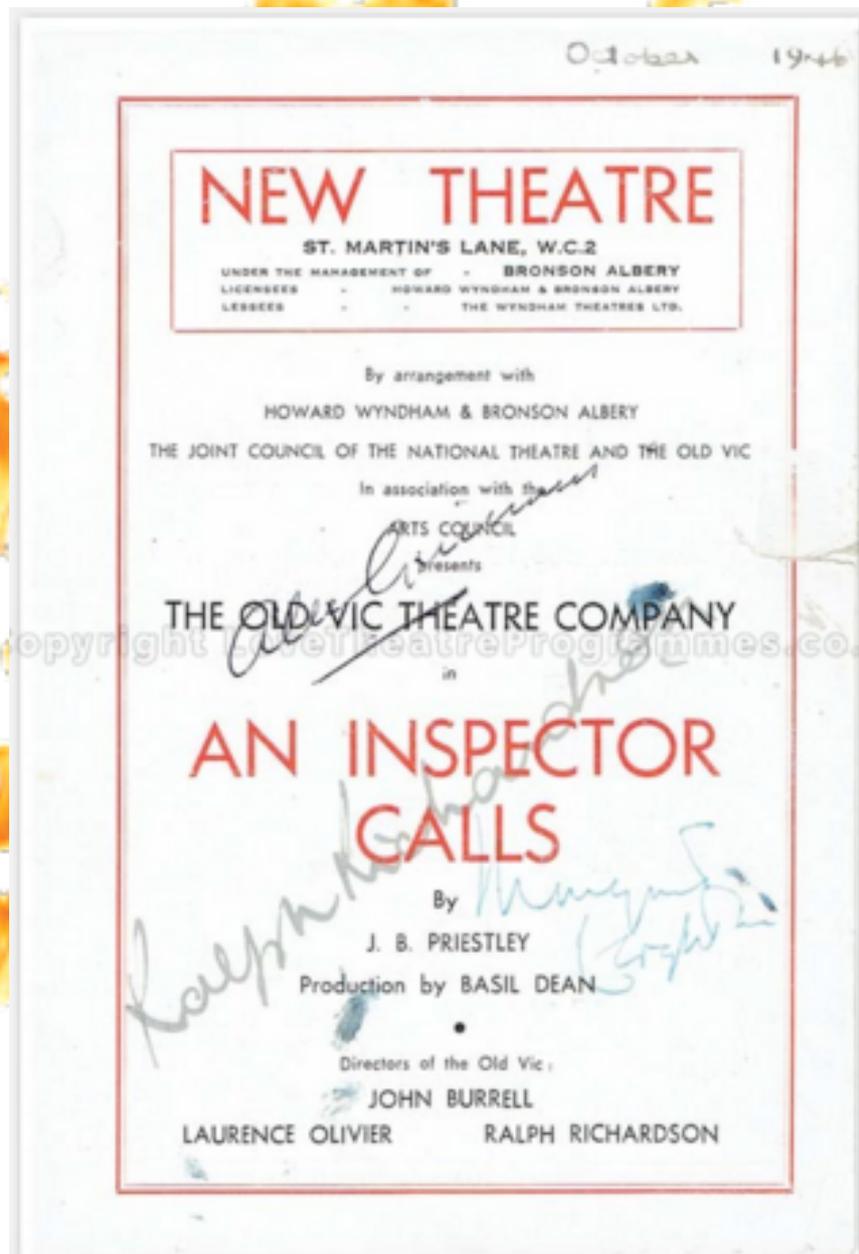


# 'An Inspector Calls'

by J. B. Priestley

*A Revision Guide from William Ellis*



## **OCR GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE: a guide to the examination of the 20<sup>th</sup> century play 'An Inspector Calls' by J.B. Priestley**

### **Exploring modern and literary heritage texts (J352/01)**

For William Ellis students, this means section A is on 'An Inspector Calls'; section B is on 'Great Expectations'. The recommendation is that you spend 1hr 15 minutes on section A (or 1hr, 10 mins) then 45 minutes on section B (or up to 50 minutes on your 'GE' essay).

#### This guide is for Section A, modern drama: 'An Inspector Calls'

You will need to write two short essays on the play. Each essay will be marked out of a total of 20. The highest mark band is a level 6, the lowest a level 1. Please do not confuse these with grade levels 9–1: a level 6 response will indicate those working at the highest grade levels (we presume 9, 8 and possibly 7).

The first question, part a), needs about 45 minutes of your time as you have to **compare an extract from the play with an extract from a modern play that you won't have read** before. This part requires you to compare according to a theme you will be given, e.g. tension in family relationships, generational divides, business decisions, prejudice and inequality, parent–child conflict.

For the second question, part b), 30 minutes should be enough. You will be given a theme that may be linked to a named character, e.g. Sheila and tension or Eric and deception, and you will have to find a moment in the play that you can recall in enough detail to write an analytical essay about it. That is the biggest problem – knowing a passage well enough to write about it – and we advise you **to prepare for at least five key moments from different parts of the playscript** so that you have a reliable chance of having a suitable one in your repertoire. [Please see final page for examples]

The marks are allocated for different skills. AO1 and AO2 are the most valuable skills for both essays, with AO3 marks being awarded in the comparative part a) essay for a sensitive understanding of the contexts that emerge and how these are important to the ways in which we respond to the texts:

#### **What the AOs (assessment objectives) are measuring**

*AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts: maintain a critical style; develop an informed personal response; use 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 terminology where appropriate.*

*\*AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written. (Relevant to the essay for PART A ONLY)*

\* In this section, candidates will have knowledge of contextual factors for their studied text (so 'An Inspector Calls') and will use this to develop their response to the question as it applies to both pieces of text. The relevant contextual factors will be concerned with social and cultural situations or experiences, which can be inferred from details in the extracts, for example, social class, gender, age and cultural and family relationships. [OCR guidance]

The introduction to each extract in Part A will give clear contextual information, to allow you to develop inferences and ideas about relevant contexts. For this part, you do not need to refer more widely to the whole studied text.

Part A type questions:

Example 1:

***An Inspector Calls* by J. B. Priestley and *Blindsided* by Simon Stephens**  
**Read the two extracts below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

For **part a)**, you should focus only on the extracts here rather than referring to the rest of your studied text.

Compare the ways in which tension in family relationships is presented in these two extracts. You should consider:

- the situations and experiences faced by the characters
- how the characters react to the situations and experiences
- how language and dramatic features create effects.

Example 2:

***An Inspector Calls* by J. B. Priestley and *Hope* by Jack Thorne**  
**Read the two extracts below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

**For part a)**, you should focus only on the extracts here rather than referring to the rest of your studied text.

Compare how business decisions are presented in these two extracts. You should consider:

- the situations and experiences faced by the characters
- how the characters react to the business decisions
- how the writers' use of language and techniques creates effects.

**Part b)** type questions:

Example 1:

**Part b)** Explore another moment in the play where there is tension between Sheila and one or more of the other characters.

Example 2:

**Part b)** Explore one other moment in *An Inspector Calls* when a character puts forward their views forcefully.

Teacher advice:

We recommend that you pay close attention to OCR's advice that you spend 45 minutes on the comparative essay and then just half an hour on the part b) essay. You might want to shave off five minutes overall to give you a little more time with 'Great Expectations' but you have to manage your time really carefully. (There is just one other English literature exam question that follows this format and that is the poetry two-part question on Paper 2).

Crucial advice for A01:

Nobody who does not weave in literary language (here that includes words like 'stage', 'audience', and terms like 'dramatic irony' or 'dialogue') and apt quotations or other details that are analysed for their significance and creative impact will be able to score more than the lowest bands.

**Learning quotations and using them effectively**

This has been a stumbling block for some students and why they did badly in practices. There is no short-cut to this. Without being able to use (cite) quotations or refer to identifiable details that are effectively analysed even a strongly argued, thoughtful, well written part b) essay won't be able to reach middle or top bands.

There is no such thing as "ten quotations you must know on 'An Inspector Calls'". Nor would the exam board appreciate it if we had students rote learning the same small bank of famous quotations. Examiners reward thoughtful, personal responses.

So, the best we can do is suggest each student comes up with a bank of favourites. Remember that sometimes even a word or emblematic phrase might do, for example there is a repeated stage direction word for Mr Birling as he is often so pleased with himself and that is the adverb 'triumphantly' (Mrs Birling gets it later too); Mrs Birling is linked with the word 'impertinent'; all the Birlings are sometimes linked

with the stage direction description 'angrily' as they find out their own and each other's betrayals. Even those little fragments have a world of associations and ideas attached to them.

As well as these tiny little quotations that you probably don't realise you know already, pick out 12–15 or so more, or twenty if you have the stamina, and learn them.

So next is a chart to fill with some of your favourites. That done, write them on the fridge, on the bedroom ceiling, chant them to the dog, the cat or the goldfish. Doodle them, draw them or sing them. Flick through your book and look back at the ones your teachers advised you to highlight or colour in, but only write them up if you can imagine how you might use them, or if their language sounds so important that you like them enough to learn them and begin to think about them. Watching the good TV and film versions again might help too (though remember elements, such as endings, have been changed by the screen-writers).

<b>Context/page:</b>	
Quotation 1:	
Quotation 2:	
Quotation 3:	
Quotation 4:	
Quotation 5:	
Quotation 6:	
Quotation 7:	
Quotation 8:	
Quotation 9:	
Quotation 10:	
Quotation 11:	
Quotation 12:	

## **Embedding quotations (i.e. tucking them comfortably into your sentences) and using them effectively:**

Show you can analyse and weave in quotations to develop a clear and well thought-out point.

Remember:

1) The noun 'quotation' (or 'quote' for short) is banned in your mini-essays: if you are about to write it in a sentence, stop and think about what your quotation actually, for example:

- a plea/promise/pledge?
- a statement/threat/warning/caution?
- a comment/remark/aside/sneer/insult?

If you are about to write 'quotation', stop and think of an alternative that will allow you to gain AO1 literary terms credit instead.

2) Your quotation has to fit the grammar of your sentence. This means that you either cut a word or two that isn't needed from its front or end OR, more likely, you adapt your sentence to fit the chosen quotation. Remember to use the present tense, e.g. 'Eric reacts'.

3) A quotation should not generally appear at the start of a sentence (only very rarely does this work). Instead, it should be embedded (tucked in) as in this example:

*When the Inspector turns to Mrs Birling for the final time and quietly states "You turned her away when she most needed help" he makes something that Mrs Birling has presented as a complicated moral issue sound utterly simple: it is really an accusation of unneighbourliness, of selfishness. In the same speech he urges the Birlings three times to 'Remember' what they have done. He provides Priestley's moral message with simple clarity, acting as the author's voice in the play, a voice that seems to echo over time.*

## **Interpreting mark schemes:**

As has been indicated before, these are of limited value, in one sense, to those untrained to read them, in that sometimes they are full of adjectives that can be susceptible to being valued differently. Teachers tend to get to get to know what is meant. Here is the level 5 (old style B+/A-) descriptor. The one above it relies on words like 'perceptive', 'sustained', 'skilfully interwoven' to mark the difference. The one below tends to use 'some' to suggest unevenness; the very lowest descriptors rely on the word 'limited' and other synonyms.

### **Part a) Level 5 (15–17 marks)**

#### **Convincing critical style in a well-developed personal response to both text and task**

- Convincing understanding of context which informs the response to the text (AO3)
- Convincing critical style maintained in a well-developed personal response to the text, showing some insightful understanding (AO1)
- Textual references and quotations are well-selected and fully integrated (AO1)
- Thoughtful and developed analysis of writer's use of language, form and structure to create meanings and effects (AO2)

- Good use of relevant subject terminology (AO2)
- Achieves a sustained comparison of texts

### Part b) Level 5 (15–17 marks)

#### Convincing critical style in a well-developed personal response to both text and task

- Convincing critical style maintained in a well-developed personal response to the text, showing some insightful understanding (AO1)
- Textual references and quotations are well-selected and fully integrated (AO1)
- Thoughtful and developed analysis of writer's use of language, form and structure to create meanings and effects (AO2)
- Good use of relevant subject terminology (AO2)

A reminder of the kind of preparation you need to do for the part b) mini-essay. Remember that you need to do this for 5 or 6 different moments of the play and learn their content:

<p><i>1) Mr Birling and the family just before the Inspector arrives:</i></p> <p>Eric: What about war? Mr B: fiddlesticks!</p> <p>Mr B = huge blocks of speech.</p> <p>Mr B: 'unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable' + ref. to left-wing writers: BS and HG Wells</p> <p>Mrs B: 'Yes, of course, dear' to B</p> <p>Sheila admires her ring; Mr B mid 'lecture, Eric drinks and almost leaks indiscreet things about women, Mr B boasts about getting a title....</p> <p><b>Dramatic irony</b> everywhere... Titanic, 'hardheaded practical business men', a man must 'look after himself and his own' then doorbell rings</p>	<p><i>2) The Inspector arrives:</i></p> <p>Stage directions stress <u>symbolic</u> 'solidity', how he speaks 'weightily', looks 'hard', speaks 'massively'. I imagine granite weights.</p> <p>I = 'I'm on duty' + duty as key concept/theme.</p> <p>I: 'great agony' of Eva S + how he speaks "coolly" while the men are annoyed</p> <p>I establishes a 'chain of events'. Look at 'chain' symbolism.</p> <p>Mr B: long account of Eva emerges. End with 'I refused, of course.' <u>I's</u> 'Why?' is instant.</p> <p>Eric backs the I, is cutting and opinionated about father's business practices. More <b>DI</b>. G aligns himself with Mr B, S 'mean'.</p> <p>Asking and <b>taking earth</b> exchange</p>	<p><i>3) Sheila's story:</i></p> <p>S: Has just said her father did a 'mean thing', now <u>her</u> meanness, jealousy.</p> <p>S = kind of confession in which she says she was 'rude', reports how she'd reported ES @ <u>Milwards</u> as 'impertinent' (her mother's word!).</p> <p>I: Three short statements to S's remorse/shame spoken 'harshly'</p> <p><u>ES's</u> prettiness stressed; how the I picks up on S's words and redirects them ('Oh-why..?' / 'That's what I asked myself...why it <b>had to happen</b>*')</p> <p>S left with G as new name for ES emerges. <u>I's</u> key exit.</p>
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