

- Eric represents the reckless and spoilt upper middle class men, who feel they can afford to be selfish, indulgent, frivolous and lack any clear sense of direction and purpose.
- Eric's voice is ignored and his views are dismissed or criticised by both of his parents. This contrasts with the obvious respect that Birling displays towards Gerald
- The audience feel some sympathy for Eric at the end of the play: he redeems himself and seems to have learnt his lesson.
- His views clash with the views of his parents who are keen to hush up the events.
- Eric is not afraid of his behaviour being exposed and he seems to be facing up to his responsibilities for the first time.
- Like Sheila, Eric also represents the possibility of change and provides an element of hope for the audience

Eric's beliefs

- Eric is not naïve and is willing to briefly challenge his father.
- Like Sheila, Eric shows empathy for the workers of the factory:
- He is disgusted by his parents' reactions as the end of the play, and even tells his father: "I don't give a damn now whether I stay here or not."
- Eric has changed by the end of the play and realises his actions had consequences. He is aware of his social responsibilities.

Example exam

question:

Explore how Priestley reveals the relationship between young and old in the play through Eric's relationship with his father.

Example analysis for Eric:

Eric's shame is clear when he describes his first night with Eva, 'And I didn't even remember – that's the hellish thing. Oh – my God! – how stupid it all is!' Priestley's use of repeated exclamations and dramatic pauses shows the distress that should be apparent in the character. This also shows how the impact of his behaviour and its consequences is slowly dawning on him.

Eric's quotes

- At the start of the play, Eric is described as "in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive." He is an awkward character that doesn't seem to fit in very well with his family. This awkwardness seems to be explained once we find out that he got an unmarried girl working class girl pregnant and stole money from his parents.
- 'She wouldn't take any more and she didn't want to see me again.' Eric explains how Eva/Daisy behaved more decently, even in poverty, than any of the Birlings did. Wouldn't accept stolen money.
- "Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices. And I don't see why she should have been sacked just because she'd a bit more spirit than the others. You said yourself she was a good worker. I'd have let her stay." – Eric explains his views on the lower classes and how they aren't so different
- 'and the child she'd had too – my child – your own grandchild – you killed them both – damn you-' Eric reveals the Inspector's ability to turn them against themselves. Hyphens used to show his distress – harsh language used. Don't forget to look at the stage directions as well!
- 'The money's not the important thing. It's what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters.' Eric proves that he is good at heart and understands that they were morally very bad to the girl.'



Why is Eric important?

- He represents the younger generation that are more socially responsible than their parents.
- He drinks because he feels guilt about what he did: by violently forcing himself on Eva, he got her pregnant and helped to drive her towards suicide.
- Because he accepts responsibility by the end of the play, the audience come to respect Eric a lot more.

AO3

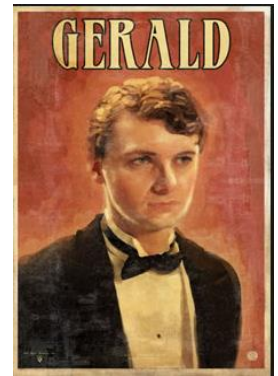
The play is set 2 years before the start of World War I. Eric most likely would have been drafted during WWI so the audience understand that the Inspector's last statement of 'fire, blood and anguish', referring to the war, could be direct foreshadowing of his future. This would increase audience sympathy as, having lived through WWI, they know just how high the death toll is.

AO1

Eric is a good character to compare to Gerald! Both are from wealthy families and high class backgrounds, however Eric accepts his responsibility whilst Gerald doesn't; this indicates the power of class and family.

Mr Gerald Croft

- Gerald is part of the **aristocracy** and is Sheila's fiancé
- He has the self-confidence of a young man of his class and upbringing.
- Gerald works at his father's company, Crofts Limited, Birling and Co's rivals.
- His parents disapprove of his marriage to Sheila as they are higher up the social hierarchy than the Birlings
- Despite being a similar age to Sheila and Eric, he is more like Mr Birling in his views and outlook on life
- Gerald had an affair with Eva Smith (as Daisy Renton). He met her at the Variety Theatre in town and 'rescued' her from Alderman Meggarty
- He initially takes some responsibility for Eva's death, but then like Mr and Mrs Birling is all too willing to cover it up and deny that Goole is a real inspector.
- Gerald is more concerned with protecting his reputation than he is taking responsibility for others.



Gerald's role in the play:

- Priestley uses Gerald to represent the upper classes and the privileged in society. He shares many of Mr Birling's views as capitalism is to some degree embedded in the class system. He has a sense of entitlement which prevents him from truly empathising with the suffering of the working classes.
- Gerald acts on his suspicions about the Inspector and he begins the chain of events which result in the revelation that the Inspector is a fraud.
- Ultimately, through Gerald, Priestley implies that the priority of the upper classes is appearance and reputation, rather than genuine concern for those who are socially inferior.

Gerald's beliefs

- He agrees with the way that Mr Birling handles the sacking of Eva Smith,
- When questioned by the Inspector his first impulse is to deny everything.
- Unlike Mr and Mrs Birling, he shows remorse for his actions when he realises what has happened to her.
- Once he realises the Inspector is a fraud, like the Birlings, he reverts to a light-hearted attitude which shows that he has not genuinely learned anything from the events of the evening.
- He believes women should be protected so tries to protect Sheila (or possibly himself) from the information about his affair with Eva, but he does admit what he did.

Example exam question:

Using the character of Gerald as a starting point, explore how Priestley presents that idea that the class system is focused on appearance, rather than morality.

Example analysis for Gerald:

Priestley makes it clear that Gerald is upset by Eva Smith's death, '(distressed) Sorry – I – well, I've suddenly realised – taken it in properly – that she's dead –'. This stumbling speech shows that he is in a state of shock. He repeats 'I' and rephrases what he is trying to say, with the dashes creating pauses to indicate that he is struggling to find the right words to say and that he is almost lost for words.

Gerald's quotes

'And I've told you – I was awfully busy at the works all that time.' Gerald proves that he is capable of being so dishonest to someone he should respect, i.e. Sheila.

'I didn't install her there so I could make love to her... I was sorry for her.' Gerald may have tried to help her but he never considered what would happen when he took the help away.

'She told me she'd been happier than she'd ever been before.' As above. Gerald's sense of generosity is not only providing him with sex without responsibilities, it is also misplaced.

'Everything's alright now sheila, what about this ring?.' Trying to win Sheila back, showing how easily he can put aside his guilt.



Why is Gerald important?

- He represents the upper classes in the play
- We – the audience – want him to change, after all, he did help Daisy with money, but he doesn't.
- He represents how the old class system is hard to remove – aristocrats don't want to lose their power and their status.

AO2

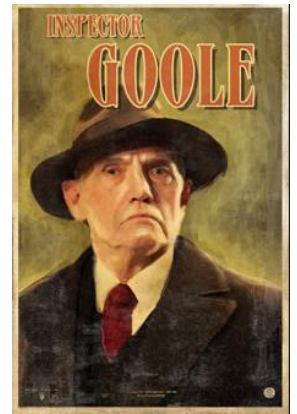
Gerald's vocabulary reflects his aristocratic upbringing and he clearly portrays himself as high class – his use of euphemism and refusal to outright state what he and Eva Smith did is telling of this.

AO1

It could be argued that Gerald is less guilty than the rest of the Birling family, as he showed Eva Smith happiness, and their eventual end was on positive terms. Is he forgiven because he gave her that moment of happiness?

Inspector Goole

- **Vehicle for socialism** and social change, and the contrast to Mr Birling's capitalist views. Priestley's **mouthpiece** for his ideas.
- Despite being lower class than the Birlings, he is calm and authoritative.
- He knows all of the characters are connected. This makes him seem ghostly
- Although Mr Birling tries to bribe him, Goole is not interested. Nor does Birlings' apparent connections to the police or those in politics have any effect on the Inspector.
- His final speech seems like a politician or a sermon to a congregation.
- He seems to be operating on a different level of consciousness to the other characters and this has led to a number of theories about who or what Inspector Goole is.
- His ordinary appearance highlights that he is not ordinary in how he conducts business
- The power of the Inspector lies in not knowing exactly who or what he represents.



Inspector Goole's role in the play:	Inspector Goole's beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He exposes the corrupt and cruel nature of capitalist society and remains constant and unmoving. • He holds the power and is an authority figure to the audience and for a time, to the characters. • He is a catalyst who seems able to get characters to reveal their involvement with Eva Smith because he seems to already know what they are going to say. When he leaves and it is revealed he was not a real police inspector, it confuses the audience about who he was and why he was there; the second phone call at the end confirming a young girl has died adds in another 'supernatural' layer to the play. • He is an ambiguous character, and we question who he was. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He believe we are responsible for one another ➤ He is a socialist voice of reason ➤ He challenges the upper classes and believes they have certain responsibilities they must accept ➤ He is single-minded and certain of himself and of his facts.

Example exam question:
Explore how Priestley presents the Inspector as a figure of morality?

Example analysis for Inspector Goole:

The Inspector is presented as powerful through the way he challenges Mr and Mrs Birling, 'Don't stammer and yammer at me again, man. *What did she say?*'. The imperative sentence here interrupts Arthur's attempt to stand up for Sybil and undermines the authority of Mr Birling – who is the patriarch of the family. The use of the word 'man', instead of the more respectful title 'sir' belittle Arthur and also reveal that the Inspector will not follow or conform to social conventions and that he is not intimidated by the status of the family. The use of italics here also serve to indicate that the actor should emphasise these words, showing his contempt for the family and highlighting that he will not allow the family members to evade his questioning.

Inspector Goole's quotes

- 'It's better to ask for the earth than to take it.' The Inspector's lesson to Mr Birling is that at least Eva Smith only asked for a rise. Mr Birling just takes all of his money without asking anyone.
- 'There are a lot of young women... if there weren't the factories and warehouses wouldn't know where to look for cheap labour. Ask your father.' (19) The Inspector shows he knows how business works and how the workers are exploited by Mr Birling.
- Gerald points out that they are respectable citizens, not criminals. Inspector says 'Sometimes, there isn't as much difference as you think ... I wouldn't know where to draw the line.' (22) Inspector suggests that even though no legal crime has been committed, they are guilty of a moral crime.
- 'You were annoyed with yourself and passed the annoyance onto her.' (25) The Inspector knows why Sheila did what she did to Eva Smith.
- 'She wanted to keep this youngster out of any more trouble – isn't that so?' (47) Eva Smith wouldn't accept any more money from Eric because she thought he'd get into trouble for it. Eva is morally superior to her superiors – irony.
- 'You're offering the money at the wrong time, Mr Birling.' (56) The Inspector offers moral, not legal lessons. Mr Birling appears not to know the difference.
- 'One Eva Smith has gone... but there are millions... of Eva Smiths... all intertwined with our lives... if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish.' The message Priestley wanted to put across when he wrote the play?
- The Inspector is described as creating 'an impression of massiveness, solidarity and purposefulness'



Why is Inspector Goole important?

- He represents the voice of reason in the play, and Priestley's ideologies
- We the audience come to feel as though he is 'inspecting' us as well, encouraging change and social responsibility
- He is the **omniscient** conscience of society and the forces needed to enact change
- He leaves the audience questioning what has occurred and makes them more susceptible to considering Priestley's messages in the play and reflecting upon their own behaviour.

AO2

Goole is an essential dramatic device in moving the plot along and creating the steady build up of tension. Priestley had to make him a police inspector as he is the only outsider of a lower class in society, who could demand entry to the Birlings' family home, ask them probing questions and have some form of independent authority over them.

AO3

Some critics have argued that the Inspector is a confessor figure such as a priest, with the characters revealing their sins to him. However, he does not make things easy for them and he does pass judgement on them. Yet unlike a priest he neither forgives nor punishes them.

Eva Smith/Daisty Renton

- Central to the action of the story, though she never appears on stage or speaks.
- Her story is relayed through the diary she has left behind.
- Her story is also told through the Inspector to highlight her powerlessness and lack of status in society – she did not have the power to speak of these events herself.
- Gerald, Sheila and Mr Birling comment on her good looks and she is presented as a moral character
- She has a strong sense of fairness and equality, shown through the organisation of the strike



Eva Smith's role in the play:

- Eva Smith represents the powerless working class woman who had few rights in Edwardian society.
- The fact that the audience are given details about her by the other characters is important because this symbolises how the working classes play a large role in the Birlings' life and wealth, but they are also invisible.
- It is significant that she comes across as having better values and a stronger morality than the people who ruined her life. This also directly challenges Mrs Birling's views on the working classes and their 'inferior' moral values.
- Priestley uses Eva Smith as an 'every-woman' and he draws attention to this by giving her the common surname 'Smith'. She represents the vulnerable working classes in society; their financial struggles and the prejudice against them higher classes.
- She reveals to the audience some of the obstacles that women in society faced at that time:
 - The dominance of men (Arthur as her employer, Eric forces his way into her lodgings).
 - Being treated like a sexual object (Joe Meggarty's advances, Eric wanting her only for sex).
 - The difficulty in being independent or self-sufficient (she is unemployed and hungry when she meets Gerald and she is dependent on his support).
 - Prejudice about sexual activity (Sybil is prejudiced against her partly because she is pregnant and unmarried).

Example exam question:

Analyse how Priestley uses the character of Eva Smith to represent the need for society to be more caring.

Example analysis for Eva Smith:

Though she is the central figure of the story, Eva Smith never appears on stage or speaks, immediately highlighting to the audience that, though this is about her, she has no say in what happens – she is helpless and silenced by the upper classes. The audience learn about Eva through the other characters' descriptions of her, many of which focus on her good looks – her worth seems to only be in terms of how attractive she is.

Furthermore, the fact that Eric describes her as a 'good sport' reveals how little he thought of her initially, as the noun 'sport' implies she is a game to be played, completely dehumanising her. For a post WW2 audience, this dehumanised, silenced portrayal of a working class woman would evoke sympathy and a desire for change, knowing that there were many women living a similar lifestyle to Eva Smith.

Eva Smith quotes

‘She was rather pretty, and a good sport’

‘A lively looking girl – country bred [...] good worker too’ – She was more naïve than a ‘city girl’ but she was capable of doing well, even Birling noticed this!

‘she’d had a lot to say, far too much, so she had to go’ – not afraid to speak her mind.

‘she was very pretty and looked as if she could take care of herself’ – Sheila judged Eva Smith and assumed she would find other work



Why is Eva Smith important?

- She is the representation of the **voiceless lower classes**
- She is the central character whom the entire plot of the play revolves around
- She is a **martyr** for social change and socialism – her death inspires change in Eric and Sheila

Edna

Eva Smith isn't the only lower class character in the play! Edna, the Birlings' maid also reveals crucial information about the time period.

- Edna does appear on stage (though not much) yet she lacks a clear voice. There are no stage directions indicating how Edna would deliver her lines
- Edna also represents powerless, working class women who would have had few rights in Edwardian society.
- She is a servant, cleaning away the table and fetching drinks.
- She is largely ignored by the family, who only acknowledge her presence when they want her to undertake a task. She is addressed informally as 'Edna', while she responds to her employers as 'ma'am' or 'sir', indicating the difference in status between the classes and the deference she is expected to show as a result

Themes

Things to consider:

- How does this theme link to the main **events/plot** of the play?
- Which **characters** relate to this theme?
- Does this **theme** connect to/relate to other themes? For example, inequality links/contrasts with equality and relates to the theme of responsibility.
- How does this theme relate to the **background/context** of Edwardian society? Why would this theme be relevant to the audience?
- What do we learn about this theme through the **staging**/stage directions?
- What **language**/key speeches are used to reveal this theme?
- Does this theme change/develop during the play? **Structure**
- Why does Priestley include this theme? How does this theme relate to the **playwright's message**?

Equality and Inequality



Priestley presents the audience with a powerful social and political message regarding equality and inequality, rife in 1912, and still prevalent in 1945, through the Inspector.

Priestley explores how a lack of equality makes Eva Smith's life difficult and ultimately contributes to her death.

In contrast, because the Birlings and Gerald have more money, status and power, their lives are much easier.

Priestley uses his characters as **microcosmic representations** for the class hierarchy in the play. Eva Smith is a representation for the lower class, whilst the Birlings reflect the upper class ideas and values.

Quotes linked to theme

- 'girls of that class'
- 'as if a girl of that sort would refuse money'
- 'Get into trouble? Go on the streets?'
- 'Because she had been turned out and turned down too many times'.
- 'These girls aren't cheap labour, they're *people*'
- "She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position'

Theme Tracker

- Mr Birling shows his belief in the class structure – acknowledging Lord and Lady Croft are of a superior position
- Mr Birling explains why he dismissed the strikers. Gerald agrees with this act, Eric doesn't.
- Sheila uses her social power and influence to have Eva fired, despite her being a 'good worker'.
- Sheila challenges Mrs Birling's belief in their superior social position
- The Inspector challenges Birling's arrogant comments on community with a 'sharp ring of the doorbell'

Upper Class

- The Birlings represent the upper classes and the power they have over the lower classes.
- They have benefitted from inequality
- Their wealth is highlighted through the opening stage directions
- The set immediately suggests to the audience they have a high social status.
- Birling refers to the fact that Eric has been given many advantages and opportunities as a result of their class, when he mentions Eric's 'public school and Varsity life'.
- Their power comes from money and their roles in society:
 - Arthur is a magistrate, has been Lord Mayor, and is expecting a knighthood.

Lower Class

- Eva is at the bottom of the social hierarchy because she is working class and a woman
- In Edwardian society she would have little power and few rights.
- Eva represents the most vulnerable members of society who are at the mercy of those who are more powerful, like the Birlings and Gerald.
- She was dismissed from the factory and her employment at Milwards.
- In her relationships with Gerald and Eric she is dependent on them financially and/or emotionally
- Eva has a lack of opportunities. When Arthur asks what she did after being sacked, crime and prostitution are presented as her most obvious options.
- Her life is presented to the audience as being a constant struggle and references

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Despite being female in a patriarchal society, Sheila has power over Eva Smith as the daughter of a wealthy customer. ○ Sybil Birling has power due to her own social status, that of her husband, and to influence those who are helped by her charity. 	<p>are made to her being penniless, hungry, lonely and preyed upon sexually by more powerful men.</p> <p>➤ Her lack of presence and voice in the play are also indicators of inequality – the silence reflects how little power and ‘voice’ the lower classes had</p>
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- How does the Inspector fit into this?**
- The Inspector is consistently critical of how working class girls are viewed as ‘cheap labour’ and exploited for the profit of the powerful.
 - As he interrogates the family, he reveals the different ways that they have each made Eva a victim of their social superiority.
 - He blames inequality for her suicide.
 - Priestley’s use of **the passive voice** emphasises how Eva wasn’t in control of her own life.
 - Through the Inspector, Priestley is trying to show that the upper classes are unaware that the easy lives they lead rest upon hard work of the lower classes.

Character	Attitudes to the lower class	Attitudes to the upper class:
	To this character, Eva was...	At the start of the play, this character was:
Mr Birling	Cheap labour	Keen to be knighted to cement his hard-fought rise to the upper class
Sheila	Someone who could be fired out of spite	Happy spending a lot of time in expensive shops
Gerald	A mistress who could be discarded at will	Prepared to marry sheila, despite her lower social position
Eric	Easy sex at the end of a drunken night out	Awkward about his 'public-school-and-varsity' life
Mrs Birling	A presumptuous upstart	Socially superior to her husband, and embarrassed at his gaffes

Sample analysis point on this theme:

Priestley presents inequality by describing Eva’s life after she is sacked, ‘no work, no money coming in...no relatives to help her, few friends, lonely, half-starved, she was feeling desperate’.

Priestley uses a list here to build up a sense of Eva’s struggle, with the repetition of ‘no’ highlighting aspects of her social inequality. The fact that her struggles are presented against the backdrop of wealth and that this happens after the Birling family’s lavish celebrations, help to create a real contrast between Eva’s life and the lives of those who have caused her demise.

Sample question:
Explore how Priestley presents society as being unequal in the play.

Social Responsibility



Priestley uses the play to express his belief that we should help the less fortunate in society - a key principle of socialism. He believes that capitalism focuses too much on individual gain.

This is clearly linked to power and equality, and Priestley's view is that with power comes responsibility. He wants the audience to realise that the Birlings and Gerald have not lived up to their social responsibilities, using Eva Smith's suicide as an example.

Social Responsibility is the **antithesis** (*opposite*) to Mr Birling's views, which are based on capitalist ideals. He feels a responsibility towards his family and business, not to other people. He believes that the poor are greedy and the rich need to keep them in their place or 'they'd soon be asking for the earth'. In order for him to be wealthy and happy, he thinks others must be poor and unhappy.

Quotes linked to theme

- 'it's my duty to keep labour costs down'
- 'their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering, and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, with what we think and say and do'.
- 'She needed not only money, but advice, sympathy, friendliness'.
- 'public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges'

Mrs Birling does not have a sense of social responsibility, despite being a member of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation (a charity that helps girls who are 'deserving cases').

Mrs Birling doesn't like Eva Smith and makes sure her case is refused. She uses personal prejudices and abuses her position of power, ignoring any social responsibility that should come with this role. She refers to Eva as 'a girl of that sort' who was giving herself 'ridiculous airs'. This shows that she thinks working class girls are beneath her and should know their place.

Priestley hopes his message about power and responsibility will encourage the audience to change and reflect upon their own behaviour and social responsibility.

Although the older members of the family don't seem to change or accept responsibility, Eric and Sheila's sense of responsibility towards others is altered.

Theme Tracker

- Mr Birling gives a speech about responsibility to oneself and one's family- Eric later remarks on this
- Mrs Birling states who she thinks is to blame for Eva Smith's pregnancy
- Inspector Goole gives a passionate speech about responsibility to others
- The Inspector challenges Birling's arrogant comments on community with a 'sharp ring of the doorbell'

Sample question:

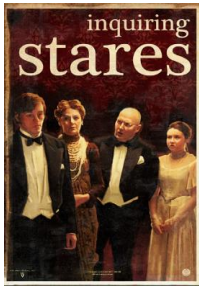
Explore how Priestley presents society as being unequal in the play.

Sample analysis point on this theme:

Priestley uses the Inspector to explore social responsibility through the comments he makes about society, 'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.' This pattern of three statements repeats the plural pronoun 'we' to emphasise socialist values of joint responsibility. The short sentences emphasise the messages that we should all respect and help each other, and this is captured in the metaphor 'one body'.

Personal responsibility

Personal responsibility means accepting the consequences of your own actions. As well as wanting the Birlings to understand why they should behave differently and accept social responsibility, The Inspector (and Priestley) also wants them to admit, and feel guilt for, their individual role and contribution to Eva's suicide.



This is highlighted in one of the Inspector's final monologues. The emotive language emphasises the effects of the characters' behaviour, while the short sentences highlight their importance to Priestley's intentions and central message in the play overall.

Sheila and Eric accept that they have wronged Eva Smith. Priestley emphasises her sense of personal guilt by repeated use of the pronoun 'I' and uses short sentences to indicate the certainty and sincerity of her statements.

Theme Tracker

- Mr Birling refusing to take any responsibility
- Sheila accepts her role in Eva's suicide, as does Eric
- Gerald begins to accept responsibility but when he realises he's 'off the hook' he reverts back to his old ways

Quotes linked to theme

- 'I had done no more than my duty'.
- 'the fact remains that I did what I did. And mother did what she did. And the rest of you did what you did to her'
- 'I behaved badly...I know I did. I'm ashamed of it'.
- 'This girl killed herself – and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it'.

Eric and Sheila also identify the responsibility of the rest of the family while the parents celebrate the news that the Inspector was not a real police inspector. Eric and Sheila do not share their joy as they have learnt to take personal responsibility as a direct consequence of the Inspector's visit. They develop and mature in the play and do not care if their actions and treatment of Eva are exposed. This implies that they have truly learnt their lesson.

In contrast, while Gerald feels guilty in Act 2 for cheating on Sheila and for deserting Eva, by the end of the play (because he thinks that no-one else knows) he seems to have forgotten his shame.

He asks Sheila to remain engaged to him and doubts the story of Eva's death.

Mr and Mrs Birling feel that their actions were justified. Priestley highlights their lack of personal responsibility by also having them point out the failings of others. This is most obvious when Sybil focuses on the responsibility of the father of Eva's child, not realising it is Eric. She is

horrified when she realises this, highlighting her hypocrisy and view that concept of social responsibility should not apply to her, or her family.

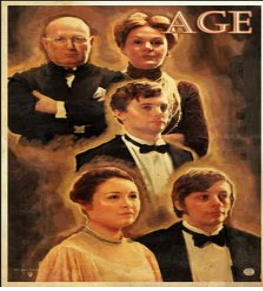
Sample question:

Analyse how Priestley emphasises the importance of people taking personal responsibility for their actions through the play.

Sample analysis point on this theme:

Priestley presents a lack of personal responsibility through Arthur's refusal to take any blame, 'There's every excuse for what both your mother and I did – it turned out unfortunately, that's all'. Including Sybil in the acknowledgement of his involvement shows his reluctance to accept any individual guilt. The dramatic pause followed by the callous understatement of 'unfortunately' and then the dismissive phrase 'that's all' suggests that he has no genuine sympathy for Eva Smith's death.

Young and Old



At the start of the 20th century, it was a rigid thought that young people are expected to respect and obey their elders. Priestley uses this to highlight the contrast and divide between the two generations.

The older generation – consisting of Mr and Mrs Birling - are shown to have a **myopic** (narrow) and fixed view on society in general.

The younger generation – Eric and Sheila - present a more positive view and are more open to change. As a result, they are more susceptible to the Inspector's (and Priestley's) socialist views on changing society.

This age divide shows Priestley believes that hope for a society that learns from the mistakes of the past rests with the young.

Quotes linked to theme

- 'The famous younger generation who know it all.'
- 'Are you listening Sheila?'
- 'Just let me finish Eric'
- 'Please don't contradict me like that'.
- 'You seem to have made a great impression on this child, Inspector'.

In the beginning, Priestley gives Arthur the greatest number of lines to show his authority. He toasts the engagement, gives his opinions about the state of the world and goes on to lecture Eric and Gerald about life. When he talks, he expects people to pay attention, doesn't like to be interrupted and gives opinions as facts.

Mrs Birling also shows dominance over the young, although she lets her husband take the lead.

Theme Tracker

- Mr and Mrs Birling treat their children as if they are very young
- Sheila is childish in her speech 'mummy'
- Mr and Mrs Birling believe they are superior due to age
- The younger generation change by the end

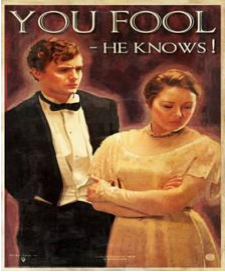
The arrival of the Inspector marks a change with age roles challenged and generation divides emphasized. Eric and Sheila challenge their parents' values. Notably, Eric's responses (which are more extreme) include him cursing his mother ('damn you'), being aggressive towards her ('[almost threatening her]') and mocking the irony of Arthur's after-dinner speech about self-interest.

Gerald is caught in the middle. In the end he sides with the older generation, perhaps because of his aristocratic roots and their influence on him to keep the status quo and protect his own interests. This may be Priestley's way of highlighting that age alone isn't the defining factor.

Sample question:

Explore how Priestley reveals the growing divisions between the younger and older generations in the play.

Youth and age are explored through Arthur's response to Eric challenging his authority in Act 3: 'So hold your tongue if you want to stay here'. His assertion to Eric that he must stay silent and its aggressive implications highlights his anger that traditional expectations of respect for one's elders are being ignored. We know that Birling is used to speaking and being listened to, so Priestley's use of an imperative and the threat of being forced to leave home, suggests that Arthur is alarmed by the way he is being challenged by the younger generation.



Love and marriage

The play begins with the celebration of Sheila and Gerald's engagement. The stage directions emphasise that this is a happy occasion and the mood is warm. They initially appear deeply in love but the audience notice possible uncertainty and reservation in Sheila's reactions. This could imply that money plays a role in their love. This returns when we realise the Arthur's own reasons for approving of their engagement.

Mr Birling is keen for this marriage to take place, as he thinks it will benefit his business and increase his social standing. His interest is not based on love but on how much he can gain.

Mr Birling's motives for marrying his wife, may have more to do with her social position, rather than love, as she is his social superior. They seem to share and support each other's opinions, but their reactions to one another suggest that marriage lacks affection. Married women during the Edwardian period, from whatever class they came, would be expected to put their husbands before themselves at all times.

Love and marriage are presented as meaning different things to men and women. For Sheila and Eva it represents faithfulness and love is linked to romance. Men see love differently - women are viewed as a commodity. Notably, Gerald and Eric's relationships are linked to sex more than love.

Theme Tracker

- The family toast Gerald and Sheila's engagement
- Sheila demands to know if Gerald loved Daisy Renton. Gerald isn't sure
- Sheila no longer knows what her feelings are for Gerald. She needs to understand what has happened before the engagement can resume.

Quotes linked to theme

- 'Now I feel really engaged'
- 'And I drink to you – and hope that I can make you as happy as you deserve to be'
- 'Men with important work to do spend nearly all their time and energy on their business'
- 'she was pretty and a good sport'

These differing views highlight other gender divisions such as male infidelities being overlooked and seen as more acceptable to have different sexual partners. In comparison, it be expected that women were virgins when they married and they were judged far harsher socially.

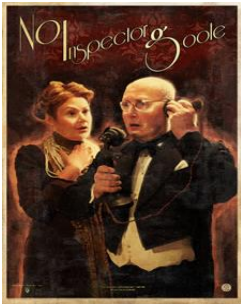
Parental love, or the lack of it in Eric's view, is also referenced. Inspector Goole promotes love as charity or general compassion, care and humanity for others in society.

The love between Gerald and Sheila undergoes the greatest change. As Gerald's affair with Daisy Renton comes to light, Sheila realises that she doesn't really know the man she is due to marry, and that trust and honesty are the basis of a sound marriage – which is why she does not resume her engagement.

Sample question:

How does Priestley use to explore the theme of love in the play?

There is a lack of honesty in Gerald's relationship with Sheila and we see this in his reply to her question about Daisy Renton, 'All right. I knew her. Let's leave it at that'. His monosyllabic response to her here suggest that he is reluctant to be honest with her. He clearly thinks Sheila should not question his love, but instead accept whatever he says as truth and an end to the matter – reflecting the attitudes to gender during this period.



Time

Priestley uses time as a dramatic device and a key theme to reveal his criticisms and undermine characters. This is particularly so in Mr Birling's confidence in the Titanic and the impossibility of war. Priestley uses dramatic irony to signal to the audience that he isn't as wise as he thinks, which encourages the audience to distance themselves from his views.

The Inspector's final words refer to the two world wars that took place between the play's setting and when it was written. This allows the audience to reflect on the past and consider how and why society has changed.

The play takes place over the course of one evening, with each act leading directly into the next, intensifying the destruction of the Birlings' self-centred way of life.

The series of flashbacks over a 2 year period, told by the characters, present Eva's life as a continual struggle against inequality. This emphasises the idea of a chain of events, consequences and the fact that they cannot change the past.

By the end, the play has almost come full circle. Mr and Mrs Birling and Gerald feel safe and secure before they again receive news that a police inspector is on his way round.

Theme Tracker

- Inspector Goole informs Gerald and the Birlings that a young woman has committed suicide by drinking disinfectant
- When the inspector leaves, Gerald and the Birlings discover that there is no one called inspector Goole and no recent suicide
- The final phone call reveals that an inspector is on his way to investigate the suicide of a young woman. Events are about to repeat themselves

Quotes linked to theme

- 'a time of steadily increasing prosperity'
- 'fire and blood and anguish'
- 'a chain of events'
- A girl has just died – on her way to the infirmary.'

Priestley uses this **cyclical**

structure to suggest that, unless people change, society is doomed to keep making the same mistakes. The past will return to haunt them.

He creates an intriguing cliffhanger ending that explores the idea of second chances; the audience are left wondering how the characters will respond to the consequences of their actions a second time around.

The quickened pace in Act 3, and the Inspector's need to hurry, raises tension on stage and adds to the story's mystery: the audience later realise the Inspector needed to finish before the real police arrived.

Sample question:

How does Priestley reveal his intentions through the use of time?

Priestley explores time through the idea that the events of the past affect the present. This is clear when Sybil Birling criticises Eva for having 'fine air and scruples that were simply absurd for a girl in her position' and the Inspector replies that 'her position now is that she lies with a burnt-out inside on a slab'. This shocking contrast is used by Priestley and the Inspector to highlight how Mrs Birling's last encounter with Eva has resulted in tragic present circumstances.

Structure and Form

Stage and setting

Staging- All the action takes place in one room- it is claustrophobic and intense- so pressure builds within the closed room. The Birlings are shown to live in a closed, protected world and the Inspector is not welcomed from the outside. His entrance into the house shows the intrusion of social change.

Stephen Daldry's 1992 production showed the house on stilts. Height showed the Birlings' separation from the rest of the town, but the stilts seemed unsteady- showing the Birlings could easily fall from their status.

Stage Directions are important parts of the play that you can analyse and examine in the same way that you would analyse language! They can give you information about the layout of the stage itself, or give more information about the feelings and actions of characters.

The stage directions at the beginning of the play give us lots of information about the characters, their personalities and the lifestyle they lead:

- The Birlings are well off and middle class. Their home is described as being a 'fairly solid suburban house' with 'good solid furniture' which is 'substantial and heavily comfortable' rather than 'cosy'.
- Birling is 'heavy looking' and 'rather portentous'
- Mrs Birling is 'rather cold'
- Sheila is a 'pretty girl...very pleased with life and rather excited'.
- Gerald is an 'attractive chap'
- Eric is 'not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive'.
- When the Inspector arrives, we are told that he 'need not be a big man' and that he 'has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking'.

Lighting: remember, this is not a play that is meant to be read on a flat page, but is meant to be seen and heard on stage! Lighting helps create a fully immersive, 'real' setting and can subtly change or enhance atmosphere and tone

- At the beginning the lighting is 'pink and intimate', which fits the celebratory, warm mood at the start of the play
- This becomes 'brighter and harder' with the arrival of the Inspector, suggesting the change in mood, a sense of interrogation and indicating that the Inspector will shed light on the family and expose the reality behind this warm façade.

Sound effects also help to increase the drama! Think of the doorbell -it marks the arrival of the Inspector in the middle of one of Mr Birling's capitalist monologues, indicating that his views will now be interrupted and challenged. Also, the ringing of the doorbell in the final moments of the play is highly significant.

Arrivals to and exits from the house are heard with a loud bang

Entrances and exits are used to create dramatic tension, with some characters being unaware of what has happened whilst they have been out of the room. For example, the entrance of the Inspector just after Birling has made his pompous speeches, and Eric's re-appearance at the end of Act 2, just at the moment when the audience and characters realise that he is the father of Eva's baby.

Dramatic Devices

Dashes show a character's emotional; the dash represents the fact that the character is speaking in a disjointed way so perhaps they could feel incredulous, distressed or unsettled by the Inspector.

Dramatic irony (when an audience knows more about the characters/action than the characters on stage) is evident in Birling's speeches at the beginning where he says war is 'impossible' and the Titanic is 'unsinkable'. His foolishness is contrasted with the Inspector's talk of 'blood and anguish'.

For an audience who have just lived through two world wars, they would think of Mr Birling as a fool, making his political opinions seem wrong. He's trying to show his concern that such idiotic people have such a degree of power in society. Audiences would therefore be more likely to align themselves with the Inspector.

Cliff-hangers are used several times to make the audience wait in anticipation for what they know will happen. This is used to some extent at the end of each act. The end of the play in particular is a cliff-hanger. The audience leave the theatre with more questions than answers which forces them to reconsider and evaluate the play, considering the events that have occurred and examining their own social conscience

The Inspector himself is a dramatic device partly due to his mystery. He is used to good effect to move the plot along, controlling the pace of events and the order of questioning, speaking 'carefully, weightily' showing his power. He is also used as a mouthpiece to vocalise Priestley's socialist views. His name also suggests something unpleasant/interesting about him 'Goole' is a homophone (*sounding like*) for 'Ghoul' meaning ghost. He is in command at the end of Act 1, 2 and to some extent 3. He is also in command at the beginning of Act 2 and 3

The **ending** leaves the audience on a cliff-hanger. In Act 3 the Birlings believed themselves to be off the hook when it is discovered that the Inspector wasn't real and that no girl had died in the infirmary. This is cathartic (it releases tension) - but the final telephone call, announcing that a real inspector is on his way to ask questions about the suicide of a young girl, suddenly restores the tension very dramatically, taking away this catharsis. It is an unexpected final twist.

Form

The play follows the rules of **Greek Drama**, known as the three unities: Time, Place, Action. This makes the play realistic.

- The **unity of place** means that the drama happens in one location – the Birling household
- The **unity of action** means the action is only focused on one line at one time, there are no subplots or shifts in focus – everything is about Eva Smith's suicide and it all takes place in one evening
- The **unity of time**, time pass on stage relative to time in real life – the story follows the 2 hour questioning of the Birlings, with no flashbacks or breaks in time.

The Inspector also acts like a **Greek chorus** (Narrator). He sums up what has happened, and explains to both actors and the audience the lessons we must learn.

The play is known as a '**Well Made Play**' - this is a very traditional form of drama and normally follows this structure:

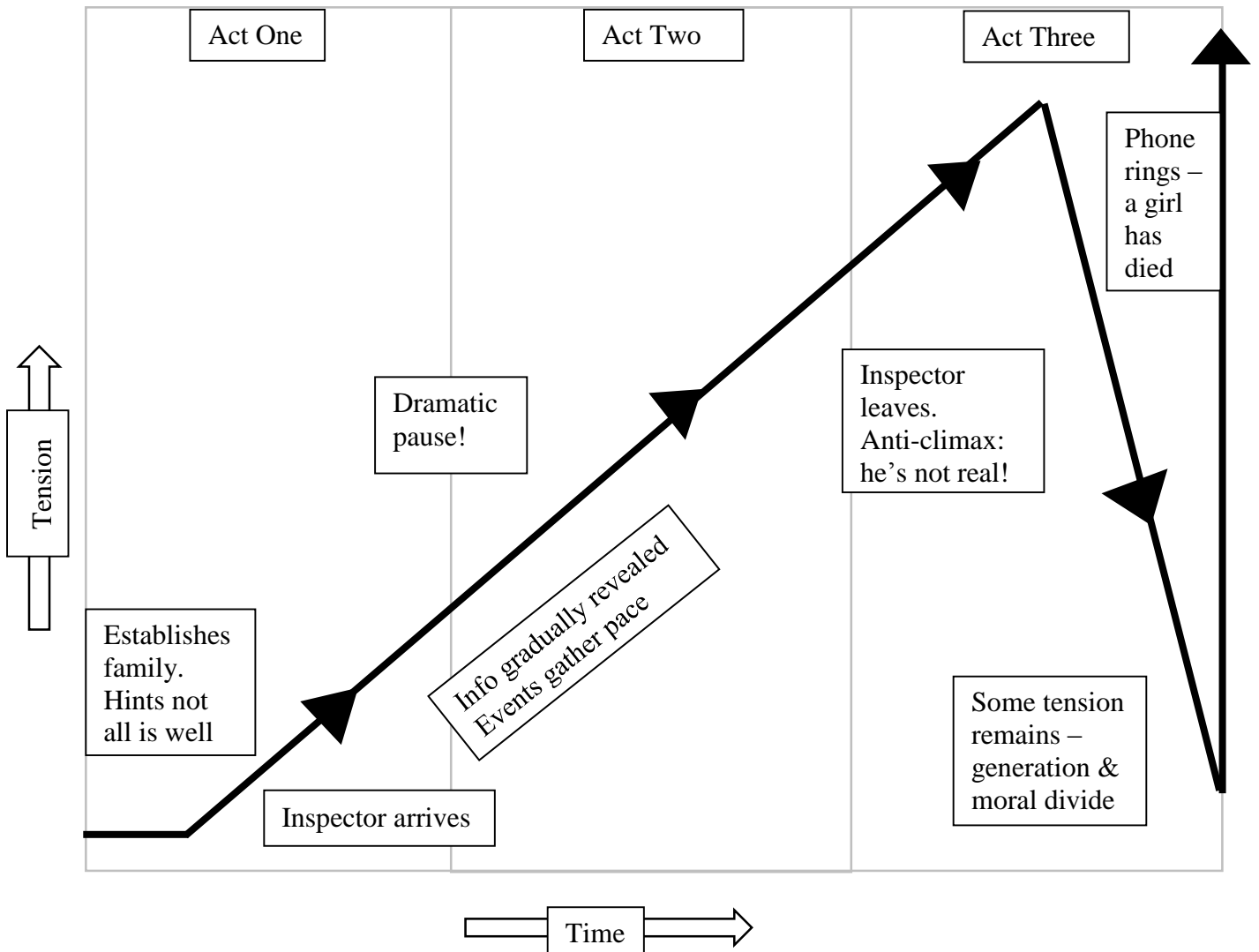
- There is a strong main plot in which events are linked by cause and effect
- There is a revelation about something or someone in which letters or documents are important
- There is a backstory in which events have already happened before the play begins
- Usually the conflict is resolved and there is a return to normality

This is where *An Inspector Calls* differs! The twist at the end leaves the audience questioning, and shows there is no return to normality

It has also been considered as a **Morality Play** as it has a moral or principal, kind of like a fable/parable.

Equally might be seen as a simple crime/mystery play - '**Whodunit?**' – where the whole purpose of the play is to figure out who did it. Does *An Inspector Calls* fit to this?

Tension



- Tension is also created through the very compact structure to the play: there is no sub-plot and nothing is allowed to distract the audience from the central theme.
- The play takes place in just once location, the action is continuous and takes place over one evening. This increase the sense of tension and claustrophobia.
- Timing of entrances and exits is crucial. For example:
 - The Inspector arrives immediately after Birling has told Gerald about his impending knighthood and about how "a man has to look after himself and his own."
 - Sheila runs off stage when she realises she is the reason Eva was sacked - creates intense atmosphere.
 - Sheila and Gerald are left alone to discuss Daisy Renton- this draws information out for audience.

Essay Writing Response

In the exam you have a choice of two questions for 'An Inspector Calls'. You should only plan and answer **one** of these. Please see the examples below for the format:

JB Priestley: *An Inspector Calls*

Either

0 | 1

How does Priestley present Gerald's relationships with women in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- the way Gerald treats women in the play
- how Priestley presents Gerald's relationships with women.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Or

0 | 2

How does Priestley use Eva Smith to represent poverty in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- what Eva's life is like in the play
- how Priestley uses Eva to represent the lives of poor people.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Your response here is also marked for SPaG (4 marks), so remember to spend 5 minutes proof reading your work. See SPaG mark scheme below.

Performance Descriptor	Marks awarded
<p>High Level In the context of the level of demand of the question, learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy, and consistently use vocabulary and sentence structure to achieve control of meaning</p>	4 marks
<p>Mid-Level In the context of the level of demand of the question, learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy, and use a considerable range of vocabulary and sentence structure to achieve general control of meaning</p>	2-3 marks
<p>Low Level In the context of the level of demand of the question, learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy, and use a reasonable range of vocabulary and sentence structures; any errors do not hinder meaning in the response</p>	1 mark

The Mark Scheme

Mark	AO	Typical features
Level 6 <i>Convincing, critical analysis and exploration</i> 26–30 marks	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical, exploratory, conceptualised response to task and whole text • Judicious use of precise references to support interpretation(s)
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of writer’s methods with subject terminology used judiciously • Exploration of effects of writer’s methods on reader
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of ideas/perspectives/contextual factors shown by specific, detailed links between context/text/task
Level 5 <i>Thoughtful, developed consideration</i> 21–25 marks	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughtful, developed response to task and whole text • Apt references integrated into interpretation(s)
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of writer’s methods with subject terminology used effectively to support consideration of methods • Examination of effects of writer’s methods on reader
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughtful consideration of ideas/perspectives/contextual factors shown by examination of detailed links between context/text/task
Level 4 <i>Clear understanding</i> 16–20 marks	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, explained response to task and whole text • Effective use of references to support explanation
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear explanation of writer’s methods with appropriate use of relevant subject terminology • Understanding of effects of writer’s methods on reader
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear understanding of ideas/perspectives/ contextual factors shown by specific links between context/text/task
Level 3 <i>Explained, structured comments</i> 11–15 marks	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some explained response to task and whole text • References used to support a range of relevant comments
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explained/relevant comments on writer’s methods with some relevant use of subject terminology • Identification of effects of writer’s methods on reader
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some understanding of implicit ideas/perspectives/contextual factors shown by links between context/text/task
Level 2 <i>Supported, relevant comments</i> 6–10 marks	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported response to task and text • Comments on references
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of writers’ methods • Some reference to subject terminology
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some awareness of implicit ideas/contextual factors
Level 1 <i>Simple, explicit comments</i> 1–5 marks	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple comments relevant to task and text • Reference to relevant details
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of writer making deliberate choices • Possible reference to subject terminology
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple comment on explicit ideas/contextual factors

Planning and writing your response

10 minutes to plan, 30 to write and 5 to proof read

Planning time

- Underline the key words of the question.
- Throw all of your ideas onto the page – you will need to have between 3-6 clear points that will help you to answer the question. Get the ideas down and then select your best points for your essay.
- When you clearly understand how the question/topic relates to Priestley's intentions and message in the play, you are ready to begin your essay.

Writing your response:

- Introduction – you **must** respond to the question by using the words of the question. You should state your opinion/view as fact and then explain how this links to Priestley's intentions/message. Avoid quotes.
- Context point – it can be a good idea to write a paragraph here to link the question/topic to Edwardian society.
- Each paragraph would start with your line of argument and you should then write this up into an analytical paragraph (if it helps, remember the MEAL structure – Methods, Evidence, Analysis, Link).
- You need to clearly demonstrate to the examiner that your point is relevant, valid and well supported, then explain how each point is helping you to answer the question.
- Aim for three really strong, well-constructed paragraphs
- Conclusion – end with a summary statement that responds to the question and relates this back to your line of argument (your statement about Priestley's intentions). Here you could also evaluate the effectiveness of the play or comment on the modern audience and changing perceptions.

If your analysis is strong, you are likely to get good marks!

Example of **analysis** in action

It becomes apparent towards the end of the play that Gerald has not truly learnt anything from the Inspector's visit. Although he seemed to be 'visibly distressed' when he learnt of Daisy's suicide, his desire to cover this up and his statement that 'Everything's alright now' when they learn that the Inspector was a fraud, shows that he is not truly remorseful, he was just sorry to be caught. The audience realise that he shares similar views as Mr and Mrs Birling and he has not developed a social conscience like the younger characters. His belief that he can resume his engagement with Sheila shows how little he valued Eva/Daisy and how expectations of men and women's behaviour during the Edwardian period were very different, with extramarital affairs being almost commonplace for men.

Pupil 1 – extract from response

How does Mrs Birling respond to the Inspector's visit?

Write about:

- How Priestley presents the character of Mrs Birling
- Why she responds in the way she does

Priestley presents Sybil Birling as a snobbish and unkind woman. She feels herself to be above other people who are not in the same class as she is, and when the Inspector arrives she treats him like an inferior.

She does not meet the Inspector until Act Two. When Mrs Birling comes on to the stage she is not prepared for this. Her mood is 'quite out of key' and she does not pick up on the atmosphere and the effect is to make her seem like a busybody. Sheila uses the metaphor 'not to build a wall'. She is trying to tell her mother not to stop the Inspector's inquiries, but Sybil Birling does not understand and she is annoyed. She is also rude to the Inspector, saying that his comments are 'a trifle impertinent'. The word 'impertinent' shows how her attitude to others is a superior one.

Priestley also presents Sybil Birling as someone who does not care how people from the lower classes live. Priestley sees this as part of the problem with the rich in Edwardian times and since there is no government assistance, charities need to help. Although Sybil Birling belongs to the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation, she only helps those who she thinks have earned it. When Eva Smith, who is pregnant, asks for help and calls herself Mrs Birling, Sybil Birling is extremely angry and tells her committee not to assist. This is irony, because Sybil Birling doesn't know that Eric is the unborn baby's father. Sybil then tells the inspector when he is questioning her that the father of the child should be made to pay and be 'dealt with very severely'.

Sybil Birling does not understand why her daughter Sheila is so impressed with the Inspector. She does not grasp the Inspector's message 'that we are all responsible for one another' and most of the time she goes along with what her husband says. She is more concerned to keep things under wraps and make sure that there is no gossip that could harm her family. She is not interested in people outside her own class.

Priestley emphasises how Sybil Birling's coldness turns to horror. At the end of Act Two there is a climax. This is because she has just realised that that Eric is the father of Eva's unborn baby. Although she shouts 'I won't believe it' we feel she does. The stress on 'won't' means that she doesn't want to believe it.

You might think Mrs Birling would think hard about what she has done and Eric's problems, but when she speaks next she just blames Eric. She is more concerned with avoiding a scandal, and this tells us that despite everything that has happened she is not willing to learn from the Inspector and change.

Examiner's Comment: GOOD LEVEL RESPONSE

This is a confident response to the question and demonstrates a good understanding of the character's nature and motivations. The context of the play has also been mentioned. Literary devices have been highlighted and there is some exploration of language to emphasise effects. Quotations are relevant and fluently embedded in sentences, but occasionally the language is a little informal.

For a High Level:

- Refer more to Priestley's control of language and purpose
- Extend the range of vocabulary and look for more sophisticated words to express ideas
- Be careful not to use informal language, but to develop a critical style.

Pupil 2 – extract from response

How does Mrs Birling respond to the Inspector's visit?

Write about:

- How Priestley presents the character of Mrs Birling
- Why she responds in the way she does

Sybil Birling's aloof and contemptuous nature springs from feelings of social superiority and her character (along with her husband's) is central to an understanding of the play. They symbolise everything that Priestley believes is wrong with the Edwardian ruling class: their individualism, their lack of responsibility to the community and their callousness.

Having been off stage since the celebratory dinner, Mrs Birling is unaware of the dramatic events that have taken place between Sheila and Gerald in the Inspector's presence. In Act Two she bustles in 'briskly and self-confidently, quite out of key' with what has happened. Priestley's stage directions sum up her complete failure to sense the mood. Sheila's attempts to prevent her mother 'building a wall' against the Inspector – a metaphor for resistance – are met with bewilderment and annoyance. Inspector Goole's plain speaking is met with an accusation of impertinence.

Sybil Birling is ignorant of how others, less fortunate, struggle, at a time when there was no welfare state. Her myopic view of the world prevents her from grasping that Eva Smith, whose suicide is the focus of the Inspector's call, visited The Brumley Women's Charity Organisation in desperation. The pregnant young woman's offence was to call herself 'Mrs Birling', another apparent impertinence and an irony lost on Sybil. She is unaware that her son Eric was the father of Eva Smith's unborn child. For Sybil, Eva Smith is one of the undeserving poor, so she cruelly uses her influence to refuse charity. Not only that, she takes the opportunity to tell the Inspector in no uncertain terms that the father should be held 'entirely responsible' and 'dealt with very severely'. Another irony.

At the heart of Sybil Birling's character and the reason why the Inspector is so unwelcome is her acute sense of propriety, respectability and status. Maintaining her family's social standing without regard to the needs of wider society is where she feels her duty lies. She is quite unable to understand Sheila's attitude as her daughter tries to face the crux of the Inspector's (and Priestley's) rhetorical message; that social justice is crucial to society and that without it there will be 'fire and blood and anguish'. For Sybil Birling anything troubling or unsavoury must be kept hidden. Much of her dialogue is peppered with warning: 'Careful what you say dear!', 'Sheila!', 'Arthur!', 'Eric!'. The frequency of exclamation marks in her speech reveals anxiety as well as disapproval. Any whiff of scandal alerts her to danger so she resists the inspector's interrogation until it is impossible to do so.

There are two occasions in the play where her chilly exterior crumples. The first is in the climax of Act Two. We witness her 'frightened glance', as she realises that Eric is the father of the unborn child, leaving us to speculate on what scenes will follow in Act Three. The second occasion is when Eric, 'nearly at breaking point', damns her for killing 'her own grandchild'. The audience is gripped as Sybil pleads that she didn't understand that it was his child and we see how this lack of understanding is part of her relationship with Eric. He accuses her of never having 'tried' to understand him. We do not know how she reacts to this. She says no more, and only speaks a few pages later to declare her shame at his behaviour. Is this an indication of her heartlessness or her inability to recognise her part in his unhappy life and alcoholism? Certainly, her recovery is remarkable once she thinks the Inspector is a hoax. All the previous revelations have been shuffled away in order to 'behave sensibly'.

For Sybil Birling the Inspector's visit brings no epiphany, and we can only assume that she remains unchanged by all that has happened. Or does she? The Inspector, whether a man of insight or a mysterious prophet, warns her that she will 'spend the rest of [her] life regretting' what she did.

Examiner's Comment: VERY HIGH LEVEL RESPONSE

This is an excellent critique of Sybil Birling and her motives. There is good use of literary techniques, sound analysis of language and its effect. Links have been made to other features of the play, particularly to the central theme of responsibility and also to the playwright's main purpose. A sophisticated range of vocabulary appropriate to the character has been used and sentence structure has pace and variety. The conclusion presents an unusual and well-supported argument about an aspect of the character.