

## 'An Inspector Calls' - Mini Plans - Characterisation

### Current Assessment Objectives (AOs) for Modern Texts 2017 onwards

**AO1** Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:

- maintain a **critical style** and develop an **informed personal response**
- **select textual references**, including quotations, to **support and illustrate interpretations**

**AO2** Analyse the **language, form and structure** used by a writer to **create meanings and effects**, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

**AO3** Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.

**AO4** Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

**AO1, 2 & 3 = 30 marks**

**Ao4 = 4 marks (Section A only)**

### **The Inspector:**

**What do you think is the importance of Inspector Goole?**

**How does Priestley present him by the ways he writes ?**

#### **AO1**

- Inspector's entrance
- his relationships with the other characters and how they respond to him
- what Inspector Goole says / does in the play
- his revelations to each of the Birling family and Gerald and what this represents
- what he says in his speech before he leaves which relates to his importance
- his ideas about social responsibility
- a 'real' character?

#### **AO2**

- props used by inspector
- the control of the Inspector on other characters' speech and actions
- contrast between Birling's speech about the Titanic and war and Inspector Goole's speech at the end - like a sermon or political speech)
- language used by the Inspector and the Inspector as Priestley's mouthpiece
- Use of humour - 'I don't play golf' - humanises him somewhat and makes him more credible
- stage directions which relate to Inspector Goole and their significance
- represents voice of Priestley / the voice of God / the voice of all of our conscience?

#### **AO3**

- highlights issues about social responsibility

## Mr Arthur Birling

Arthur Birling describes himself as 'a hard-headed, practical man of business'. How does Priestley present this and other views of Arthur Birling in *An Inspector Calls*?

### AO1

- what Arthur says and does e.g. pompous and arrogant "hard-headed practical man of business"
- thinks he knows everything e.g. the Titanic as unsinkable how others react to him e.g. the Inspector
- attitude to Sheila's engagement to Gerald as a way to forge business links - no mention of love - Birling himself married 'above' him - chance of knighthood
- Birling's selfishness 'a man has to mind his own business and look after himself' - he is also self-satisfied - his speech to Eric and Gerald near the beginning
- Birling's attitude to Eva Smith and what he did - motivated by money / business / status
- naively believes he has influence, was an 'alderman', 'Lord Mayor', 'on the bench' and knows police officers, and can control Inspector Goole
- learns nothing and, ultimately, takes no responsibility and dismisses Sheila's and Eric's attempts to do so at the end as them being 'hysterical' and 'over-tired'. But, at the end, we see him at his most vulnerable and weak
- what others say about him lack of social responsibility and conscience

### AO2

- how Priestley presents Birling almost as a caricature - use of dramatic irony to make him look ridiculous - the audience is unable to take him seriously because of his ludicrous statements about the Titanic and war
- presentation of Birling at the end of the play - 'panic-stricken' and seemingly lost for words - unlike in the rest of the play
- Birling in contrast to his children
- range of stage directions used in relation to Birling, eg 'laughs complacently', frequently 'impatiently' when responding to Inspector Goole
- language used by Priestley to manipulate our perspective of Birling
- Birling as a dramatic device for Priestley to convey his moral message
- structure of the play - Birling doesn't change

### AO3

- highlights issues about social class / social responsibility
- Birling as a symbol of the older generation / capitalism - unwilling to change or to take responsibility

## Mr Arthur Birling and the Inspector

**How does Priestley present the different attitudes of Mr Birling and the Inspector?**

Write about:

- what Mr Birling and the Inspector say and do
- their different attitudes
- how Priestley presents these different attitudes by the ways he writes

### **AO1**

- difference in attitudes to functions of society - e.g. Capitalism and Socialism
- attitudes to people especially Eva Smith
- attitudes to life and how to conduct oneself

### **AO2**

- highlight different views on social responsibility & class
- stage directions direct reader to Birling family's ideals and values
- Inspector's name and mysterious qualities
- Inspector is mouthpiece for Priestley

### **AO3**

- Birling is used by Priestley to convey his views on class, social responsibility and Capitalism

## Arthur Birling and Eric Birling

**Write about the differences between Arthur Birling and Eric Birling in the play An Inspector Calls.**

You should write about:

- what Arthur and Eric Birling are like
- their different attitudes
- how Priestley presents Arthur and Eric Birling by the ways he writes .

### **AO1**

- differences between children and parents
- behaviour of the two characters attitudes to Eva Smith and Inspector Goole
- speed with which they understand the enormity of the situation
- social responsibility and morals

### **AO2**

- language used by the different generations
- the play form as a dramatic device to manipulate the characters and audience
- length of speeches given by the characters e.g. Birling taking centre stage in giving advice
- the younger character of Eric goes on a journey through the play and learns the key lessons but Birling does not

### **AO3**

- contrast between generations
- contrast in attitudes / behaviour of men and women

## Mrs Sybil Birling

In Act 2 of *An Inspector Calls*, Sheila says to her mother, Mrs Birling, 'But we must stop these silly pretences.'

How does Priestley show, in his presentation of Mrs Birling, that she often pretends to be something she is not? How does Priestley present Sybil Birling in *An Inspector Calls*?

### AO1

- lacks understanding of her children
- shocked by her son's drinking / talk of his relationship with the girl, but she can't bear not hearing what Eric has to say about it - is hypocritical
- believes in class - social snobbery
- judgemental, opinionated - part of a committee that purports to help young girls in distress, but when the real test comes she fails to do so - pretends to be a helpful, caring person, but she is not
- lays the blame on the father of the child, but when it becomes obvious that this is Eric she won't own up to her comments until Sheila insists - quick to apportion blame, but not if it concerns her own child
- quick to criticise Gerald's affair but is equally quick to forget it once the blame appears to have been removed /end of the play she praises Gerald for the way he appears to have settled things. She shows no remorse / pretends nothing has changed
- unable to change and doesn't accept responsibility

### AO2

- Stage directions let the reader know the type of character she is - a '...rather cold woman and her husband's social superior'. The stage descriptions of her actions change as the pretence is revealed e.g. '...grandly' 'haughtily' '...triumphantly' become '...rather cowed' 'distressed' 'staggered' 'alarmed'. Also '...Mrs Birling enters briskly and self-confidently, quite out of key with the little scene that has just passed'
- dialogue / language she uses e.g. treats Eric still as a little child, rude to the Inspector
- Puts on a pretence of respectability by her use of euphemisms: e.g. 'a girl of that class' who has found herself in a 'particular condition'
- Use of imagery: Sheila warns her mother not to try and build up a kind of 'wall' - the wall being a symbol of a barrier/pretence
- Mrs Birling's pretence revealed by other characters -- in particular the Inspector and Sheila
- Priestley compares her to her children who transform throughout the play, in contrast to her since she doesn't change

### AO3

- Highlights issues about class and social responsibility
- Highlight differences between different generations

## Sheila and Sybil Birling

**Write about the differences between Sheila and Sybil Birling in the play An Inspector Calls.**

You should write about:

- what they say and do their different attitudes
- how Priestley presents Sheila and Sybil Birling by the ways he writes.

### AO1

- differences between children and parents
- what both characters say and do their behaviour and attitudes
- compare and contrast attitudes to Eva Smith and Inspector Goole speed with which they understand the enormity of the situation

### AO2

- language used by the different characters the play form as a dramatic device to manipulate the characters and audience
- is this seen through the characters? the differences in the journeys of the characters through the play
- scene directions to help the audience learn about the characters

### AO3

- Highlights Priestley's ideas about social class / social responsibility
- Highlights issues about gender expectations e.g. a woman's place
- Highlight differences between different generations

## Gerald

**How does Priestley present Gerald in An Inspector Calls?**

**How do you respond to Gerald in 'An Inspector Calls'? How does Priestley make you respond as you do by the way he presents him by the ways he writes ?**

### AO1

- Aristocrat - ideas about class system - essentially engaged to someone 'beneath' him
- Not as willing as Sheila to admit his guilt - at first pretends he never knew Daisy Renton - link with Mr Birling?
- he lies to Sheila about Daisy
- what he says and does e.g. his affair with Daisy - seems to have some genuine feelings for Daisy Renton
- his relationships with the other characters including the Inspector
- In Act 3, Gerald tries to come up with as much evidence as possible to prove the Inspector is a fake - wants to protect himself rather than change himself
- Which generation does he 'fit' most readily with?

### AO2

- stage directions and information about him - attractive chap, naive, unwillingness to change
- the language he uses - careful and correct
- reactions of other characters to his actions

- portrayed as socially superior to the Birlings Regular references to Gerald's 'disappearance' the previous summer makes the audience wonder about him
- References to any stage directions which reveal Gerald's attitudes / feelings
- How Priestley creates a sense of self-satisfaction in Gerald when he thinks 'Everything's all right now'
- Presentation as an 'easy, well-bred young man-about town'

### AO3

- Social class / social responsibility
- Attitudes to gender - different expectations / rules and judgment for behaviour of men and women

## Sheila

**How does Priestley present Sheila Birling in *An Inspector Calls*? You could think about: How Priestley present the change in Sheila during the course of the play *An Inspector Calls*? How this change reflects some of Priestley's ideas?**

### AO1

- spoiled and from the upper class background when we meet her - shaped by her family and their views
- Inspector has a significant impact on Sheila - she listens and gradually changes over the course of the play - Sheila is more open to change than the other characters, especially the older generation; she begins to realise the difference between right and wrong; she becomes more independent as the play progresses
- she is very different at the end of the play to the beginning; from a girl pleased with life, self-centred and attractive she develops a conscience and feels regret over her dealings with Eva - feels guilty for her part in the death of Eva Smith
- she learns from experience and is honest about her behaviour
- realises that honesty and truth are important
- ideas she reflects of Priestley e.g. responsibility
- appears to fulfil the traditional female role of the time e.g. passive in her relationship with Gerald when we learn that he had been having an affair and she didn't question it but she changes and adopts the new thinking of the era

### AO2

- stage directions at the beginning; 'very pleased with life and rather excited'
- changes in her dialogue and language as the play develops - Sheila's use of language - seen by her move from dependence on parents and her future husband to more independence. Her more passionate use of language, her use of sarcasm ('So nothing's happened, so there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn.');
- dramatic language ('We killed her')
- stage directions- she 'shivers', 'tensely' (showing her fear)
- actions - hands back the engagement ring, shows her independence by saying to her father "I'm not a child". Shows she becomes a bit like the inspector - asking questions, contradicting her mother.

- political tool of Priestley's - becomes Priestley's mouthpiece through delivering the Inspector's thoughts and ideas to the family and audience - therefore dramatically and structurally she is important

### AO3

- Highlights Priestley's ideas about social class / social responsibility
- Highlights issues about gender expectations e.g. a woman's place

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| <h3>Gerald And Sheila</h3> |
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**How does the relationship between Gerald and Sheila change in *An Inspector Calls* and how does Priestley show the changes? How does he present these changes by the ways he writes ?**

### AO1

- at the start: appear to be happy and content at the beginning - dinner party to celebrate engagement - everything is as it should be - Gerald insists on 'being one of the family now' and Sheila thinks her ring is 'perfect' and she 'really feel[s] engaged'
- at the end of Act 1, Sheila realises that Gerald knew Eva / Daisy - 'You gave yourself away as soon as he mentioned her other name.'
- when Gerald confesses his involvement in Act 2, she makes ironic remarks about his behaviour - 'You were the wonderful fairy prince' but is won over by his honesty
- hints that their relationship might not be founded on honesty - Sheila had suspected that Gerald had not been honest with her previously but convention required her to accept his excuses
- she refuses his ring at the end because of his willingness to compromise his moral standards and gloss over events by 'pretending everything is just as it was before.'
- financial rewards? Loving relationship?
- how they react to the Inspector and to each other

### AO2

Clear exploration of the change over the course of the play is a response to structure

- stage directions at the beginning let the reader know the types of characters and their relationship dialogue / language used between them
- Sheila starts with similar attitudes to Gerald but they change over the course of the play structural progression of their relationship - foreshadowing from the beginning that Gerald isn't entirely honest to Sheila
- Gerald and Sheila's conversation at the end of Act 2: she interrupts him, questions him, takes control and 'laughs hysterically'
- at the start, Sheila is presented as very much in thrall of Gerald - she is 'excited' when she asks if the ring is the one you wanted me to have' and her reaction is childlike, 'Look - mummy - isn't it a beauty?'
- presentation of Sheila's anger at the end - 'flaring up' as she says 'Well, he inspected us all right' - very different from her demeanour at the start of the play.

### AO3

- Highlights Priestley's ideas about social class / social responsibility

- Highlights issues about gender expectations e.g. a woman's place
- Highlight differences between different generations

## Eric

**In the opening stage directions, Priestley refers to Eric as 'not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive'. How does Priestley present these and other ideas about Eric in An Inspector Calls?**

### AO1

- Any valid reference[s] to / discussion of Priestley's first description of him
- what he says and does - foolish and young
- Eric as a heavy drinker, the father of an illegitimate child, a liar, a thief
- Relationship with other members of his family - how they respond to him and how he responds to them
- his relationships with Eva Smith
- Early indications that Eric has something to conceal
- his reaction to the Inspector
- What Eric learns / how he changes - his growth throughout the play / part of the younger generation / responsibility / Eric
- at the end of the play - 'It's still the same rotten story...'

### A02

- Structural points in relation to the presentation of Eric: how he develops changes e.g. appropriate references to the beginning and the end]; hints / references to his drinking throughout - in both stage directions and what he says / others say.
- his journey through the play - how he is introduced and what his last lines in the play are
- Comments on effects of any appropriate stage direction in relation to Eric, e.g. 'uneasily' / 'unease'; 'suddenly guffaws' - by the end 'shouting'
- Hesitancy in Eric's speech: e.g. when he finds out what his mother has said / done, Eric is 'nearly at breaking point' and 'Then - you killed her.....'
- Mr Birling and others interrupt Eric when he is speaking; by the end of the play 'Birling tries to interrupt' when Eric is speaking.
- the differences between him and his parents

### A03

- Family life / differences between generations
- Social class/ social responsibility
- Gender differences - attitudes to behaviour of men and women

## Sheila and Eric

**In An Inspector Calls Eric and Sheila Birling are brother and sister. How are they alike and how are they different.**

You should write about:

- what Eric and Sheila say and do similarities and differences between them
- how Priestley presents Eric and Sheila by the ways he writes

### **AO1**

- what each character says and does Sheila over dramatic / Eric appears lazy and uninterested
- Sheila takes responsibility for her actions quicker than Eric
- both similar in their attitudes - contrast to their parents

### **AO2**

- language used to introduce the characters language used by the characters
- their progression in the play and changes in attitudes
- comparisons to their parents and each other

### **AO3**

- Family life / differences between generations
- Social class/ social responsibility

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| <b>Eva Smith</b> |
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**What do you think is the importance of Eva Smith in *An Inspector Calls*? How does Priestley present her by the ways he writes ?**

### **AO1**

- we learn about her life - working for Mr Birling, then Milwards and her different associations with the Birlings and Gerald
- characters' attitudes to her and what they say about her, eg Mrs Birling 'girls of that class', lots of positive comments about her eg from Gerald 'she was young, pretty and warm-hearted', Mr Birling 'She'd had a lot to say - far too much - she had to go.'
- she is working class - especially important in that historical period
- different reactions of the characters when questioned by the Inspector about their behaviour to her, eg differences between the young and old generation
- details of her death and what happens at the end in relation to Eva Smith.

### **AO2**

- she doesn't have a voice, other than the Inspector, who is presented as her champion - essentially not a character as such
- her name has Biblical links and also represents the masses eg Smith
- use of the photograph of her as a dramatic device
- what she represents in terms of Priestley's ideas and his message about the class system / his political views, 'millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths...' 'members of one body'
- emotive language used to describe her death
- attitudes of characters to her revealed in what they say about her, eg 'She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl in her position.' - Mrs Birling

### **AO3**

- Highlight lives of working classes / working class women
- Highlight different attitudes to gender
- Highlight issues of social class and social responsibility

## **Generic Questions about presentation of character & family relationships**

**Write about two characters who you think feel guilty in An Inspector Calls.** You should write about:

- what each character says and does
- why the character feels guilty
- how Priestley presents their feelings of guilt by the ways he writes .

### **AO1**

- character choices are likely to be dependent on the difference in attitudes to functions of society - eg Capitalism and Socialism
- attitudes to people especially Eva Smith eg Sheila and Eric feel guilty
- generational divide linked to guilt
- attitudes to life and how to conduct oneself

### **AO2**

- Inspector is mouthpiece for Priestley and then Sheila takes on the values so shows guilt for her capitalist ways
- stage directions direct reader to Birling family's ideals and values
- the language for each character.

### **AO3**

- Social class/ social responsibility
- Capitalism
- Family life / Differences between generations

**How does Priestley present the family life of the Birlings in An Inspector Calls?**

**Write about:**

- what the members of the Birling family say and do
- what happens within the Birling family
- how Priestley presents the family life of the Birlings by the ways he writes

### **AO1**

Birlings have a comfortable life

- Birlings appear close family based on stage directions but actually have very different ideas - lots of tension within the family
- lack of understanding between generations

### **AO2**

- the family are used by Priestley to convey his views on class, Capitalism and Socialism
- stage directions direct reader to Birling family's ideals and values
- dialogue between family members hints at their lack of closeness and understanding of each other

### **AO3**

- Social class/ social responsibility
- Capitalism
- Family life / Differences between generations