

*An Inspector Calls*

# Revision Booklet.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

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Form: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Context

Part a) of the question requires you to have an awareness of the context in which AIC was written. Priestley's motivation for writing the play was political and concerned the massive gaps between rich and poor. The characters are shaped through Priestley's perspective – to the point where characters like Sheila and the Inspector are his mouthpiece.

The play is set in 1912, Edwardian England, just two years before the war. This was a very difficult time for England. It was a period when there **were many strikes, food shortages and great political tension**. The play was written and published in 1945, just after World War II, when the country was also in great disorder.



Europe was in ruins and two cities of Japan were destroyed by atomic bombs. During the war, the blitz and the evacuation of city children into the country meant that **a lot of people were thrown or forced together**. As a result, they learned about each other and felt responsible for each other as individuals and as a country.



This play has a **moral message** (a lesson to be learned at the end); that **we should think of others and work together** to ensure that we are all offered a chance to be treated equally.

This idea is known as **socialism**. When the play was first published, **Labour** had just taken over the country for the first time.

**Socialism:**  
the radical  
idea of  
sharing



Before Labour, the country was run by **Capitalists**. **Capitalism** believed that each person had to look after **themselves**- this belief, however, resulted in **unequal treatment of people**.

During Edwardian England, there was a massive divide between the people of England at that time; the rich and the poor. **87% of all the money in England belonged to only 5% of the population!**



When the Capitalists were in control of the country, England had no welfare system, in other words, there was no dole if you didn't have a job. Even when you did have a job, there were no unions or laws that helped people at work- there was no minimum wage and the average number of hours people worked each week was up to 65, we only work an average 39! Employers could basically treat their workers as they wanted.



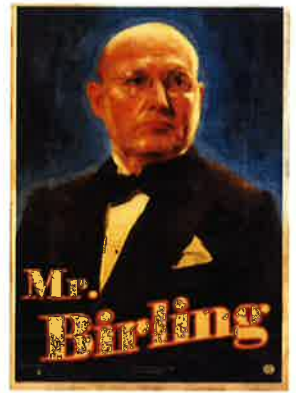
The play is set in the fictional town Brumley; a northern town, like Bradford. Bradford had many factories, owned by rich people who paid very little for back breaking work.

Women had fewer rights than men at the time and had not yet won the right to vote. They were not expected to work unless they were the lower class, then they would have to work to survive. The eldest male of any home would be the main breadwinner (the person who brings the money home), they were also in charge at home, and their word was law; a wife would never argue or answer back to her husband or eldest son.





# Mr. Arthur Birling



- He has worked his way up in the world and is proud of his achievements. He boasts about having been Mayor and tries (and fails) to impress the Inspector with his local standing and his influential friends.
- However, he is aware of people who are his social superiors, which is why he shows off about the port to Gerald, "it's exactly the same port your father gets." He is proud that he is likely to be knighted, as that would move him even higher in social circles.
- He claims the party "is one of the happiest nights of my life." This is not only because Sheila will be happy, but because a merger with Crofts Limited will be good for his business.
- He is optimistic for the future and confident that there will not be a war. As the audience knows there will be a war, we begin to doubt Mr Birling's judgement. (If he is wrong about the war, what else will he be wrong about?)
- He is extremely selfish:
- He wants to protect himself and his family. He believes that socialist ideas that stress the importance of the community are "nonsense" and that "a man has to make his own way."
- He wants to protect Birling and Co. He cannot see that he did anything wrong when he fired Eva Smith - he was just looking after his business interests.
- He wants to protect his reputation. As the Inspector's investigations continue, his selfishness gets the better of him: he is worried about how the press will view the story in Act II, and accuses Sheila of disloyalty at the start of Act III. He wants to hide the fact that Eric stole money: "I've got to cover this up as soon as I can."
- At the end of the play, he knows he has lost the chance of his knighthood, his reputation in Brumley and the chance of Birling and Co. merging with their rivals. Yet he hasn't learnt the lesson of the play: he is unable to admit his responsibility for his part in Eva's death.

**BIRLING**

(*rather heavily*) I just want to say this. (*Noticing that SHEILA is still admiring her ring.*) Are you listening, Sheila? This concerns you too. And after all I don't often make speeches at you—

**SHEILA**

I'm sorry, Daddy. Actually I was listening. *She looks attentive, as they all do. He holds them for a moment before continuing.*

**BIRLING**

I'm delighted about this engagement and I hope it won't be too long before you're married. And I want to say this. There's a good deal of silly talk about these days – but – and I speak as a hard-headed business man, who has to take risks and know what he's about – I say, you can ignore all this silly pessimistic talk. When you marry, you'll be marrying at a very good time. Yes, a very good time – and soon it'll be an even better time. Last month, just because the miners came out on strike, there's a lot of wild talk about possible labour trouble in the near future. Don't worry. We've passed the worst of it. We employers at last are coming together to see that our interests – and the interests of Capital – are properly protected. And we're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity.

**GERALD**

I believe you're right, sir.

**ERIC**

What about war?

**BIRLING**

Glad you mentioned it, Eric. I'm coming to that. Just because the Kaiser makes a speech or two, or a few German officers have too much to drink and begin talking nonsense, you'll hear some people say that war's inevitable. And to that I say – fiddlesticks! The Germans don't want war. Nobody wants war, except some half-civilized folks in the Balkans. And why? There's too much at stake these days. Everything to lose and nothing to gain by war.

**ERIC**

Yes, I know – but still—

**BIRLING**

Just let me finish, Eric. You've a lot to learn yet. And I'm talking as a hard-headed, practical man of business. And I say there isn't a chance of war. The world's developing

so fast that it'll make war impossible. Look at the progress we're making. In a year or two we'll have aeroplanes that will be able to go anywhere. And look at the way the auto-mobile's making headway – bigger and faster all the time. And then ships. Why, a friend of mine went over this new liner last week – the *Titanic* – she sails next week – forty-six thousand eight hundred tons – New York in five days – and every luxury – and unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable. That's what you've got to keep your eye on, facts like that, progress like that – and not a few German officers talking nonsense and a few scaremongers here making a fuss about nothing. Now you three young people, just listen to this – and remember what I'm telling you now. In twenty or thirty years' time – let's say, in 1940 – you may be giving a little party like this – your son or daughter might be getting engaged – and I tell you, by that time you'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these Capital versus Labour agitations and all these silly little war scares. There'll be peace and prosperity and rapid progress everywhere – except of course in Russia, which will always be behindhand naturally.

**MRS B.**

Arthur!

*As MRS BIRLING shows signs of interrupting.*

Yes, my dear, I know – I'm talking too much. But you youngsters just remember what I said. We can't let these Bernard Shaws and H. G. Wells do all the talking. We hardheaded practical business men must say something sometime. And we don't guess – we've had experience – and we know.

**MRS B.**

(*rising. The others rise*) Yes, of course, dear. Well – don't keep Gerald in here too long, Eric – I want you a minute.

*She and SHEILA and ERIC go out. BIRLING and GERALD sit down again.*

**BIRLING**

Cigar?

Explore how arrogance  
and ignorance is presented  
in this extract.

# Sheila Birling



- She is described at the start as "a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited."
- Even though she seems very playful at the opening, we know that she has had suspicions about Gerald when she mentions "last summer, when you never came near me." Does this suggest that she is not as naive and shallow as she first appears?
- Although she has probably never before considered the conditions of the workers, she shows her **compassion** immediately when she hears of her father's treatment of Eva Smith: "But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people." Already, she is starting to change.
- She is horrified by her own part in Eva's story. She feels **guilt** for her jealous actions and blames herself as "really responsible."
- She is very **perceptive**: she realises that Gerald knew Daisy Renton from his reaction, the moment the Inspector mentioned her name. At the end of Act II, she is the first to realise Eric's part in the story. Significantly, she is the first to wonder who the Inspector really is, saying to him, 'wonderingly', "I don't understand about you." She warns the others "he's giving us the rope – so that we'll hang ourselves" (Act II) and, near the end, is the first to consider whether the Inspector may not be real.
- She is **curious**. She genuinely wants to know about Gerald's part in the story. It's interesting that she is not angry with him when she hears about the affair: she says that she respects his honesty. She is becoming **more mature**.
- She is **angry** with her parents in Act 3 for trying to "pretend that nothing much has happened." Sheila says "It frightens me the way you talk:" she cannot understand how they cannot have learnt from the evening in the same way that she has. She is seeing her parents in a new, unfavourable light.
- At the end of the play, Sheila is much **wiser**. She can now judge her parents and Gerald from a new perspective, but the greatest change has been in herself: her social conscience has been awakened and she is aware of her responsibilities.

## THEME REMINDER!

### Gender/Presentation of Women

Because Eva was a woman - in the days before women were valued by society and had not yet been awarded the right to vote - she was in an even worse position than a lower class man. Even upper class women had few choices. For most, the best they could hope for was to impress a rich man and marry well - which could explain why Sheila spent so long in Milwards.

For working class women, a job was crucial. There was no social security at that time, so without a job they had no money. There were very few options open to women in that situation: many saw no alternative but to turn to prostitution.

# Gerald Croft



- He is described as "an attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred man-about-town."
- He is an aristocrat – the son of Lord and Lady Croft. We realise that they are not over-impressed by Gerald's engagement to Sheila because they declined the invitation to the dinner.
- He is not as willing as Sheila to admit his part in the girl's death to the Inspector and initially pretends that he never knew her. Is he a bit like Mr Birling, wanting to protect his own interests?
- He did have some genuine feeling for Daisy Renton, however: he is very moved when he hears of her death. He tells Inspector Goole that he arranged for her to live in his friend's flat "because I was sorry for her;" she became his mistress because "She was young and pretty and warm-hearted – and intensely grateful."
- Despite this, in Act 3 he tries to come up with as much evidence as possible to prove that the Inspector is a fake – because that would get him off the hook. It is Gerald who confirms that the local force has no officer by the name of Goole, he who realises it may not have been the same girl and he who finds out from the infirmary that there has not been a suicide case in months. He seems to throw his energies into "protecting" himself rather than "changing" himself (unlike Sheila).
- At the end of the play, he has not changed. He has not gained a new sense of social responsibility, which is why Sheila (who has) is unsure whether to take back the engagement ring.

## THEME REMINDER!

### Class

Apart from Edna the maid, the cast of the play does not include any lower class characters. We see only the rich, upwardly mobile Birlings and the upper class Gerald Croft. Yet we *learn* a lot about the lower class as we hear of each stage in Eva's life and we see the attitude the Birlings had for them.

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.

# Gerald and Sheila

**GERALD** ... In fact, I insist upon being one of the family now. I've been trying long enough, haven't I? (*As she does not reply, with more insistence.*) Haven't I? You know I have.

**MRS B.** (*smiling*) Of course she does.

**SHEILA** (*half serious, half playful*) Yes – except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.

**GERALD** And I've told you – I was awfully busy at the works all that time.

**SHEILA** (*same tone as before*) Yes, that's what *you* say.

**MRS B.** Now, Sheila, don't tease him. When you're married you'll realise that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

**SHEILA** I don't believe I will. (*Half playful, half serious to Gerald*) So you be careful.

**GERALD** Oh – I will, I will.

## Discuss and think about the following:

- Why are these two getting married? Is it true love? What else?
- What does Gerald's comment that he has 'been trying long enough' tell us about the relationship?
- How do you think Gerald feels when Sheila ignores him? Why does she ignore him?
- Why is Sheila 'half playful, half serious'?
- Was Gerald at work 'all last summer'? How do we know that Sheila has questioned Gerald on this matter before? How does Gerald feel about being questioned? Does Sheila believe him? Do you believe him? Where was he?
- Is Sheila (as Mrs. B thinks) teasing Gerald or is she accusing him? How do you know?
- Does Sheila share her mother's notion of how she should accept her role as the wife of a businessman?
- What part does Mrs. Birling play here?

# Gerald and Sheila

The next extract is taken from page 5, just after the toast, when Gerald gives Sheila the ring. Birling and Mrs. Birling offer formal congratulations and this contrasts with Eric's insulting and rather comic effort. Again, Sheila is annoyed with her brother and she refuses to follow his toast. Gerald suggests that she drinks to him.



**GERALD** You can drink to me.

*(quiet and serious now)* All right then. I drink to you, Gerald.

**SHEILA**

*For a moment they look at each other.*

**GERALD**

*(quietly)* Thank you. And I drink to you – and hope I can make you as happy as you deserve to be.

**SHEILA**

*(trying to be light and easy)* You be careful – or I'll start weeping.

**GERALD**

*(smiling)* Well, perhaps this will help to stop it. *(He produces a ring case.)*

**SHEILA**

*(excited)* Oh – Gerald – you've got it – is it the one you wanted me to have?

**GERALD**

*(giving the case to her)* Yes – the very one.

**SHEILA**

*(taking out the ring)* Oh – it's wonderful! Look – Mummy – isn't it a beauty? Oh – darling – *(She kisses GERALD hastily.)*

**ERIC**

Steady the buffs!

**SHEILA**

*(who has put the ring on, admiringly)* I think it's perfect. Now I feel really engaged.

**MRS B.**

So you ought, darling. It's a lovely ring. Be careful with it.

**SHEILA**

Careful! I'll never let it go out of my sight for an instant.

- Is Sheila glad to 'drink to' Gerald?
- Why do they 'look at each other'?
- Are these two people happy with their decision?
- The tone of the extract changes. What makes Gerald smile and Sheila excited? Who chose it and what do you make of this?
- Gerald doesn't put the ring on her finger. What does he do?
- How does Sheila kiss Gerald? What do you make of this adverb?
- Does Eric misread the mood of the exchange? Explain your ideas.
- Why do you think Mrs. Birling says to 'Be careful' with the ring? What does this tell us about the things that they value?
- Will their engagement last the course of the play?
- What might Gerald and Sheila's private and personal insecurities be?

# Mrs. Sybil Birling



- She is described at the start as "about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior."
- She is a **snob**, very aware of the differences between social classes. She is irritated when Mr Birling makes the social gaffe of praising the cook in front of Gerald and later is very dismissive of Eva, saying "Girls of that class."
- She has the least respect for the Inspector of all the characters. She tries – unsuccessfully – to intimidate him and force him to leave, then lies to him when she claims that she does not recognise the photograph that he shows her.
- She sees Sheila and Eric still as "children" and speaks patronisingly to them.
- She tries to deny things that she doesn't want to believe: Eric's drinking, Gerald's affair with Eva, and the fact that a working class girl would refuse money even if it was stolen, claiming "She was giving herself ridiculous airs."
- She admits she was "prejudiced" against the girl who applied to her committee for help and saw it as her "duty" to refuse to help her. Her narrow sense of morality dictates that the father of a child should be responsible for its welfare, regardless of circumstances.
- At the end of the play, she has had to come to terms that her son is a heavy drinker who got a girl pregnant and stole money to support her, her daughter will not marry a good social 'catch' and that her own reputation within the town will be sullied. Yet, like her husband, she refuses to believe that she did anything wrong and doesn't accept responsibility for her part in Eva's death.

## THEME REMINDER!

### Age vs. Youth

The older generation and the younger generation take the Inspector's message in different ways. While Sheila and Eric accept their part in Eva's death and feel huge guilt about it, their parents are unable to admit that they did anything wrong.

Gerald Croft is caught in the middle, being neither very young nor old. In the end he sides with the older generation, perhaps because his aristocratic roots influence him to want to keep the status quo and protect his own interests.

Ultimately, we can be optimistic that the young - those who will shape future society - are able to take on board the Inspector's message.

## Mrs Birling in Act 2.

It is worth noting that nothing from Act 2 has been used for part (a) in practice papers/specimens.

Mrs Birling in Act 2. She is a social snob who gets taken down a peg or two in this part of the play. She tries to avoid being questioned by the Inspector and still refuses to accept responsibility for Eva's death once she has explained why she refused to help her. Finally, she digs herself a hole by repeatedly blaming the father of the child, who inevitably turns out to be Eric. Mrs Birling only starts to realise the gravity of the situation – that she played a part in killing her own grandchild – at the end of this scene. This an excellent part of the play to look at structure, tension and dramatic irony.

Look at the following quotes from Mrs Birling in Act 2 – explain in what they tell us about her character and how Priestley is trying to portray her to the audience.

Quote	What it tells us
'I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class-'	
<b>Mrs B</b> – 'Eric? Oh- I'm afraid he may have had rather too much to drink tonight. We were having a little celebration here – ' <b>Inspector</b> – (cutting in) 'Isn't he used to drinking?' <b>Mrs B</b> – 'No, of course not. He's only a boy'	
'(with dignity) Yes. We've done a great deal of useful work in helping deserving cases.'	

<p><b>Inspector-</b> 'She came to you for help at a time when no woman could have needed it more.'</p> <p><b>Mrs B</b> - 'She was claiming elaborate fine feelings and scruples that were simply absurd in a girl of her position.'</p>	
<p>'As if a girl of that sort would refuse money.'</p>	
<p>I'm sorry she should have come to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame for it at all.'</p>	
<p>If, as she said, he didn't belong to her class, and was some drunken young idler, then that's all the more reason why he shouldn't escape. He should be made an example of. If the girl's death is due to anybody, then it's due to him.'</p>	
<p>'I don't believe it. I won't believe it'</p>	



# Eric Birling



- He is described at the start as "in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive."
- Eric seems **embarrassed and awkward** right from the start. The first mention of him in the script is "Eric suddenly guffaws," and then he is unable to explain his laughter, as if he is nervous about something. (It is not until the final act that we realise this must be because of his having stolen some money.) There is another awkward moment when Gerald, Birling and Eric are chatting about women's love of clothes before the Inspector arrives. Do you feel that there is tension in Eric's relationship with his father?
- It soon becomes clear to us (although it takes his parents longer) that he is a **hardened drinker**. Gerald admits, "I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard."
- When he hears how his father sacked Eva Smith, he supports the worker's cause, like Sheila. "Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?"
- He feels **guilt and frustration** with himself over his relationship with the girl. He cries, "Oh - my God! - how stupid it all is!" as he tells his story. He is horrified that his thoughtless actions had such consequences.
- He had some innate **sense of responsibility**, though, because although he got a woman pregnant, he was concerned enough to give her money. He was obviously less worried about stealing (or 'borrowing' from his father's office) than he was about the girl's future. So, was Eric, initially, the most socially aware member of the Birling family?
- He is appalled by his parents' inability to admit their own responsibility. He tells them forcefully, "I'm ashamed of you." When Birling tries to threaten him in Act III, Eric is aggressive in return: "I don't give a damn now." Do you think Eric has ever stood up to his father in this way before?
- At the end of the play, like Sheila, he is fully aware of his social responsibility. He is not interested in his parents' efforts to cover everything up: as far as he is concerned, the important thing is that a girl is dead. "We did her in all right."

adjust your family relationships. But now I must hear what your son has to tell me. (*Sternly, to the three of them.*) And I'll be obliged if you'll let us get on without any further interruptions. (*Turning to ERIC.*) Now then.

**ERIC** (*miserably*) Could I have a drink first?

**BIRLING** (*explosively*) No.

**INSPECTOR** (*firmly*) Yes. (*As BIRLING looks like interrupting explosively.*) I know – he's your son and this is your house – but look at him. He needs a drink now just to see him through.

**BIRLING** (*to ERIC*) All right. Go on.

*ERIC goes for a whisky. His whole manner of handling the decanter and then the drink shows his familiarity with quick heavy drinking. The others watch him narrowly.*

(*Bitterly*) I understand a lot of things now I didn't understand before.

**INSPECTOR** Don't start on that. I want to get on. (*To ERIC.*) When did you first meet this girl?

**ERIC** One night last November.

**INSPECTOR** Where did you meet her?

**ERIC** In the Palace bar. I'd been there an hour or so with two or three chaps. I was a bit squiffy.

**INSPECTOR** What happened then?

**ERIC** I began talking to her, and stood her a few drinks. I was rather far gone by the time we had to go.

**INSPECTOR** Was she drunk too?

**ERIC** She told me afterwards that she was a bit, chiefly because she'd not had much to eat that day.

**INSPECTOR** Why had she gone there—?

**ERIC** She wasn't the usual sort. But – well, I suppose she didn't know what to do. There was some woman who wanted her to go there. I never quite understood about that.

**INSPECTOR** You went with her to her lodgings that night?

**ERIC** Yes, I insisted – it seems. I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in

Explore how shame and pride are presented in this extract.

but that – well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row.

**INSPECTOR** So she let you in?

**ERIC** Yes. And that's when it happened. And I didn't even remember – that's the hellish thing. Oh – my God! – how stupid it all is!

**MRS B.** (*with a cry*) Oh – Eric – how could you?

**BIRLING** (*sharply*) Sheila, take your mother along to the drawing-room—

**SHEILA** (*protesting*) But – I want to—

**BIRLING** (*very sharply*) You heard what I said. (*Gentler.*) Go on, Sybil.

*He goes to open the door while SHEILA takes her mother out. Then he closes it and comes in.*

**INSPECTOR** When did you meet her again?

**ERIC** About a fortnight afterwards.

**INSPECTOR** By appointment?

**ERIC** No. And I couldn't remember her name or where she lived. It was all very vague. But I happened to see her again in the Palace bar.

**INSPECTOR** More drinks?

**ERIC** Yes, though that time I wasn't so bad.

**INSPECTOR** But you took her home again?

**ERIC** Yes. And this time we talked a bit. She told me something about herself and I talked too. Told her my name and what I did.

**INSPECTOR** And you made love again?

**ERIC** Yes. I wasn't in love with her or anything – but I liked her – she was pretty and a good sport—

**BIRLING** (*harshly*) So you had to go to bed with her?

**ERIC** Well, I'm old enough to be married, aren't I, and I'm not married, and I hate these fat old tarts round the town – the ones I see some of your respectable friends with—

**BIRLING** (*angrily*) I don't want any of that talk from you—

**INSPECTOR** (*very sharply*) I don't want any of it from either

Key Question

of you. Settle it afterwards. (To ERIC.) Did you arrange to see each other after that?

ERIC Yes. And the next time – or the time after that – she told me she thought she was going to have a baby. She wasn't quite sure. And then she was.

INSPECTOR And of course she was very worried about it?

ERIC Yes, and so was I. I was in a hell of a state about it.

INSPECTOR Did she suggest that you ought to marry her?

ERIC No. She didn't want me to marry her. Said I didn't love her – and all that. In a way, she treated me – as if I were a kid. Though I was nearly as old as she was.

INSPECTOR So what did you propose to do?

ERIC Well, she hadn't a job – and didn't feel like trying again for one – and she'd no money left – so I insisted on giving her enough money to keep her going – until she refused to take any more –

INSPECTOR How much did you give her altogether?

ERIC I suppose – about fifty pounds all told.

BIRLING Fifty pounds – on top of drinking and going round the town! Where did you get fifty pounds from?

As ERIC does not reply.

INSPECTOR That's my question too.

ERIC (miserably) I got it – from the office –

BIRLING My office?

ERIC Yes.

INSPECTOR You mean – you stole the money?

ERIC Not really.

BIRLING (angrily) What do you mean – not really?

ERIC does not reply because now MRS BIRLING and SHEILA come back.

SHEILA This isn't my fault.

MRS B. (to BIRLING) I'm sorry, Arthur, but I simply couldn't stay in there. I had to know what's happening.

BIRLING (savagely) Well, I can tell you what's happening. He's admitted he was responsible for the girl's condition,

and now he's telling us he supplied her with money he stole from the office.

MRS B. (shocked) Eric! You stole money?

ERIC No, not really. I intended to pay it back.

BIRLING We've heard that story before. How could you have paid it back?

ERIC I'd have managed somehow. I had to have some money –

BIRLING I don't understand how you could take as much as that out of the office without somebody knowing.

ERIC There were some small accounts to collect, and I asked for cash –

BIRLING Gave the firm's receipt and then kept the money, eh?

ERIC Yes.

BIRLING You must give me a list of those accounts. I've got to cover this up as soon as I can. You damned fool – why didn't you come to me when you found yourself in this mess?

ERIC Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble – that's why.

BIRLING (angrily) Don't talk to me like that. Your trouble is – you've been spoilt –

INSPECTOR (cutting in) And my trouble is – that I haven't much time. You'll be able to divide the

responsibility between you when I've gone. (To

ERIC.) Just one last question, that's all. The girl discovered that this money you were giving her was stolen, didn't she?

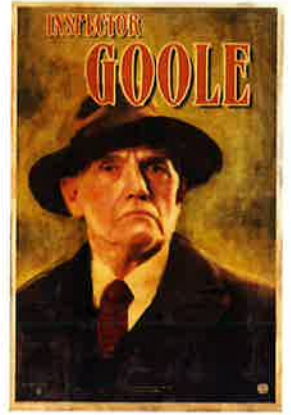
ERIC (miserably) Yes. That was the worst of all. She wouldn't take any more, and she didn't want to see me again. (Sudden startled tone.) Here, but how did you know that? Did she tell you?

INSPECTOR No. She told me nothing. I never spoke to her.

SHEILA She told mother.

MRS B. (alarmed) Sheila!

# Inspector Goole



- He is described on his entrance as creating "an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit. He speaks carefully, weightily, and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking. "
- He works very **systematically**; he likes to deal with "one person and one line of enquiry at a time." His method is to confront a suspect with a piece of information and then make them talk – or, as Sheila puts it, "he's giving us the rope – so that we'll hang ourselves."
- He is a figure of **authority**. He deals with each member of the family very firmly and several times we see him "massively taking charge as disputes erupt between them." He is not impressed when he hears about Mr Birling's influential friends and he cuts through Mrs Birling's obstructiveness.
- He seems to **know and understand** an extraordinary amount: he knows the history of Eva Smith and the Birlings' involvement in it, even though she died only hours ago. Sheila tells Gerald, "Of course he knows."
- He knows things are going to happen – He says "I'm waiting... To do my duty" just before Eric's return, as if he expected Eric to reappear at exactly that moment
- He is obviously in a great hurry towards the end of the play: he stresses "I haven't much time." Does he know that the real inspector is shortly going to arrive?
- His final speech is like a sermon or a politician's. He leaves the family with the message "We are responsible for each other" and warns them of the "fire and blood and anguish" that will result if they do not pay attention to what he has taught them.
- All this **mystery** suggests that the Inspector is not a 'real' person. So, what is he?
  - ? Is he a ghost? Goole reminds us of 'ghoul'.
  - ? ? Is he the voice of all our consciences?
  - ? Is he the voice of Priestley?
  - ? Is he the voice of God?



## AN INSPECTOR CALLS: THE INSPECTOR'S SPEECH

"But just remember this. 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, with what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are all responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night."

You may have noticed that what the Inspector says here does not sound like ordinary conversation. The way it is structured and the language that is used makes it clear that Priestley wanted the audience to listen carefully. It is a speech.

Which of the following techniques do you recognise in the Inspector's speech? Find an example.

- lists of three
- use of contrasting pairs (e.g. one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind)
- talking about 'we' or 'us' (often positively)
- using powerful or memorable words and phrases
- talking about 'them' (often negatively)
- the use of 'I'
- the rhythm of language used (e.g. length of sentences, pauses)

Key  
Question  
→

**Now compare this speech to Mr Birling's speech earlier on in the play (the one the Inspector interrupts as he arrives). What effect does the conflict between these two belief systems have on the audience?**

"But what so many of you don't seem to understand now, when things are so much easier, is that a man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too of course, when he has one – and so long as he does that he won't come to much harm. But the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up together like bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense. But take my word for it, you youngsters – and I've learnt in the good school of experience – that a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own – and – *We hear the sharp ring of a front door bell. Birling stops to listen.*"

# Themes:

## Young vs Old

### Conflict/differences between the generations

The Old (Mr and Mrs Birling)	The Young (Sheila and Eric)
The old are set in their ways. They are utterly confident that they are right and they see the young as foolish.	The young are open to new ideas. This is first seen early in Act 1 when both Eric and Sheila express sympathy for the strikers - an idea which horrifies Birling, who can only think of production costs and ignores the human side of the issue.
The old will do anything to protect themselves: Mrs Birling lies to the Inspector when he first shows her the photograph; Mr Birling wants to cover up a potential scandal.	The young are honest and admit their faults. Eric refuses to try to cover his part up, saying, <i>"the fact remains that I did what I did."</i>
They have never been forced to examine their consciences before and find they cannot do it now - as the saying goes, 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks.'	Sheila and Eric see the human side of Eva's story and are very troubled by their part in it. They do examine their consciences.
Mr and Mrs Birling have much to fear from the visit of the 'real' inspector because they know they will lose everything.	Sheila and Eric have nothing to fear from the visit of the 'real' inspector because they have already admitted what they have done wrong, and will change.

Gerald Croft is caught in the middle, being neither very young nor old. In the end he sides with the older generation, perhaps because his aristocratic roots influence him to want to keep the status quo and protect his own interests.

## Class

Apart from Edna, the maid, the characters in the play are from the rich, upper classes. However, a lot can be learnt about the lower classes through the attitudes of the characters and their interactions with Eva Smith. Again make sure that you consider how each character views the lower classes at the beginning and the end of the play.

## Gender

Because of her sex, Eva was in an even more vulnerable position. When the play is set women were not yet valued in their own right by society and had not been awarded the right to vote.

Even upper class women had limited choices and were under the control of men. The situation was even worse for working class women. Eva Smith encompasses this plights and her life is heavily influenced by the men she encounters.

Why do you think Priestley decided to have the play based on the death of a young working class woman rather than the death of a young working class man?

# Responsibility

‘You’ll be able to divide the responsibility between you when I’ve gone.’

Following the Inspector’s exit, one of the play’s central themes comes to the fore – the idea of **responsibility**. However, while some characters are ready to consider their involvement and accept responsibility for their part in Eva Smith’s death, other characters appear to have other concerns.

Who, overall, has truly **understood** the **Inspector’s message** and **purpose**?

Look at the quotes below and make notes on them so you know who said what. Put a **name** and a **quote** underneath each of the following questions.

1 The character who is most willing to accept **responsibility**.

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2 The character who is most willing to accept that they are **jointly responsible**.

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3 The character who is most ready to **blame** others.

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4 The character who is most **affected** by the death of Eva Smith / Daisy Renton.

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5 The character who is most interested in preserving his / her **own public position**.

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6 The character who is most interested in proving that the **Inspector wasn’t real** and that there was **more than one girl**.

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7 The character whose response is most **sympathetic** whilst also being **logical** and **considered**.

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### An Inspector Calls Character Notes

<u>Key quotations</u>	<u>Key language &amp; structural features</u>	<u>Priestley's Ideas</u>
<p><b>MR BIRLING</b></p> <p>"I'm talking as a hard-headed practical man of business"</p> <p>'you'll hear some people say war is inevitable ... fiddlesticks!'</p> <p>'The Titanic – she sails next week...and unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.'</p> <p>"I gather there's a very good chance of a knighthood"</p> <p>"A man has to make his own way – has to look after himself – and his family too, of course"</p> <p>"(rather impatiently) Horrid business. But I don't understand why you should come here."</p> <p>"you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else, as if we were all mixed up like bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense."</p> <p>"I was an alderman for years – and Lord Mayor two years ago – and I'm still on the Bench – so I know the Brumley police offers pretty well"</p> <p>"there's every excuse for what your mother and I did"</p> <p>"Probably a Socialist or some sort of crank"</p> <p>"Now look at the pair of them- the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke-"</p>	<p><u>long monologues</u></p> <p><u>dramatic irony</u></p> <p>His language is also very dismissive when he says 'Fiddlesticks!' and 'silly' - he belittles other's ideas.</p> <p><u>Exclamatory sentence</u> – he's passionate and convinced about what he's saying.</p> <p><u>Titanic symbolizes</u> his own family – believes they are untouchable until the Inspector arrives giving them a rude awakening.</p> <p>His language changes when the Inspector arrives as he speaks in <u>short, sharp fragments</u> and uses lots of <u>dashes</u>.</p> <p>His language becomes more <u>colloquial</u> 'y'know' which conveys how his authority is breaking down.</p> <p>He often uses 'I' which conveys his selfish attitude, however, as the play continues he switches to the <u>inclusive pronoun 'we'</u> to diminish the scale of the problem (Eva's death) and shift blame.</p> <p>He uses <u>understatement</u> 'it would be very awkward wouldn't it?'</p> <p>He uses <u>euphemisms</u> when referring to taboo subjects</p>	<p>Priestley uses Birling as a symbol of the callous and heartlessness of capitalism. Through his character he is criticizing the complacency of capitalist prosperity.</p> <p>He is representative of the older generation who were unwilling to change.</p> <p>However, he is presented as a <u>realistic character</u> by Priestley through his use of <u>colloquial language</u> appropriate for the time. Furthermore, he is described as 'panic stricken' this indicates that his defiance and bravado have finally been shattered and so Priestley lets the audience see someone who is so blindly wrong and never as really in control of events as he would like himself and others to think. Therefore the audience is invited to feel sympathy.</p>
<p><b>MRS BIRLING</b></p> <p>"About fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior"</p> <p>"girls of that class"</p> <p>'you know, my husband was Lord Mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate'</p> <p>'I'm very sorry. But I think she only had herself to blame'</p> <p>"I've done nothing wrong – and you know it."</p> <p>"Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility."</p> <p>"She was giving herself ridiculous airs...claiming elaborate fine feelings...that were simply absurd"</p>	<p>The <u>stage descriptions</u> of her actions change as the pretence is revealed e.g. 'grandly' / 'haughtily' / 'triumphantly' become 'rather cowed' / 'distressed' / 'staggered' / 'alarmed'.</p> <p>Mrs Birling's language is quite <u>abrupt and dismissive</u>: 'that class' / 'that sort' / 'the type'. She believes she is morally and socially superior to them – she is a snob.</p> <p>Later in the play Mrs Birling's language is <u>broken up into fragments</u> that don't connect: 'No-Eric-please'. The fragmented speech echoes the collapsing of self-confidence and complacency of these very comfortable, middle class, wealthy characters. This is more shocking because of the <u>contrast</u> with how they were at the start of the play. The dashes could also represent the break down in their relationship.</p>	<p>Priestley uses Mrs Birling to epitomize all that is wrong with society. She <u>represents the social snobbery and hypocrisy</u> of the upper classes and shows no remorse in her cruel treatment of Eva Smith.</p> <p>Priestley presents her as an <u>absurd character</u> that ironically passes her own social guilt onto her own son – condemning him. As a result, Priestley deals with Mrs Birling with special severity, having her fall into a trap of her own making: she is confronted with the knowledge that Eric is a hard drinker and the father of the dead woman's child. She has helped to kill her own grandchild. It is only when she realises this does she begin to show</p>



<p>in a girl in her position."</p> <p>"As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!"</p> <p>"I'm sorry she should have come to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame at all"</p> <p>"he ought to be dealt with very severely....make sure that he's compelled to confess in public his responsibility"</p> <p>'he certainly didn't make me confess – I had done no more than my duty'</p>	<p>Mrs Birling uses <u>imperatives</u> as she commands the Inspector and other characters which conveys her superiority, confidence and self-assurance.</p> <p>Puts on a pretence of respectability by her use of <u>euphemisms</u>: e.g. 'a girl of that Class' who has found herself in a 'particular condition'</p> <p>Use of <u>imagery</u>: Sheila warns her mother not to try and build up a kind of 'wall' – the wall being a symbol of a barrier/pretence</p>	<p>any signs of weakening.</p> <p>Priestley shows us that we should not trust the wealthy members of society to tell the truth.</p>
<p><b>SHEILA BIRLING</b></p> <p>"A pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited"</p> <p>"Yes, go on, Mummy"</p> <p>"(rather distressed) I can't help thinking about this girl- destroying herself so horribly- and I've been so happy tonight. Oh I wish you hadn't told me."</p> <p>"But these girls aren't cheap labour- they're people."</p> <p>"She was a very pretty girl...that didn't make it any better."</p> <p>"I went to the manager and told him this girl had been very impertinent – and – and - "</p> <p>"And if I could help her now, I would-"</p> <p>"I'll never, never do it again to anybody...I feel now I can never go there again"</p> <p>"Why- you fool- he knows. Of course he knows. And I hate to think how much he knows that we don't know yet. You'll see. You'll see."</p> <p>"You mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do the Inspector will just break it down. And it'll be all the worse when he does"</p> <p>"No, he's giving us the rope- so that we'll hang ourselves"</p> <p>Bitterly "I suppose we're all nice people now"</p> <p>"He inspected us all right."</p> <p>"It frightens me the way you talk"</p>	<p>Sheila uses <u>imagery</u> when she talks of her mother's attempts to 'build up a kind of wall'; implying the metaphorical distance Mrs Birling creates between the classes. When Sheila warns the others that the Inspector is 'giving us rope so that we hang ourselves', she once again uses a metaphor to create a visual image of the way the Inspector skilfully manipulates characters into confessing their sins.</p> <p>Sheila's language also reflects her increasing maturity as she begins the play saying "mummy" using a lot of <u>personal pronouns</u> to highlight her selfish, childlike attitude at the start of the play. As the play progresses she refers to Mrs Birling as "mother" which reflects this change and perhaps she doesn't feel as intimate with her mother and has lost respect for her because of the way she is behaving.</p> <p>Sheila's language becomes more <u>passionate</u> and she uses <u>sarcasm</u> ("So nothing's happened, so there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn.") Sheila also uses <u>irony</u> when she is appalled by her parents' attitudes to carry on as before: "I suppose we're all nice people now". Sheila uses irony to show that she completely disagrees with her parents and that she understands the moral consequences of her actions. The use of irony highlights the tensions that existed between the younger and older generations.</p> <p>Sheila and Eric are less restrained and their use of <u>slang expressions</u> such as 'squiffy' which shock their parents and highlight the tensions between the generations.</p> <p>Sheila uses <u>dramatic language</u> "We killed her"</p> <p><u>Stage directions</u>– she "shivers", "tensely" - shows her fear</p> <p>Shows she becomes a bit like the Inspector – asking <u>questions</u>, <u>contradicting</u> her mother.</p> <p>Sheila significantly refuses to take back Gerald's ring and interestingly she uses phrases <u>reminiscent</u> of</p>	<p>Priestley uses the character of Sheila to represent his own views of social responsibility.</p> <p>She offers hope for the future and Priestley uses Sheila as an example of people's changing attitudes towards those less fortunate than themselves. She is sympathetic towards Eva and other girls in her position, recognising that they were "not just cheap labour but people". She accepts that her actions impacted on Eva's life and that she cannot disconnect her actions from the effects these have on others. She recognises and understands the Inspector's message that we are all collectively responsible for all that happens in the world.</p> <p>At times she acts as almost an assistant to the Inspector, in that she supports his criticism of the other characters, becoming his mouthpiece when he has left the stage. Sheila's character becomes quite <u>didactic</u> and this can make her a character with whom the audience <u>do not sympathise</u> with as her change has happened far too quickly and so she is in some ways quite <u>unrealistic</u>.</p>

	the Inspector in her reply, "not yet" and "It's too soon" which emphasizes the importance of timing – the telephone rings just after.	
<p><b>ERIC BIRLING</b></p> <p>"In his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive"</p> <p>"Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices"</p> <p>"it isn't as if you can go and work somewhere else."</p> <p>"He could have kept her on instead of throwing her out. I call it tough luck."</p> <p>"I'd have let her stay"</p> <p>"Well I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty- and I threatened to make a row"</p> <p>"And that's when it happened. And I don't even remember- that's the hellish thing."</p> <p>"I wasn't in love with her or anything- but I liked her- she was pretty and a good sport-"</p> <p>"she didn't want me to marry her. Said I didn't love her- and all that. In a way, she treated me- as if I were a kid. Though I was nearly as old as she was."</p> <p>"You're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble- that's why."</p> <p>"Then- you killed her. She came to you to protect me- and you turned her away-yes, and you killed her-and the child she'd have had too- my child- your own grandchild- you killed them both- damn you, damn you-"</p> <p>"He was <u>our</u> police inspector all right"</p> <p>"(shouting) And I say the girl's dead and we all <u>helped</u> to kill her- and that's what matters-"</p>	<p>Eric acts as dramatic irritant to his father challenging his ideology – <u>contradicting</u> him / <u>interrupting</u> / asking <u>questions</u>.</p> <p>Eric uses a <u>euphemism</u> to describe his sexual assault on Eva Smith: 'that's when it happened.'</p> <p>Eric's language is <u>fragmented</u> as he becomes emotional / hysterical. The dashed could also represent the break down in his relationship with his mother.</p> <p>As his attack on his mother continues, his language becomes more <u>violent</u> as he <u>repeats</u> 'killed' three times. The effect on the reader is highly shocking as this language completely <u>contrasts</u> with the polite, euphemistic language of earlier in the play. Priestley effectively uses <u>the semantic field of heaven and hell</u> when Eric describes what he did to Eva Smith: 'that's the hellish thing. Oh - my God!'</p> <p>When the Inspector leaves Eric <u>emulates</u> the Inspector using the Inspector's <u>harsh, commanding</u> language. Priestley does this so the Inspector's presence is felt on stage and a reminder to the audience to look at their own conscience. ("the girl's dead")</p> <p>Eric's character develops - <u>stage directions</u>, e.g. 'uneasily' / 'unease'; 'suddenly guffaws' – by the end 'shouting'</p>	<p>Eric has the most active social conscience – at the start of play he says: "he could have kept her instead of throwing her out". This demonstrates that there is potential/hope for the future. At the end of the play Eric shows remorse and his acceptance is evidence of his moral fibre.</p> <p>Through Eric's treatment of Eva "I wasn't in love with her or anything" an abhorrent picture of the upper-class emerges. They are shown to be callous and cold. However, Eric illustrates the capacity to change – despite your past errors and your family's beliefs you can change. His transformation is more realistic – as at first he blames his mother for her death and then finally comes round to accepting responsibility.</p> <p>On the other hand, he is presented as quite a weak character and is the most emotional and demonstrative of all. This leads the audience to question whether he can change his ways for good or is he too weak and dependent on his parents?</p> <p>When Eric gives Eva stolen money, Priestley could be commenting that wealth does not replace goodness and integrity – there needed to be a more even distribution of wealth so people like Eric become socially aware.</p>
<p><b>GERALD CROFT</b></p> <p>"An attractive chap about thirty, rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred young man-about-town"</p> <p>"Well, it came just at the right moment. That was clever of you, Gerald."</p> <p>"You couldn't have done anything else" (sacking Eva Smith)</p> <p>"After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and</p>	<p>Gerald is inevitably careful and correct about what he says.</p> <p>Mrs Birling's admiration of Gerald's cleverness is echoed at the end of the play. There are many <u>parallels</u> like this in the play's construction, which link in with Priestley's ideas on timing.</p> <p>Gerald <u>echoes</u> Mr Birling's concern to protect Sheila from anything 'unpleasant' – patronizing – view of women</p> <p><u>Euphemism</u> is also used in the play when characters</p>	<p>Priestley uses the character of Gerald Croft to throw light both on the Birling parents who are too set in their social ways to be changed by the Inspector's visit, and on the Birling children who are certainly very responsive to the Inspector's message, but possibly in a slightly naïve and hysterical way. Gerald acts as <u>a bridge</u> between the two generations.</p> <p>Gerald provides a strong contrast to Eric, Mr Birling's natural son and</p>

<p>not criminals"</p> <p>(about Sheila): "She's obviously had about as much as she can stand"</p> <p>"Why should you [stay]? It's bound to be unpleasant and disturbing"</p> <p>"It's a favourite haunt of women of the town"</p> <p>'[Daisy] gave me a glance that was nothing less than a cry for help"</p> <p>"I insisted on Daisy moving into these rooms and I made her take some money to keep her going there...I want you to understand that I didn't install her there so I could make love to her...I was sorry for her...I didn't ask for anything in return"</p> <p>"She was young and pretty and warm-hearted-and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life- you understand?"</p> <p>"She told me she'd been happier than she'd ever been before"</p> <p>"Nearly any man would have done" (adored being 'fairy prince')</p> <p>"That man wasn't a police officer...I'm almost certain"</p> <p>"But how do you know it's the same girl? ... We've no proof it was the same photograph and therefore no proof it was the same girl"</p> <p>"Everything's all right now Sheila. What about this ring?"</p>	<p>refer to taboo subjects, so when Mr Birling talks of Eva becoming a prostitute he talks of her going 'on the street' and Gerald refers to 'women of the town'.</p> <p>Gerald and Sheila use <u>irony</u> in their interchange when he says "You're going to be a great help" and "I'm glad I amuse you". The irony highlights for us the tension between the two of them.</p> <p>Gerald uses <u>imagery of a rescue mission</u> when describing his role in Daisy Renton's death. He does this to lessen his guilt and try and justify his behaviour.</p> <p>Gerald's offering Sheila the engagement ring <u>echoes</u> the same event from the start of the play.</p>	<p>Priestley uses Gerald to show the tensions between Eric and his father.</p> <p>Priestley shows that it was common for the upper class to behave so badly towards the lower-class by having Gerald present. If the Inspector only questioned the Birling family, Priestley wouldn't be able to convey to the audience how widespread the problem was. Nor would he be able to get them to inspect their own consciences.</p>
<p><b><u>INSPECTOR GOOLE</u></b></p> <p>"Need not be a big man but he creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness."</p> <p>"He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit of the period. He speaks carefully, weightily and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking"</p> <p>"Two hours ago a young woman died in the Infirmary. She'd been taken there this afternoon because she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course"</p> <p>"A chain of events" (may have driven her to</p>	<p>The Inspector assumes control, which is a disturbing shift for Birling and he immediately tries to regain it. The Inspector interrupts Birling 'cutting through, massively'. The Inspector's <u>interruptions</u> and his indifference to the nicer points of polite behaviour make him stand apart from the others.</p> <p>Whenever Priestley describes the Inspector, he uses the <u>semantic field of size</u>: showing the importance of this man, and his power.</p> <p>He speaks in a controlled way, often building on comments made by other characters. He <u>repeats</u> words they have used and <u>manipulates</u> them for his own end. Examples include his repetition and manipulation of the word 'impression' and his manipulation of the word 'position', the meaning of which he changes from a metaphorical to a more</p>	<p>The omniscient Inspector is used by Priestley to further convey his views on collective / social responsibility. The Inspector is used very effectively to highlight the corruption and the selfish attitudes of the twentieth century society.</p> <p>The Inspector's name leads us to question whether he actually exists. The word 'Goole' suggests his mysterious quality, being a pun on the word 'ghoul'. Is he merely a ghost, someone whose very existence has come about as a result of Eva Smith's death?</p> <p>Through the Inspector's final dramatic</p>

<p>suicide)</p> <p>"it's better to ask for the Earth than to take it"</p> <p>"Goole. G. double O-L-E"</p> <p>"it would do us all a bit of good if sometimes we tried to put ourselves in the place of these young women counting their pennies in their dingy little back bedroom"</p> <p>(To Gerald) "And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?"</p> <p>"A girl died tonight. A pretty, lively sort of girl, who never did anybody any harm. But she died in misery and agony- hating life-"</p> <p>"If there's nothing else we have to share our guilt"</p> <p>(the young ones) "Are the most impressionable"</p> <p>"Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges"</p> <p>"You've had children. You must have known what she was feeling. And you slammed the door in her face"</p> <p>"And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. I don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself- and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. <i>(He looks from one to the other of them carefully)</i> But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did"</p> <p>"But remember this. 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. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. 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 blood and anguish. Good night."</p>	<p>literal one, in order to shock Mrs Birling.</p> <p>The Inspector also <b>turns each character's words and actions back upon him or her</b>, e.g. he draws attention to Gerald's hypocrisy regarding women: "And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?" This theme of reversal runs through the structure of the play.</p> <p><b>Chain imagery</b> – Goole emphasizes how we are all responsible for each other and Eva's death was the result of a chain of events etc.</p> <p>Throughout the play, Priestley makes use of <b>dramatic pauses</b> to build tension. The Inspector uses them to make the other characters feel uncomfortable and to control the pace.</p> <p>When he begins to reveal who is responsible for the death of Eva Smith, his words are quite emphatic and he makes great use of two short sentences in the <b>imperative</b> 'Remember that. Never forget.'</p> <p>He <b>alludes to the Bible</b> when he says 'We are members of one body' to emphasise the Inspector's belief in human love and equality.</p> <p>The speech is composed of complex sentences, which are <b>referential</b> (utterances that provide information) and short sentences that are <b>expressive</b> (utterances that express the speaker's feelings). Priestley makes great use of these short sentence structures in order to deliver his <b>opinions as facts</b>. This intended effect is to make both the characters and the audience inspect their own consciences. Furthermore, the use of <b>short sentences symbolises the limit of society</b>, which could still be developed by everyone accepting each other.</p> <p>To convey to the Birlings how widespread their actions are, the Inspector uses the <b>extended metaphor</b> of 'millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths' to represent the number of working-class men and women who were exploited on a daily basis by the greed of capitalism.</p> <p>The Inspector's use of the <b>inclusive pronoun</b> 'we' contrast with the language of Mr and Mrs Birling who normally use 'I' as their primary concern is themselves. The use of 'we' further emphasises Priestley's ideas of collective responsibility and how society should be formed.</p>	<p>speech, Priestley skillfully warns the audience of the potential social disasters of failing to support or help those in need in society.</p> <p>Inspector Goole serves several functions in the play. He acts as the storyteller, linking all the separate incidents together into one, coherent story. Priestley has him supply dates for events, or fill in background about the girl. He also behaves rather like a priest, someone to whom characters confess their sins, helping them to see the extent of their involvement in the downfall of Eva Smith, and encouraging them to acknowledge their guilt and repent. While the Inspector himself does not hand out forgiveness or punishment, characters are made to recognise that they must find the courage to judge themselves, because only then will they have learnt anything and be able to change themselves.</p> <p>Certainly it seems that Priestley did not want to promote a single interpretation of who the Inspector 'really' is. The character's dramatic power lies in this. To have revealed his identity as a hoaxer or as some kind of 'spirit' would have spoilt the unresolved tension that is so effective at the end of the play.</p>
<p><b>EVA SMITH</b></p> <p>"Two hours ago a young woman died in the Infirmary. She'd been taken there this afternoon because she'd swallowed a lot of strong</p>	<p>Eva's character is absent from the stage.</p> <p>Her character is <b>first introduced by the Inspector</b> – significant as the working class were supported by very few people in society – namely those concerned</p>	<p>In many ways she is a counterpoint to the Inspector. Like him, she remains a <b>symbolic figure</b> and one who carries the weight of the plot. Priestley uses Eva as a symbol of the common man or</p>



<p>disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course"</p> <p>"Now – about this girl, Eva Smith. I remember her quite well now. She was a lively good-looking girl – country-bred, I fancy – and she'd been working in one of our shops for over a year. A good worker too."</p> <p>"...and died, after several hours of agony..."</p> <p>"She was a very pretty girl...that didn't make it any better."</p> <p>"She was young and pretty and warm-hearted- and intensely grateful. I became at once the most important person in her life- you understand?"</p> <p>"She was giving herself ridiculous airs...claiming elaborate fine feelings...that were simply absurd in a girl in her position."</p> <p>"As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!"</p> <p>"I wasn't in love with her or anything- but I liked her- she was pretty and a good sport-"</p> <p>"she didn't want me to marry her. Said I didn't love her- and all that. In a way, she treated me- as if I were a kid. Though I was nearly as old as she was."</p> <p>"Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person."</p> <p>"But remember this. 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."</p>	<p>with socialism.</p> <p><u>Emotive language</u> used to describe Eva's death – creates sympathy for her.</p> <p><u>Imagery of insides</u> – suggests that the abuse Eva experienced was not physical (exception of Eric) but more emotional – a reminder to the audience that the damage we do to people is not always seen at first.</p> <p>Eva is described in an <u>idealized way</u> – innocent victim, pretty a good worker. In some ways, Priestley presents her as a martyr. The lower she sinks in her fortunes, the more honourable and noble she appears. She refuses to treat others as they have treated her, even though she is in a position to create scandal for them all.</p> <p>When Eric gave Eva stolen money, she wouldn't accept it showing that she has strong morals. This <u>hagiographical deification</u> of Eva creates a lack of respect for Eric and further highlights the corruption of the upper-class. By presenting Eva in a positive light Priestley presents his socialist ideas of equality and equal rights for all.</p> <p>Eva is described in terms of <u>objectification</u>. She is often referred to as 'the girl', which highlights her youth and innocence. The Inspector also says that Eric treated her like 'an animal, a thing.' Mrs Birling refers to her as 'that sort' etc.</p>	<p>woman and reminds us of our need to take responsibility for our actions and their impact on others.</p> <p>Eva represents ordinary people who can be destroyed by indifference when society fails to grant them the right of basic human dignity.</p> <p>Her connection to the characters in the play is what prompts their confessions. She promotes the idea that we have collective social responsibility, therefore. Despite her lower social class and death, Eva could be said to have the upper hand in the play as she is the one who has shown the others who they really are.</p> <p>The fact that Eva is presented in a highly idealized way which makes her an unrealistic character – could someone who had suffered so much be so gracious and forgiving?</p> <p>The fact that Eva was pregnant suggests that the way we treat people can affect the next generation but also shows how hard it was to escape poverty.</p>
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<p><b>EDNA</b></p> <p>"Edna the parlour-maid is just clearing the table"</p> <p>"Yes Ma'am"</p> <p>"Edna'll answer it"</p> <p>"Please, sir, an inspector's called"</p> <p>"All right, Edna. Show him in here. Give us some more light."</p> <p>"Edna'll go. I asked her to wait up to make us some tea"</p>	<p>Interestingly, while Priestley explains how the set should be and introduces the characters, Edna is the <b>last to be mentioned</b>: 'At rise of curtain, the four Birlings and Gerald are seated at the table... Edna the parlourmaid, is just clearing the table'. <b>Hierarchy</b> is a key concept within <i>An Inspector Calls</i>. It could be argued that it is what drives the main characters actions. Priestley immediately establishes that Edna is at the bottom of the hierarchy and not of any real importance in the eyes of the Birlings and Gerald. He does this by describing her as 'the parlourmaid', emphasising the fact that she is only seen as her profession; the audience is given no details about her appearance or personality because they don't need to know.</p> <p>She provides a contrast to Eva - their names are similar on purpose - and is the <b>dramatic device</b> which means that the family do not have to leave the dining room to perform tasks. They come and go at the behest of the Inspector.</p> <p>Edna calls him sir. The <b>repeated use of 'Sir'</b> when talking to Birling is a reminder of how stark the class divide was at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He, however, calls her by her Christian name but not out of friendliness - it is a way of reinforcing that he is the boss and that she is disposable.</p> <p>Note that Birling is abrupt with her 'Don't know him.' This is not a conversation and there are no niceties - Birling wants this exchange to be over quickly so he can get back to his pleasant evening so he speaks in <b>fragments</b>. He uses unmitigated <b>imperatives</b> with her: 'Show him in' and 'Give us...'.  When Edna announces the arrival of the Inspector it is as though she is heralding in an opportunity for change. It is the people like Edna who would benefit the most from the Birlings learning the Inspector's lesson; her life could improve vastly. Therefore she is allowed a seldom moment away from her docile obedience and delivers the Inspector into the room readily, <b>even stopping the Birlings from finishing their conversation</b>.</p>	<p>Edna is another example of the invisible working class and she helps to create an impression of the Birling's wealthy lifestyle.</p> <p>Edna illustrates the themes of inequality, power, responsibility and class.</p>
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## The Exam - what to expect....

The AIC exam is split into two questions.

- The first one requires you to compare an extract from AIC with another unseen play:

### **4    *An Inspector Calls* by J. B. Priestley and *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* by Jim Cartwright**

**Read the two extracts below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

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

- a)** Compare how conflict between young people and their parents is presented in these two extracts. You should consider:
- the situations and experiences faced by the young people
  - how the young people react to their parents
  - how language and dramatic features create effects.

**[20]**

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

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. Critically compare and contrast texts, referring where relevant to theme, characterisation, context (where known), style and literary quality.

- The second question will be more open about another theme/character:

**AND**

- b)** Explore a moment earlier in the play that shows how Sheila gains a new understanding.

**[20]**

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. Critically compare and contrast texts, referring where relevant to theme, characterisation, context (where known), style and literary quality.

N.B. The other literature text in this paper is *Great Expectations*.

Subject specific terminology				
Imagery	Interpretation	Imply/infer	Line length	Pause
Drama	Dramatic Irony	Audience	Plot	Structure
Adjective	Stage direction	Adverb	Foreshadows	Tension
On the stage	Soliloquy	Repetition	Punctuation	Entrance/exits
Scene	Catalyst	Structure	Verb	Noun/pronoun
Context				
Priestley	1912/1945	Capitalism	Socialism	Gender
Class division	Representation	Society	Political	Left/right wing

Remember to **embed** your quotations:

e.g. When Mr Birling **questions** the Inspector with, “**You’re new, aren’t you?**”, it suggests he is challenging his authority.

Think about whether your quotation is...

- an image, or imagery?
- an answer/response/retort/riposte?
- a plea/promise/pledge?
- a statement/threat/warning/caution?
- a metaphor/simile/motif/symbol/refrain?
- a verb/adverb/pronoun/adjective?
- a comment/remark/aside/sneer/insult?
- piece of dialogue/dialect/rhetoric/reflection

**4    *An Inspector Calls* by J. B. Priestley and *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* by Jim Cartwright**

**Read the two extracts below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

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- a)** Compare how conflict between young people and their parents is presented in these two extracts. You should consider:
- the situations and experiences faced by the young people
  - how the young people react to their parents
  - how language and dramatic features create effects.

**[20]**

**AND**

- b)** Explore a moment earlier in the play that shows how Sheila gains a new understanding.

**[20]**

**Extract 1 from: *An Inspector Calls* by J. B. Priestley**

*This scene is towards the end of the play. It now seems possible that Inspector Goole was not a real Inspector and that a girl has not died after all.*

**Birling:** (*jovially*): But the whole thing's different now. Come, come, you can see that, can't you? (Imitating Inspector in his final speech) You all helped to kill her. (Pointing at Sheila and Eric, and laughing) And I wish you could have seen the look on your faces when he said that. (Sheila moves towards door.) Going to bed, young woman?

**Sheila:** (*tensely*): I want to get out of this. It frightens me the way you talk.

**Birling:** (*heartily*): Nonsense! You'll have a good laugh over it yet. Look, you'd better ask Gerald for that ring you gave back to him hadn't you? Then you'll feel better.

**Sheila:** (*passionately*): You're pretending everything's just as it was before.

**Eric:** I'm not!

**Sheila:** No, but these others are.

**Birling:** Well, isn't it? We've been had, that's all.

**Sheila:** So nothing really happened. So there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn. We can all go on behaving just as we did.

**Mrs Birling:** Well, why shouldn't we?

**Sheila:** I tell you – whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke. You knew it then. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way.

**Birling:** (*amused*): And you're not, eh?

**Sheila:** No, because I remember what he said, how he looked, and what he made me feel. Fire and blood and anguish. And it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it.

**Eric:** I agree with Sheila. It frightens me too.

**Birling:** Well, go to bed then, and don't stand there being hysterical.

**Mrs Birling:** They're over-tired. In the morning they'll be as amused as we are.

SPECIMEN



**Extract 2 from: *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* by Jim Cartwright**

*Little Voice's (LV's) treasured record collection has been destroyed in a fire at her home. She used to listen to the records with her dad, who has died. In this scene, the broken records prompt an argument between LV and her mother, Mari.*

**Mari:** It was always you and him, you and him all the time, doing quiet things, heads bent together, listening to the records. Driving me mad, my energy could have burnt this house down four times over, and you two tilted into books, listening the radio shows, playing board games in front of the fire.

*Mari steps forward but she slips on the massive pile of broken records, slithering all over in them and falls. LV quickly holds the sharp edge of a half record to her throat. Mari suddenly stunned.*

**LV:** And now, you will listen! One time, one! (*LV screams.*) There's one. (*Screams again.*) There's another. Can you hear me now my Mother! (*Words rush out.*) My Dad, you mention him and it's wrong what you say, wrong what you say. You drove him as fast as you could to an early grave. With your men and your shouting and your pals and your nights, your nights, your nights, your nights, your nights of neglect. Things forgotten everywhere. No soap in the dish, no roll in the toilet, no clean blouse for school. Oh my Dad, when he had his records on he sparkled, not dazzling like you, but with fine lights, fine lights! He couldn't speak up to you, cause he must have wanted you so. I couldn't speak up to you, cause I could never get a word in! But it's one after another and I can tell you now.

*Pause.*

That you hurt me.

*Pause.*

That you hurt me.

*Pause.*

With your sharp ways and the things you said and your SELFISHNESS WOMAN!

*Pause.*

I've got to stop now. I'm trembling so strange.

*She drifts slowly away. Mari on her knees, trying to stand. Pleading.*

**Mari:** LV, I beseech you. I beseech you, LV.

*Mari is slipping, trying to stand but slipping in all the records. Soot all over her hands and face, in the lamplight, slipping, sliding, trying to stand.*

**Mari:** I beseech you! I beseech you!

## Script A

## Page 1 of 3

Page 1 A

An Inspector Calls by J.B. Priestley and The Rise and Fall of Little Voice by Tim Cartwright

In both "An Inspector Calls" by J.B. Priestley, and "The Rise and Fall of Little Voice" by Tim Cartwright, there is a conflict in viewpoint between the older generation and the younger generation as a result of age difference.

In 'An Inspector Calls', Priestley uses the two younger characters, Sheila and Eric, to act as the responsible and more conscientious generation.

In response to Birling trying to forget that anything had ever happened that night, Sheila replies "(passionately) You're pretending everything's just as it was before."

The adverb 'passionately' contrasts the way that Sheila was presented initially in the book - she was a timid girl who followed orders of her mother and father. The events of the night have clearly changed her perception on how people should be treated, which was one of Priestley's intentions.

Priestley demonstrates, through his use of the adverb "passionately", that young people don't have to be passive ~~and~~ <sup>or</sup> accept the political <sup>viewpoint</sup> that their parents have indoctrinated them with. He <sup>also</sup> shows that young people can be ~~be~~ more enthusiastic about standing up for what they believe in and that they have the courage to oppose their parents' political views. The verb 'pretending' also hints at the upper class family facade that the Birlings have adopted throughout the play. Sheila and Eric, the two younger characters, are the first to recognise the ridiculous act that their family have put on; they appear to be wise to the audience, who can tell from the beginning that the

... continued

## Script A

## Page 2 of 3

integrity and warmth of the family was just a facade. ~~The~~ Priestley uses Sheila as a mouthpiece, by using the word 'pretending' to expose the upper class as fake. Furthermore, Sheila says "to Mr Birling that he is 'pretending everything's just as before. The word 'before' ~~refers~~ could refer to the beginning of the novel, before the inspector came. However, it could also imply that Sheila is actually referring to Mr and Mrs Birling's political viewpoint. Here, she could be ~~pro~~ questioning their capitalist ideology and adopting a socialistic ideology. By ~~action~~ acting on the negativity from the night, Sheila is becoming more pro-active on supporting equality for people of all classes, one of Priestley's messages.

Mr Birling however chooses to ignore the messages that the Inspector has given and continues to go back to the facade that they were previously living in. This shows Mr Birling, the older generation and also capitalist viewpoints as unsympathetic, unchanging and immoral.

In 'The Rise and Fall of Little Voice', the younger generation (Little Voice), also acts as the more responsible, sensible and moral generation. The repetition of 'your rights, your rights, your rights, your rights, your rights of neglect' also, like Sheila, could suggest the ~~the~~ Little Voice is so passionate about what she is saying that she cannot get her words to come out. This is backed up by the words in brackets "(words rush out)", showing that rather than speaking ~~calmly~~ <sup>calmly</sup>, Little Voice is shouting uncontrollably as a stream of consciousness. It could also imply that the character is repeating the words "your rights" to add emphasis to the amount of rights that her mother was away for. The pronoun "your" also suggests that the rights were exclusive to her

... continued

## Script A

## Page 3 of 3

An Inspector Calls by J.B. Priestley and The Rise and Fall of Little Voice by Jim Cartwright.

and that none shared them with her. Although Little Voice seems to be uncontrollable, it could be assumed that she was the voice of reason, like Sheila in 'An Inspector Calls', because of the 'neglect' ~~that~~ <sup>from</sup> her mother. ~~has~~ The name 'Little Voice' shows that the character was belittled in the house either because they were young and physically small or because their mother paid little attention to their opinion. The audience subconsciously feels empathetic towards the character because they seem to be the victim of the play. This makes the reader side with Little Voice because they feel sorry for him/her. ~~later~~ This is similar to the way the audience feels towards Sheila as she, too, particularly at the beginning of the play, has very little to say because she was ~~is~~ silenced by her father and was ultimately muted by society as a result of being female.

## Script A

### Examiner commentary

This is a higher level response. The candidate directly addresses the question, immediately citing 'a conflict in viewpoint between the older generation and the younger generation as a result of age difference'. Well-selected quotations are used throughout the response to support the points made.

In response to the first bullet point the response shows understanding of the differing political views of the older and younger generations. The candidate shows good contextual understanding of the taught text, recognising the significance of 'the upper class family façade that the Birlings have adopted throughout the play'. An informed personal response is evident in some of the assertions made: 'the two younger characters are the first to recognise the ridiculous act that their family have put on; they appear to be wise' and 'she could be questioning their capitalist ideology and adopting a socialist ideology. ....Sheila is becoming more pro-active on supporting equality for people of all classes..'. Some useful contextual understanding of the unseen extract is also included: a recognition that LV is a victim and deserves audience sympathy due to neglect and lack of attention by her mother. There is also some convincing comparison of LV and Sheila: 'she (LV) was the voice of reason, like Sheila in 'An Inspector Calls'. ....This makes the audience side with LV because they feel sorry for her. ....this is similar to the way the audience feels about Sheila'. The recognition that both characters are 'silenced' earlier in the plays is also an insightful observation.

In addressing the second bullet point the response recognises the passion with which the young people in both extracts address their parents. In the comments on 'An Inspector Calls' there is recognition that the night's events have allowed Sheila to see through her parents' 'façade' and that she and Eric have escaped from 'the political viewpoint that their parents have indoctrinated them with'. In the comments on the unseen extract the candidate recognises that LV is more uncontrolled than Sheila but doesn't explore the threat of violence or the clear hatred and resentment she feels for Mari. There is less emphasis on this bullet point and opportunities to explore the way that the young people speak and act have been missed.

The response addresses the third bullet point (AO2 focus) in both extracts. Stage directions are referred to and language choices such as 'pretending' are explored in the taught text. The response to AO2 is stronger in the unseen extract where the candidate makes some interesting observations about repetition and LV's words becoming a 'stream of consciousness'. There is also an insightful comment about the name 'Little Voice' reflecting a lack of recognition or attention in the house.

Although there is some direct comparison of the extracts, this response would have benefited from a more integrated approach. The understanding of context is perceptive, and a critical style is maintained in a well-developed personal response. There is some thoughtful analysis of language and insightful understanding is shown.

### High Level 5



didn't belong to her class, and was some drunken young idler, then that's all the more reason why he shouldn't escape. He should be made an example of. If the girl's death is due to anybody, then it's due to him.

INSPECTOR And if her story is true – that he was stealing money—

MRS B. (*rather agitated now*) There's no point in assuming that—

INSPECTOR But suppose we do, what then?

MRS B. Then he'd be entirely responsible – because the girl wouldn't have come to us, and have been refused assistance, if it hadn't been for him—

INSPECTOR So he's the chief culprit anyhow.

MRS B. Certainly. And he ought to be dealt with very severely—

SHEILA (*with sudden alarm*) Mother – stop – stop!

BIRLING Be quiet, Sheila!

SHEILA But don't you see—

MRS B. (*severely*) You're behaving like an hysterical child tonight.

SHEILA *begins crying quietly.* MRS BIRLING *turns to*

INSPECTOR.

And if you'd take some steps to find this young man and then make sure that he's compelled to confess in public his responsibility – instead of staying here asking quite unnecessary questions – then you really would be doing your duty.

INSPECTOR (*grimly*) Don't worry, Mrs Birling. I shall do my duty. (*He looks at his watch.*)

MRS B. (*triumphantly*) I'm glad to hear it.

INSPECTOR No hushing up, eh? Make an example of the young man, eh? Public confession of responsibility – um?

MRS B. Certainly. I consider it your duty. And now no doubt you'd like to say good night.

INSPECTOR Not yet. I'm waiting.

MRS B. Waiting for what?

INSPECTOR To do my duty.

SHEILA (*distressed*) Now, Mother – don't you see?

MRS B. (*understanding now*) But surely . . . I mean . . . it's ridiculous . . .

*She stops, and exchanges a frightened glance with her husband.*

BIRLING (*terrified now*) Look Inspector, you're not trying to tell us that – that my boy – is mixed up in this—?

INSPECTOR (*sternly*) If he is, then we know what to do, don't we? Mrs Birling has just told us.

BIRLING (*thunderstruck*) My God! But – look here—

MRS B. (*agitated*) I don't believe it. I won't believe it . . .

SHEILA Mother – I begged you and begged you to stop—

INSPECTOR *holds up a hand. We hear the front door. They wait, looking towards door. ERIC enters, looking extremely pale and distressed. He meets their inquiring stares.*

*Curtain falls quickly.*

END OF ACT TWO

Exam Practice - part (a)

Compare the ways in which ignorance and misunderstanding are presented in these two extracts.

(20 marks)



**TEXT 2****Debris by Dennis Kelly**

**A teenager – who has no parents – is watching a mother and her son as they relax at home.**

I watched. I looked in through the windows. I saw the boy watching TV. I saw the mother talking, talking on the phone. I saw a glass of wine. I saw cooked vegetables. I saw her hair. I saw homework. I saw pyjamas. I saw him talking, talking on the phone. I saw him talking to her. I saw. I saw. And

I

Saw

Him

Lying

In her

Lap.

I had seen this before. Through windows of TV shops I had seen this on TVs through the windows of TV shops before, I had seen this before, this was how people, perhaps this was how people lived.

*Pause.*

I broke in through a very small toilet window, quite high up, but not so high that I couldn't reach, the atmosphere immediately different, the smell of other people, the sound of the TV, the warmth of the air all crowding around and brushing my skin like her hair. I crept gently and quietly forward into the living room and crouched between the door and the couch, her and her boy sitting there, his head in her lap, her hands stroking his head and them watching TV. I listened to their talk. I smelled her shampoos and soaps. I watched telly inches away from them, sitting there crouched at the end of their sofa, listening to their talk and purrs and all three of us were happy, oh yes, we were, we were all three happy.

*Pause.*

The scream ripped through my flesh like a nail fired from a gun, imbedding itself in the delicate bones of my inner ear so that if I concentrate I can still hear it there now. For one tiny endless eggshell second we all three hovered there facing each other, not wanting to move in case the moment shattered like glass.