2.18 Literature: An Inspector Calls - Themes in Depth: 1-hour Pack

AQA 8702 · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Class privilege operates differently for different characters at different points in the play.

(a) Identify three moments that trace the theme of class: one from Act One, one from Act Two and one from Act Three. Give a clear, specific description of each moment (do not quote the play directly). **(3)**

(b) Using your three moments, explain how Priestley develops the theme of class across the play. **(3)**

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

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2 Gender operates through both male and female characters in the play, and in more than one direction.

(a) Identify three moments that trace the theme of gender: one from Act One, one from Act Two and one from Act Three. Give a clear, specific description of each moment (do not quote the play directly). **(3)**

(b) Using your three moments, explain how Priestley develops the theme of gender across the play. **(3)**

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 The generational divide between the older and younger Birlings widens as the play progresses.

(a) Identify three moments that trace the theme of age and generation: one from Act One, one from Act Two and one from Act Three. Give a clear, specific description of each moment (do not quote the play directly). **(3)**

(b) Using your three moments, explain how Priestley develops the generational divide across the play. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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4 Write about how Priestley presents the theme of social responsibility across the whole play.

(Total for Question 4 is 18 marks)

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5 Explore how Priestley presents ideas about social class across the whole play.

(Total for Question 5 is 18 marks)

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6 Write about how Priestley presents ideas about gender across the whole play.

(Total for Question 6 is 18 marks)

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7 Evaluate the view that Mrs Birling is presented as the character least able to change, even though she is given exactly the same opportunity as everyone else to learn the truth. Use your knowledge of the whole play to support your view.

(Total for Question 7 is 14 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.18 Literature: An Inspector Calls - Themes in Depth: 1-hour Pack

Question 1

(a) Act One: Birling's pride in the engagement to the higher-status Crofts, and his dismissal of Eva's wage request as an inconvenience from an easily replaced worker (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Two: Gerald's account of meeting Eva at a bar associated with working women with few other options, and installing her in a friend's flat without consequence to himself (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Three: the Inspector's summary of how each family member, from a position of social advantage, played a part in Eva's decline (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act One (Birling's pride in the engagement, and his dismissal of Eva's wage request); Act Two (Gerald's account of meeting and housing Eva/Daisy without personal consequence); Act Three (the Inspector's cumulative summary of privilege used against Eva).

(b) identifies the shift from a casual, individual assumption of privilege to a fuller picture of how it is used across the family (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to a dramatic method, e.g. Eva's continued absence from the stage keeping her a representative rather than an individualised figure (oe) **B1**

(b) links the theme's development to the Inspector's final case that privilege at every stage combined to destroy someone with none (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Class begins with Act One's casual assumption that a working woman's complaints can simply be dismissed, develops through Act Two's picture of how easily class privilege lets Gerald behave without consequence, and culminates in Act Three's cumulative case, delivered while Eva herself remains an absent, representative figure, that privilege at every stage combined to destroy someone with none.

Question 2

(a) Act One: Eva's dismissal from Birling's factory (led by men), followed by Sheila's jealous complaint getting Eva dismissed from Milward's (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Two: Gerald's affair with Eva/Daisy, in which he holds the power to end the relationship when it suits him, and Mrs Birling's role chairing the committee that later judges Eva (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Three: Eric's account of pressuring Eva and stealing money, followed by the revelation that Mrs Birling unknowingly condemned her own son while judging Eva (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act One (Eva's dismissal by men from the factory, then by Sheila from Milward's); Act Two (Gerald's unequal power in the affair, and Mrs Birling's committee role); Act Three (Eric's treatment of Eva, and the irony of Mrs Birling condemning her own son).

(b) identifies the shift from contrasting male and female failures towards Eva to a fuller picture of unequal power exercised by both sexes (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to a dramatic method, e.g. dramatic irony in Mrs Birling's own judgement of the woman she does not know is connected to her son (oe) **B1**

(b) links the theme's development to the play's sharpest irony, where gendered judgement is shown to be self-defeating (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Gender opens with contrasting failures by men (economic power) and women (social judgement) in Act One, deepens in Act Two by showing how both a male lover and a female moral judge can each exercise power over Eva without real accountability, and reaches its sharpest point in Act Three through the dramatic irony of Mrs Birling's confident judgement of a woman she does not realise is connected to her own son.

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Question 3

(a) Act One: Sheila's immediate distress and guilt, contrasted with her father's calmer, more self-justifying response to his own earlier part (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Two: Sheila's warning to Gerald and her parents that hiding from the Inspector's questions will not make the truth go away (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Three: Sheila and Eric's open criticism of their parents for wanting to forget the evening once doubt is cast on the Inspector's identity (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act One (Sheila's distress contrasted with her father's calm); Act Two (Sheila's warning that avoidance will not remove the truth); Act Three (Sheila and Eric's open criticism of their parents' wish to forget).

(b) identifies the shift from a private difference in reaction to an open challenge to parental authority (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to a dramatic method, e.g. the play's cyclical ending rewarding the younger characters' perceptiveness over their parents' relief (oe) **B1**

(b) links the development to Priestley's suggestion that the younger generation is more capable of genuine change (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: The generational divide begins as a private difference in reaction within Act One, becomes a more open challenge to parental authority in Act Two, and culminates in Act Three's direct confrontation, in which the play's cyclical ending rewards the younger characters' perceptiveness and suggests only the younger generation is genuinely capable of change.

Question 4

Level 1 Simple, general comments about social responsibility, with little reference to specific characters or moments. **1-4**

Level 2 Some understanding of social responsibility as a moral and political argument, with a few relevant references and straightforward comment on method. **5-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation of how social responsibility is presented across the play, supported by well-chosen reference and some comment on Priestley's dramatic methods. **9-12**

Level 4 Detailed, well-structured exploration of social responsibility, analysing structure, stagecraft and dramatic irony closely and integrating relevant historical context. **13-15**

Level 5 Sophisticated, sustained exploration of social responsibility across the whole play, with a convincing personal response, precise analysis of Priestley's dramatic methods and skilfully integrated context. **16-18**

Indicative content:

- Birling's early speech to Eric and Gerald, dismissing the idea that a man should feel responsible for anyone beyond his own family and business, establishes the individualist position the play goes on to challenge
- the Inspector's calm refusal to be rushed or deferred to, regardless of the family's social status, embodies an opposing philosophy that responsibility cannot be limited by rank or wealth
- each family member's turn under questioning demonstrates that responsibility is cumulative and interconnected: no single decision destroyed Eva alone, but the combined effect of several separate, apparently minor choices did
- Mrs Birling's attempt to end the interview once she believes her own family is safe, only to discover her son is implicated, shows the danger of assuming responsibility can be selectively applied to protect some family members but not others
- the differing reactions once doubt is cast on the Inspector's identity, the older generation's relief that they might escape consequence versus the younger generation's insistence that what they did remains real regardless, tests whether responsibility depends on being caught
- the final phone call, announcing that an inspector is genuinely on the way to investigate a real death, structurally punishes the family's attempt to treat responsibility as something that can simply be waited out
- Priestley, writing after two world wars for an audience about to build a new, more collective welfare state, uses the play to argue that social responsibility is not an optional moral extra but a practical necessity for avoiding future harm

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Question 5

Level 1 Simple, general comments about social class and its effect on the characters, with little reference to specific characters or moments. **1-4**

Level 2 Some understanding of social class and its effect on the characters, with a few relevant references and straightforward comment on method. **5-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation of how social class is presented across the play, supported by well-chosen reference and some comment on Priestley's dramatic methods. **9-12**

Level 4 Detailed, well-structured exploration of social class, analysing structure, stagecraft and dramatic irony closely and integrating relevant historical context. **13-15**

Level 5 Sophisticated, sustained exploration of social class across the whole play, with a convincing personal response, precise analysis of Priestley's dramatic methods and skilfully integrated context. **16-18**

Indicative content:

- the celebratory Act One dinner, and Birling's evident pride in the engagement linking his family to the higher-status Crofts, establishes class as a hierarchy that even a wealthy manufacturer is anxious to climb
- Birling's dismissal of Eva Smith's request for fairer wages as an unreasonable inconvenience from an easily replaced worker shows how the language of practical business decisions is used to disguise class-based indifference to suffering
- Gerald's ability to conduct an affair with a working-class woman at minimal personal or social cost, compared with the devastating consequences for Eva herself, exposes the unequal protection class affords to those involved in the same events
- Mrs Birling's presence on a charity committee, a position of unpaid but real social power, shows how class privilege operated even in supposedly benevolent institutions, since she is able to judge and refuse help to a woman with far less power than herself
- Eva's lack of an individual identity for most of the play, known largely through what happens to her rather than through her own words, mirrors how working-class women could be treated as interchangeable by those with social power over their lives
- the Inspector's final generalising speech extends the specific case of Eva Smith into a wider claim about many others in similar positions, presenting class-based mistreatment as a systemic issue rather than one family's private failing
- Priestley's own well-known socialist sympathies, and the play's original context immediately after a war that had narrowed some social distinctions, invite a post-war audience to see the rigid Edwardian class system the Birlings represent as already outdated

Question 6

Level 1 Simple, general comments about gender and the unequal treatment of men and women, with little reference to specific characters or moments. **1-4**

Level 2 Some understanding of gender and the unequal treatment of men and women, with a few relevant references and straightforward comment on method. **5-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation of how gender is presented across the play, supported by well-chosen reference and some comment on Priestley's dramatic methods. **9-12**

Level 4 Detailed, well-structured exploration of gender, analysing structure, stagecraft and dramatic irony closely and integrating relevant historical context. **13-15**

Level 5 Sophisticated, sustained exploration of gender across the whole play, with a convincing personal response, precise analysis of Priestley's dramatic methods and skilfully integrated context. **16-18**

Indicative content:

- Eva's repeated dismissals, first from Birling's factory for asking for better pay and later from a shop after a customer's complaint, show a woman with almost no power to resist decisions made largely by those above her
- Sheila's jealous complaint that leads to Eva's second dismissal complicates a simple reading of gender in the play, since it shows a woman with more social power using it against a woman with less, rather than only men mistreating women
- Gerald's affair with Eva, and his ability to end it when it becomes inconvenient without lasting damage to his own reputation, shows how far consequences for the same relationship fell unevenly between the man and the woman involved
- Mrs Birling's harsh judgement of the unnamed pregnant woman who came to her charity committee, blaming the woman rather than the man responsible, shows a woman in a position of authority reinforcing rather than challenging unequal expectations of men and women
- the dramatic irony of Mrs Birling condemning her own son without realising it demonstrates how gendered double standards can operate even without those enforcing them fully recognising what they are doing
- Sheila's growing independence across the play, culminating in her unwillingness to simply resume her engagement once Gerald's affair is revealed, offers a contrasting, more assertive model of womanhood emerging in the younger generation
- in 1912, married women had very limited independent legal and economic status, so Eva's vulnerability and Sheila's growing assertiveness can both be read against a backdrop in which women's opportunities depended heavily on both class and marital status

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Question 7

Level 1 Simple, general agreement or disagreement, with limited reference to Mrs Birling or other characters.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some understanding of the view, with relevant reference to Mrs Birling's responses and at least one other character for comparison, but limited evaluation.	**4-7**
Level 3 Clear, well-supported evaluation of the view, referring to specific moments across the play, with some discussion of Priestley's methods.	**8-10**
Level 4 Sophisticated, sustained evaluation, weighing the view judiciously against alternative readings, with precise textual support and skilfully integrated context.	**11-14**

Indicative content:

- Mrs Birling is given the same access to the Inspector's questioning and the same information about Eva's fate as every other character, yet she is the only one who does not shift her position even slightly by the play's end
- her confident, moralising judgement of the pregnant young woman who sought her charity committee's help is undermined, for the audience, by the dramatic irony that she is unknowingly condemning her own son
- unlike Mr Birling, whose concern is largely for his reputation and future honours, Mrs Birling's resistance appears rooted in a genuine belief that she has behaved correctly throughout, arguably making her denial more complete than his
- however, some candidates may argue Gerald is equally, if not more, resistant to change, since he actively works to find a way to discredit the Inspector rather than simply denying wrongdoing, suggesting the play distributes resistance to change across more than one character
- Mrs Birling's fixed position could also be read as generational rather than purely individual, since it matches her husband's reaction closely, so her lack of change may say as much about the older generation collectively as about her personally
- the play's final twist, confirming a real inspector and a real death, applies equally to every character regardless of how they responded, which could support the view that Mrs Birling's particular refusal to change makes no practical difference to the consequences she and her family now face
- strongest answers will reach a supported personal judgement, for example distinguishing between Mrs Birling being the most confidently unrepentant character and being uniquely incapable of change, rather than simply asserting the statement is true or false

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