2.18 Literature: An Inspector Calls - Themes in Depth: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8702 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Choose two of the five themes you have studied in this pack: social responsibility, class, gender, age and generation, guilt. Explore how Priestley interweaves your two chosen themes to build his argument across the whole play.

(Total for Question 1 is 24 marks)

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2 Social responsibility is developed and tested across all three acts of the play.

(a) Identify three moments that trace social responsibility across the play: 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 Give a clear, specific description of each moment (do not quote the play directly).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 social responsibility across the play. **(3)**

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Choose two different themes from social responsibility / class / gender / age and generation / guilt. For each theme you choose, explain how a specific piece of historical context, either about 1912 (when the play is set) or about 1945 (when it was first performed), sharpens Priestley's presentation of that theme. Use a different theme for each part.

(a) First chosen theme. **(4)**

(b) Second, different chosen theme. **(4)**

(Total for Question 3 is 8 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.18 Literature: An Inspector Calls - Themes in Depth: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 1 Simple, general comments about the chosen themes, treated largely separately, with limited reference.	**1-5**
Level 2 Some understanding of both chosen themes, with a few relevant references, but limited discussion of how they connect.	**6-10**
Level 3 Clear explanation of both themes, supported by well-chosen reference, with some clear discussion of how they interact or reinforce one another.	**11-15**
Level 4 Detailed, well-structured exploration of how the two chosen themes are interwoven across the play, analysing structure and dramatic method with relevant integrated context.	**16-20**
Level 5 Sophisticated, critical, sustained exploration of how the two chosen themes work together to shape Priestley's argument, evaluating their relationship with a convincing personal response, precise analysis of method and skilfully integrated context.	**21-24**

Indicative content:

- responsibility and class: Birling's individualist, self-interested philosophy is presented as inseparable from his position at the top of a class hierarchy, since his refusal of responsibility toward his own workforce is what starts the chain of events the Inspector investigates
- responsibility and guilt: characters who accept responsibility (Sheila, Eric) are also shown to feel genuine guilt, while characters who deny responsibility (Mr and Mrs Birling) are shown to feel little or none, suggesting Priestley presents guilt as evidence of a properly functioning sense of responsibility
- class and gender: Eva's vulnerability is repeatedly shown to depend on both her class and her gender together, since her lack of money and her lack of social standing as a woman combine to leave her with almost no way to resist mistreatment by either men or women above her
- gender and guilt: Mrs Birling's confident, undeserved lack of guilt is bound up with her belief that a woman in her position of moral and social authority cannot be genuinely at fault, showing how gendered assumptions about who holds authority can suppress guilt rather than justify its absence
- age and generation and guilt: the play consistently pairs youth with the capacity for guilt and change (Sheila, Eric) and age with denial and unchanged attitudes (Mr and Mrs Birling), suggesting Priestley links generational renewal directly to the capacity for moral self-examination
- class and age and generation: Gerald, from an even higher-status family than the Birlings, ultimately aligns with the older generation's relief once the Inspector's identity is doubted, suggesting the pull of class privilege toward complacency can outweigh a character's relative youth
- candidates may choose any valid pairing of the five themes studied in this pack; credit should be given for a well-supported, clearly explained connection between the two chosen themes rather than for any specific pairing
- the strongest answers will evaluate which theme is presented as driving or reinforcing the other, for example whether class privilege enables denial of responsibility, or whether generational position determines capacity for guilt, rather than simply describing both themes side by side

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Question 2

(a) Act One: Birling's speech to Eric and Gerald dismissing responsibility for anyone beyond his own family and business, immediately followed by the Inspector's arrival (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Two: the Inspector's insistence on questioning Mrs Birling in full despite her attempts to end the interview early (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Three: the Inspector's final speech to the whole family, generalising the case into a broader warning about the consequences of ignoring responsibility (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act One (Birling's individualist speech, immediately opposed by the Inspector's arrival); Act Two (the Inspector's insistence on fully questioning Mrs Birling); Act Three (the Inspector's final generalising speech).

(b) identifies the shift from an individual disagreement (Birling versus the Inspector) to a wider, tested authority (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to a dramatic method, e.g. the Inspector's calm refusal to be rushed or deferred to, regardless of social status (oe) **B1**

(b) links the theme's development to the play's final, direct warning aimed past the family at the audience itself (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Social responsibility moves from a private disagreement between Birling and the Inspector in Act One, is tested against increasingly senior family authority in Act Two through the Inspector's calm refusal to be deferred to, and is finally generalised in Act Three into a direct warning aimed past the family and at the audience.

Question 3

(a) accurate historical context relevant to the chosen theme (e.g. 1912's largely unregulated capitalism and minimal worker protection, for social responsibility; 1912's rigid, largely unchallenged class hierarchy, for class; women's very limited independent legal and economic status in 1912, or the staged extension of the vote to women from 1918, for gender; the further generation of young men lost in the Second World War, for age and generation; the 1912 setting placed before two world wars, for guilt) (oe) **B1**

(a) further specific development of that context (oe) **B1**

(a) clear, explicit link explaining how this context sharpens a 1945 audience's understanding of the chosen theme, e.g. anticipating the welfare state, judging outdated attitudes with hindsight, or recognising urgency after wartime loss (oe) **B1**

(a) further development of this link (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Sample using social responsibility: in 1912, Britain had little social security or protection for workers, so the Inspector's collectivist message directly anticipates the welfare state reforms a 1945 audience knew were then being debated, making the play's argument for shared responsibility feel practical and urgent rather than merely idealistic.

(b) accurate historical context relevant to the chosen theme, different from the theme used in part a (oe, see part a mark scheme for the full range of acceptable options) **B1**

(b) further specific development of that context (oe) **B1**

(b) clear, explicit link explaining how this context sharpens a 1945 audience's understanding of the chosen theme (oe) **B1**

(b) further development of this link (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Sample using guilt: because the play is set in 1912, before two world wars whose human cost the 1945 audience already knew in full, Priestley's post-war audience can judge the Birlings' denial of guilt with a hindsight the characters themselves do not have, making the older generation's complacency look worse rather than excusable.

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