

Section A (45 mins)

Answer 1 question from a choice of two about characters/key themes.

An Inspector Calls

MR BIRLING

Birling is a corrupt capitalist; he wants to join forces with Gerald's family's company for 'lower costs and higher prices' which means he will exploit workers and this is why he fires Eva for going on strike, labelling her a 'troublemaker'.

Birling – a personification of capitalism and wealth – is undermined by Priestley's use of dramatic irony; Birling claims the Titanic is 'absolutely unsinkable' and that 'the Germans don't want war' which may horrify the audiences of 1945.

Birling has not learned his lesson; he blames anyone but himself for Eva's death is desperate to avoid a 'scandal'. Then, he celebrates the theory that the investigation was a 'hoax' before the plot twist at the end when he receives a phone call from the police.

GERALD CROFT

At first, Gerald seems like the perfect gentleman and Birling calls him 'the son-in-law I always wanted'. Priestley aligns Gerald with Mr Birling as a corrupt capitalist.

Gerald is upper-class – the most privileged character onstage – and hides his immoral behaviour using his wealth and status: 'we're respectable citizens and not criminals'. This dialogue becomes ironic later in the play when his affair is revealed.

Gerald's affair exposes his exploitation of Eva for a low price – the relationship is described in financial terms: 'she'd lived very economically on what I'd allowed her'.

At the end, Gerald has not learned his lesson and tries to avoid responsibility using his connections: 'a police sergeant I know' asking whether it was the 'same girl'.

ERIC BIRLING

Eric's immoral and criminal behaviour is foreshadowed from the beginning of the play – he is clearly drunk and 'not quite at ease'. Perhaps this is his guilt.

However, he displays early signs of a socialist mindset in opposition to his father and Gerald: 'Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?'

In his confession, Eric reveals he 'was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty', perhaps making excuses for his sexual assault of Eva. At the same time, Eric is very emotional and demonstrates remorse for his actions. He admits he stole money from the company and curses his mother when he finds out she refused to help Eva: 'damn you, damn you' when she was pregnant: 'your own grandchild'.

Eric has learned his lesson: 'the girl's dead and we all helped to kill her'.

SHEILA BIRLING

Initially, Sheila seems materialistic, sheltered and excited about her engagement: 'Look – Mummy – isn't it a beauty?' However, she is not as naïve as she seems and is suspicious of Gerald: 'all last summer, when you never came near me'. 1912's patriarchal social structure means she can only say this in a 'half-serious, half-playful' manner rather than openly accuse Gerald.

Sheila's vanity and jealousy lead her to use her power (wealth and class) to get Eva fired from Milwards, but she is instantly remorseful: 'desperately sorry'.

Sheila has learned her lesson and takes on the role of the Inspector to encourage her family to take responsibility repeating his warning of 'fire and blood and anguish' to show hope for change lies with the younger generation.

MRS BIRLING

Mrs Birling upholds the patriarchy, telling Sheila, 'men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business'.

Mrs Birling is unsympathetic: a 'cold woman' with no empathy for the working class, shown immediately in her assumption that her family have no involvement with 'girls of that class' (Eva's suicide).

She is reluctant to admit responsibility, resisting the Inspector's interrogation: 'I accept no blame at all', admitting she was 'prejudiced against her [Eva's] case'. Instead, she blames the father: 'it's his responsibility'. The audience realise she is inadvertently blaming Eric and the scene ends with this dramatic irony.

At the end, Mrs Birling has not changed; hope lies with the younger generation.

INSPECTOR GOOLE

Interrupts cosy atmosphere of Birling celebration and the lighting changes from 'pink and intimate' to 'bright and hard'.

He 'has a habit of looking hard at people', shocking the characters and the audience with gruesome imagery of Eva: 'burnt her inside out'.

He questions the class system – Birling's decision to sack Eva, Mrs B's refusal to help and assumption of moral superiority, tricks Mrs B into blaming Eric.

He is a teacher of morality – Priestley's political mouthpiece – and gives a grave warning in his final speech that without change, there will be terrible consequences: 'fire and blood and anguish' and therefore promoting socialism.

Priestley's Intentions

1. Priestley highlights the exploitation of the working classes in the Edwardian era.
2. Priestley challenges the subservience of women in the Edwardian era.
3. Priestley criticises the selfishness of capitalism and demonstrate the need for a fairer, socialist society.
4. Priestley promotes the need for an equal society where morality is more important than reputation.
5. Priestley encourages the audience's sense of social responsibility.

Thesis: At first glance, 'An Inspector Calls' is a play simply about an investigation into the suicide of a young woman, but at a deeper level, Priestley explores _____.

CF	In Act __, / At the beginning of the play, As the play progresses, / At the end of the play, Priestley presents/ conveys/ introduces/ develops...
E	This is evident when.... / When CHARACTER does ACTION,as CHARACTER says/states/claims (etc.) '_____ ...in the dialogue '_____ ...in the stage directions '_____'
AQ	Here, Priestley suggests/ implies/ demonstrates/ indicates/ emphasises/ highlights/ reflects/ connotes/ signifies/ establishes...
WM	Here, Priestley uses/employs foreshadowing/ dramatic irony/ harsh language/ contrast/ characterisation/ dialogue/ stage directions/ exclamations/ questions...
EF	Perhaps the audience would think/ feel/ imagine/ understand... Priestley influences/ inspires/ encourages the audience to...
WI	Clearly, Priestley's intention is to... / Ultimately, Priestley challenges/ highlights/ criticises/ reflects/ persuades/ creates a sense of...
Z	The word '____' connotes/ is effective as...
S	Priestley has deliberately structured the text/included this moment/event/method to prepare the audience for... This links to the beginning/end of the play / This links to earlier/ later in the play when... This links to the play's overarching theme(s) of... Thematically, this moment/event is significant as... Structurally, this is significant as...
CON	This reflects Edwardian attitudes towards... The audience in 1945 may react with EMOTION to this as...
AC	Alternatively, CHARACTER/MOMENT can be perceived/viewed as... However, we must consider the idea/ interpretation that...

Conclusion: Ultimately, through the THEME/CHARACTER of _____, Priestley presents his moral message to the audience, promoting the necessity for a socialist society.