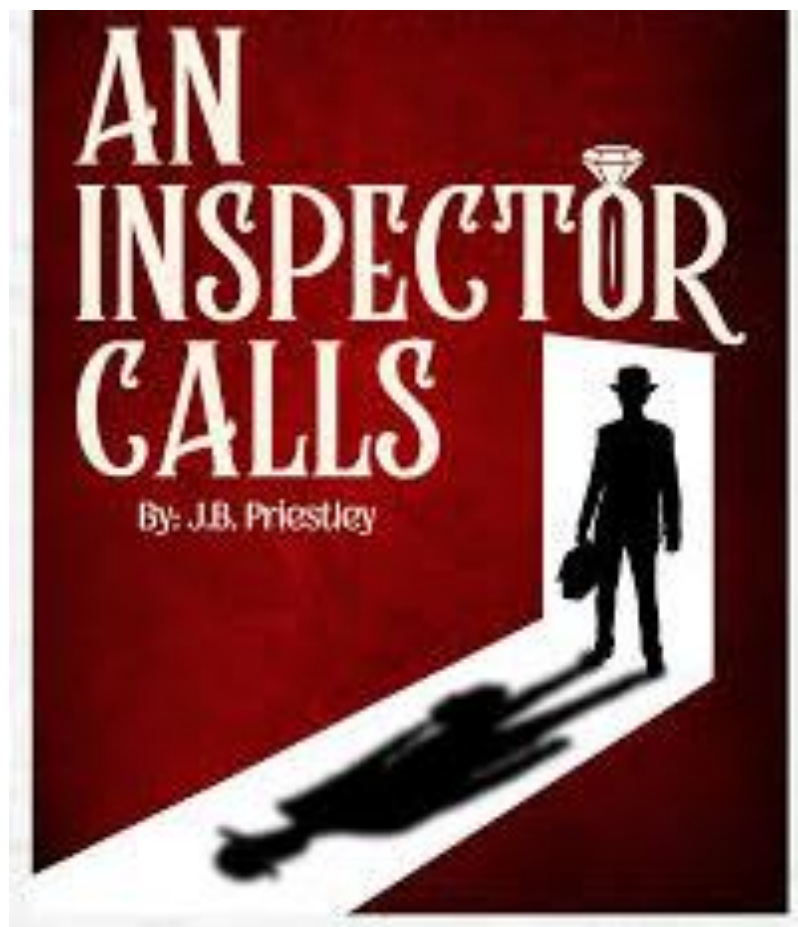


GCSE English Literature

‘An Inspector Calls’



Home Learning Booklet
Summer 2026

NAME: _____

The following activities are designed around academic reading. This means you will be given an article to read and answer questions on. These articles have been selected because they will aid your understanding of Priestley's play and the big ideas he explores. There are no answers at the back of the booklet for this section so do your best. If you need any assistance, email your teacher and if you have no access to email, do what you can and then move on to the next activity.

Activity 1: Pre-Reading Activities



This section of the booklet will focus on extracts from 'An Introduction to 'An Inspector Calls'', an article that can be found on the British Library website. Before you read the extracts, complete the following pre-reading activities to help you understand what the article. Answer in full sentences. If you would like to access the full article, you can find it here: <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/an-introduction-to-an-inspector-calls>. **Pre-Reading questions**

- 1) The British Library have filed this article under the following categories. Make notes around each category which explain how they link to 'An Inspector Calls'.

POWER AND CONFLICT

EXPLORING IDENTITY

- 2) The summary for the article reads as:

Chris Power introduces *An Inspector Calls* as a **morality** play that **denounces** the **hypocrisy** and **callousness** of capitalism and argues that a just society can only be achieved if all individuals feel a sense of social responsibility.

What is a morality play?

What does the word 'denounces' mean?

What does the word 'hypocrisy' mean?

What does the word 'callousness' mean?

- 3) Using the information above, predict what ideas you think the article is going to explore:

I think this article _____

Read the article. Highlight two sentences in each paragraph which you deem to be the most important. Down the left-hand side, add a title for each paragraph. On the right-hand side, summarise what each paragraph is saying in two or three bullet points. One has been done for you so you.

Paragraph Titles

Society neglects
the vulnerable

Extracts from <i>An introduction to An Inspector Calls</i> - Part 1 Priestley’s play revolves around a central mystery, the death of a young woman, but whereas a traditional detective story involves the narrowing down of suspects from several to one, <i>An Inspector Calls</i> inverts this process as, one by one, nearly all the characters in the play are found to be guilty. In this way, Priestley makes his larger point that society is guilty of neglecting and abusing its most vulnerable members. A just society, he states through his mysterious Inspector, is one that respects and exercises social responsibility. Social responsibility is the idea that a society’s poorer members should be helped by those who have more than them. Priestley was a socialist, and his political beliefs are woven through his work. There are many different types and degrees of socialism, but a general definition is as follows: an ideal socialist society is one that is egalitarian - in other words, its citizens have equal rights and the same opportunities are available to everybody; resources are shared out fairly, and the means of production (the facilities and resources for producing goods) are communally owned. Therefore, socialism stands in opposition to a capitalist society, such as ours, where trade and industry is mostly controlled by private owners, and these individuals or companies keep the profits made by their businesses, rather than distributing them evenly between the workers whose labour produced them. <i>An Inspector Calls</i> is a three-act play with one setting: the dining room of ‘a fairly large suburban house belonging to a fairly prosperous manufacturer’. The year is 1912, and we are in the home of the Birling family in the fictional industrial city of Brumley in the North Midlands. In the dining room five people are finishing their dinner: four members of the Birling family and one guest. Arthur Birling is a factory owner; his wife Sibyl is on the committee of a charity, and is usually scolding someone for a social mistake. Their adult children are Sheila and Eric, and their guest is Gerald Croft, Sheila’s fiancé, who is from a wealthier manufacturing family than the Birlings. One other person is present: Edna the maid, who is going back and forth to the sideboard with dirty plates and glasses. Priestley’s description of the set at the beginning of the play script stresses the solidity of the Birlings’ dining room: ‘It is a solidly built room, with good solid furniture of the period’. But a later section of this scene-setting - on the walls are ‘imposing but tasteless pictures and engravings’, and the ‘general effect is substantial and comfortable and old-fashioned but not cosy and homelike’ - suggests that although the Birling’s have wealth and social standing, they are not loving to one another or compassionate to others. The setting of the play in a single
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Summary

All characters in the play are
guilty.
Priestley says society is good if it
realises everyone has a
responsibility to look after

Extracts from *An introduction to An Inspector Calls* - Part 2

Priestley has some fun using this opening section to show how wrong Arthur Birling's opinions are, thus positioning the play as anti-capitalist. He does this through the use of dramatic irony, having Arthur state opinions that the audience, with the advantage of hindsight, knows to be incorrect. He goes on to describe an ocean liner that is clearly meant to be the Titanic (which sank in April 1912) as 'unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable', and suggests that in time, 'let's say, in the forties', 'all these Capital versus Labour agitations and all these silly little war scares' will be long forgotten. In fact, as audiences in 1945 would have been keenly aware, the period between 1912 and 1945 saw a huge number of strikes, including the monumental General Strike of 1926, and not one but two global conflicts, the second of which had only recently ended. Dramatic irony is rarely a subtle technique, but Priestley's use of it is exceptionally blunt. This could be considered clumsy, but it underlines the fact that *An Inspector Calls* is a play with a point to make, and a character whose sole job is to make it.

When Inspector Goole arrives everything changes. He tells the Birlings and Gerald that a young woman, Eva Smith, has committed suicide by drinking disinfectant, and he has questions about the case. Over the course of the next two acts he will lay responsibility for Eva Smith's death at the feet of each of the Birlings and Gerald Croft, showing how their indifference to social responsibility has contributed to the death of this young woman. Or is it young women? He shows each person an identifying photograph of the dead woman one by one, leading Gerald to later suspect they were all shown photographs of different women.

But who is the Inspector? In the play's penultimate twist, he is revealed not to be a police inspector at all, yet, as Eric states, 'He was our Police Inspector, all right'. Details about him are scant. He says he is newly posted to Brumley, and he is impervious to Arthur Birling's threats about his close relationship with the chief constable 'I don't play golf', he tells Birling. 'I didn't suppose you did', the industrialist replies: a brief exchange that makes a clear point about class, and the battle between egalitarianism and privilege. Beyond these sparse biographical details, the Inspector seems less like a person and more like a

Extracts from *An introduction to An Inspector Calls* - Part 3

Throughout the course of the Inspector's investigation, and the testimony of Gerald and each of the Birlings, the supposedly respectable city of Brumley is revealed to be a place of deep class divisions and hypocrisy. As Arthur Birling's behaviour towards Eva makes clear, it is a place where factory owners exploit their workers as a matter of course - part of his 'a man has to look after himself' philosophy. Eric accuses his father of hypocrisy for sacking the dead girl after she asked for higher wages, because the Birling firm always seeks to sell their products at the highest possible prices.

This exploitation is not limited to the factories. In the testimony of Gerald, and later Eric, the Palace Theatre emerges as a place where prostitutes gather, and where the supposedly great and good of the town go to meet them. When Gerald first met Eva, as he describes it, she was trapped in a corner by 'Old Joe Meggarty, half-drunk and goggle-eyed'. Sibyl Birling, scandalised, asks 'surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty?' An unsurprised Sheila tells her mother 'horrible old Meggarty' has a reputation for groping young women: the younger characters are either more knowledgeable or frank about the dark secrets of the city, whereas the older Birlings live in a dream world of respectability, or hypocritically turn a blind eye to any disreputable behaviour by supposedly respectable people.

The play begins with the characters' corrupt, unpleasant natures safely hidden away (a respectable group in a respectable home, enjoying that most respectable event, an engagement party); it ends with naked displays of hypocrisy. When it is confirmed that Goole is not really a policeman, Arthur, Sibyl and Gerald immediately regain an unjustified sense of outrage. 'Then look at the way he talked to me', Arthur Birling complains. 'He must have known I was an ex-Lord Mayor and a magistrate and so forth'. Once it is confirmed, in the play's penultimate twist, that there is no suicide lying on a mortuary slab, they forget the immoral, uncharitable behaviour they were recently accused of - things, remember, that they undoubtedly did - and begin talking about getting away with things. Only Sheila and Eric recognise and resist this hypocritical behaviour. 'I suppose we're all nice people now!' Sheila remarks sarcastically. Earlier she broke off her engagement to Gerald, telling him 'You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here'. Likewise, Eric angrily accuses his father of 'beginning to pretend now that nothing's really happened at all'. Priestley's vision is cautiously optimistic insofar as the youngest characters are changed by the Inspector's visit, while the older Birlings and Gerald appear to be too set in their beliefs to change them.

The play leaves open the question of whether Eva Smith is a real woman (who sometimes uses different names, including Daisy Renton), or multiple people the Inspector pretends are one. There is no right answer here, and in terms of Priestley's message it is beside the point: because his socialist principles demand that everyone should be treated the same, in his opinion abusing one working-class woman is equivalent to abusing all working-class women. Eva Smith is, therefore, not an individual victim, but a universal one. This helps explain the effectiveness of the play's final twist. Having discovered that Inspector Goole is not a real policeman, and that there is no dead woman called Eva Smith at the Brumley morgue, a phone call announces that a woman has killed herself, and an inspector is on his way to question the Birlings. The invented story Inspector Goole related has now come true. This seems a bizarre coincidence with which to end the play, but if we consider *An Inspector Calls* as a moral fable, and not as naturalistic theatre, it begins to seem much more like a logical, even inevitable, conclusion. The characters have been confronted with the error of their ways; some have repented, some have not. Now is the time for judgement, and for the watching audience to ask themselves, according to Priestley's design, are any of these people like me?

Activity 2: Post-Reading Questions

1. What is the significance of the furniture in the room? How does it reflect the Birlings and their personality?
2. The article states the play is a 'battle between egalitarianism and privilege'. What does this mean? (Hint: The definition of 'egalitarian' can be found in the first section of the article)
3. The article describes the Inspector as a 'moral force'. What are they saying about the Inspector?
4. The article says the Inspector's final speech is the 'very antithesis' of Mr. Birling's speech at the beginning of the play. 'Antithesis' means opposite. Explain how the Inspector's speech is the antithesis of Mr. Birling's speech. Re-read the speeches to help you.
5. The article says Eva Smith is not an 'individual victim but a universal one'. What does this mean? (Use the third section of the article to help you)
6. The article states 'An Inspector Calls' is a 'moral fable'. What does this mean?
7. The article ends by saying some characters have 'repented'. If you have 'repented', what have you done?

Activity 3: Further Questions

Answer the following questions on the article. These questions require shorter answers and can be answered as notes and brief annotations. If you need extra space, write on a different piece of paper and attach it to this booklet. If you need a copy of the script, you can find one online.



An Inspector Calls script



Check your answers at the back of the booklet when you have finished.

'Priestley's play revolves around a central mystery, the death of a young woman, but whereas a traditional detective story involves the narrowing down of suspects from several to one, An Inspector Calls inverts this process as, one by one, nearly all the characters in the play are found to be guilty.'

1. How did Eva die? Retrieve a short quotation.
2. In which order are the characters questioned by Inspector Goole?
3. In what ways are each of the characters 'guilty' of playing a part in the death of Eva Smith?

'In this way, Priestley makes his larger point that society is guilty of neglecting and abusing its most vulnerable members. A just society, he states through his mysterious Inspector, is one that respects and exercises social responsibility.'

1. Birling says to the Inspector, 'It's a free country, I told them.' How does Eric respond? Retrieve a short quotation.
2. After questioning Birling, what does the Inspector reveal about how Eva spent 'the next two months'?
3. Why was Eva 'lucky to get taken on' at Milwards?

'Social responsibility is the idea that a society's poorer members should be helped by those who have more than them. Priestley was a socialist, and his political beliefs are woven through his work.'

1. How do Birling's views on social responsibility differ from the Inspector's views? Retrieve a short quotation.
2. The Inspector says to Birling, 'it's better to ask for the earth than to take it.' Which page is the quotation on?

'Socialism stands in opposition to a capitalist society, such as ours, where trade and industry is mostly controlled by private owners, and these individuals or companies keep the profits made by their businesses, rather than distributing them evenly between the workers whose labour produced them.'

1. Gerald says to Birling, 'Hear, hear! And I think my father would agree to that.' What is Gerald talking about?
2. Birling says, 'And we're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity.' Which page is the quotation on?
3. By how much did Eva and the workers want their 'rates raised'? Retrieve a short quotation.

'When Inspector Goole arrives everything changes.'

1. How should the stage be lit before the Inspector arrives?
2. How should the lighting change when he enters during act one?

'Throughout the course of the Inspector's investigation, and the testimony of Gerald and each of the Birlings, the supposedly respectable city of Brumley is revealed to be a place of deep class divisions and hypocrisy.'

1. Which character is referred to as a 'notorious womanizer'?
2. Mrs Birling says, 'we *are* learning something tonight.' What does she mean?
3. Mrs Birling also says, 'It's disgusting to me'. What does she mean?

The following activities are designed around exam questions. This means you will complete a series of small activities to help you answer an essay question like the one you will receive in your GCSE Literature paper. Use the notes from this booklet and a copy of the text to help you prepare.

Activity 4: Essay Preparation

You will be answering the following question:

Q: How far does Priestley present Mr Birling as an unlikeable character?

Complete the following analytical verbs to help you explore Priestley's authorial intent with Mr. Birling's character. Authorial intent is when you explain **what** an author is doing and **why** they are doing it. The 'why' is extremely important and often missed out by students in their exams so that is what we are going to start with today. One has been done for you.

Priestley may present Mr. Birling as an unlikeable character...

- to warn
- to teach audiences about the dangers of capitalism and the way it can bring out the worst in people.
- to reveal the importance of
- to criticise
- to advocate

Pick three of your sentences from above and rewrite them below. This time, extend your sentences with the connectives 'because', 'but' or 'so'. Look at the example below to help you.

Priestley may present Mr. Birling as an unlikeable character to teach audiences about the dangers of capitalism and the way it can bring out the worst in people so he comes across as greedy, selfish and a man concerned only with self-preservation from the very beginning.

1.

2.

3.

Pick one of the sentences above. Copy it out again. Extend it by using one analytical verb to lead in to a second analytical verb in order to explore more of Priestley's authorial intent.

Look at the example below to help you.

Priestley may present Mr. Birling as an unlikeable character to teach audiences about the dangers of capitalism and the way it can bring out the worst in people so he comes across as greedy, selfish and a man concerned only with self-preservation from the very beginning. Through teaching audiences this, Priestley may also be advocating socialist ways of life. If the audience dislike Mr. Birling, a man associated with capitalism, they are more likely to turn to socialism to improve society.

1.

Write down five quotations you could use in your essay. They do not necessarily have to be spoken by Mr. Birling himself. One has been done for you to give you a sixth quotation.

'We're in for a time of steadily increasing prosperity'

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Use your analytical verbs to quickly explain what Priestley is doing with each quotation. You do not need to write in full sentences as this is just a plan. Look at the example to help you. Eg. 'We're in for a time of steady increasing prosperity' - Exposing Birling, and by extension, all capitalists as being a group of people who are out of touch with reality.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Activity 5: I Do

Identify how the following example response I have pre-prepared meets the requirements for an effective WHAT/HOW/WHY paragraph.



WHAT is the writer trying to say?
WHAT is the writer's intention?
WHAT is the writer implying?
WHAT has the writer achieved?



HOW has the writer presented this?
HOW does the text support this?
HOW do methods present this idea?
HOW do keywords present this idea?



WHY might an audience/reader react a certain way?
WHY has this been included and what is the writer's message?

You are looking for:

- Clear points at the beginning of each paragraph which relate to the question
- Embedded quotations
- Single word analysis
- Analytical verbs
- Authorial intent (what the writer is doing and why they are doing it.) - Social/historical context

Pay close attention to how I am writing. You should aim to replicate this style of writing in your own answer.

Priestley makes Mr. Birling an extremely unlikeable character, aligning him with capitalist values and ideas so that audiences consider socialism to be a stronger foundation on which to build society. He is a pompous, arrogant and selfish man who is only interested in preserving his luxurious way of life. Priestley makes him more unlikeable as the play progresses; at the beginning he believes he knows best, lecturing his family on the fact that war will not happen, the Titanic is 'unsinkable' and that the world is in 'for a time of steadily increasing prosperity.' The noun 'prosperity' connotes wealth and luxury, and perhaps Priestley makes Birling say this to criticise capitalists and their obsession with making as much money as they can whilst others suffer in this harsh Edwardian society he presents audiences with. Maybe Priestley is teaching us that money should not be the one thing we live for and that recognising the responsibilities we have to others should be our sole focus. Through teaching us this, he is celebrating socialist values and asking the audience to evaluate and reflect on their actions so that they do not end up like Mr. Birling.

Activity 6: Exam Question

Answer the following exam question. Use everything in this booklet to help you. If you need your copy of the text with you to help, you may use it but remember you will not have a copy in your real exam. Don't forget to include the following:

- Clear points at the beginning of each paragraph which relate to the question
- Quotations
- Single word analysis
- Authorial intent (what the writer is doing and why they are doing it.) - Social/historical context

The following resource may help you:

 WHAT  <u>IS YOUR POINT?</u>	 HOW  <u>DO YOU KNOW?</u>	 WHY  <u>HAS THIS BEEN DONE?</u>
WHAT is the writer trying to say? WHAT is the writer's intention? WHAT is the writer implying? WHAT has the writer achieved?	HOW has the writer presented this? HOW does the text support this? HOW do methods present this idea? HOW do keywords present this idea?	WHY might an audience/reader react a certain way? WHY has this been included and what is the writer's message?
SENTENCE STARTERS Shakespeare presents Juliet as... Dickens highlights Scrooge to be... Priestley <u>emphasises</u> Mr Birling to be... The writer conveys the idea that... The writer successfully presents the character as...	SENTENCE STARTERS The use of the metaphor "_____" suggests this because... The repeated reference to "_____" illustrates this idea by... By using the motif of "_____", the writer implies... The adjective "_____" has connotations of...	SENTENCE STARTERS Perhaps the writer wants to create an impression of... Dickens wanted to make his reader consider... It is important to learn this now because later... Shakespeare may have wanted his Elizabethan audience to <u>realise</u>...

Q: How far does Priestley present Mr Birling as an unlikeable character?

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]