2.18 Literature: An Inspector Calls - Themes in Depth: Test Pack

AQA 8702 · about 35 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Five short descriptions of moments from the play are given below, without using any of Priestley's own wording. For each one, identify the single theme from this list that it relates to most strongly: social responsibility / class / gender / age and generation / guilt.

(a) Mr Birling tells Eric and Gerald that a man has to look after himself and his own business, and should not spend his time worrying about everybody else in the community. **(1)**

(b) Mr Birling takes obvious pride in the fact that his daughter's engagement links his family to the Crofts, a family he clearly regards as socially superior to his own. **(1)**

(c) Mrs Birling's charity committee refuses to help a pregnant young woman because Mrs Birling disapproves of her behaviour, while the man who was equally responsible faces no such judgement from the committee. **(1)**

(d) By the end of the evening, Sheila and Eric are determined to learn from what has happened, while their parents want to treat the whole matter as closed as quickly as possible. **(1)**

(e) Eric becomes increasingly unable to sit still or meet his family's eyes once the questioning starts to move closer to his own involvement. **(1)**

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

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2 For each theme below, explain in one or two sentences how Priestley first introduces it within Act One.

(a) Social responsibility. **(2)**

(b) Class. **(2)**

(c) Gender. **(2)**

(d) Age and generation. **(2)**

(e) Guilt. **(2)**

(Total for Question 2 is 10 marks)

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3 Guilt affects different characters in different ways, and at different points in the play.

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 Give a clear, specific description of each moment (do not quote the play directly).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

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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4 Explore how Priestley presents the differences between the older and younger generations across the whole play.

(Total for Question 4 is 18 marks)

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

Question 1

(a) social responsibility (oe) cao **B1**

(a) Answer: Social responsibility.

(b) class (oe) cao **B1**

(b) Answer: Class.

(c) gender (oe) cao **B1**

(c) Answer: Gender.

(d) age and generation (oe) cao **B1**

(d) Answer: Age and generation.

(e) guilt (oe) cao **B1**

(e) Answer: Guilt.

Question 2

(a) accurate reference to Birling's speech to Eric and Gerald dismissing responsibility for anyone beyond his own family and business (oe) **B1**

(a) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. immediately followed by the Inspector's arrival and contrasting message (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Social responsibility is first introduced through Birling's speech to Eric and Gerald dismissing any duty toward the wider community, a position the play immediately begins to test once the Inspector arrives moments later.

(b) accurate reference to the celebratory engagement dinner and Birling's pride at linking his family to the higher-status Crofts (oe) **B1**

(b) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. through Birling's own hopeful talk of a future honour, showing status anxiety even in a wealthy family (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Class is introduced through the celebratory dinner itself, where Birling's evident pride at the engagement to the higher-status Crofts, alongside his hopes for a future honour, shows status anxiety operating even within a wealthy family.

(c) accurate reference to Eva's dismissal from Birling's factory, led by men, for asking for higher pay (oe) **B1**

(c) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. later in the same act, Sheila's own jealous complaint gets Eva dismissed a second time, complicating the theme (oe) **B1**

(c) Answer: Gender is introduced through Eva's dismissal from Birling's factory over a demand for higher pay, and is complicated later in the same act when Sheila's jealous complaint gets Eva dismissed a second time, showing gender operating between women as well as between men and women.

(d) accurate reference to Sheila's immediate distress and guilt on realising her complaint contributed to Eva's dismissal (oe) **B1**

(d) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. contrasted with her father's calmer, more self-justifying response to his own earlier part (oe) **B1**

(d) Answer: Age and generation is introduced through Sheila's immediate distress and guilt on learning her complaint contributed to Eva's dismissal, a reaction Priestley contrasts with her father's calmer, more self-justifying response to his own earlier part in events.

(e) accurate reference to Sheila's visible shock and self-blame once she connects her own complaint to Eva's second dismissal (oe) **B1**

(e) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. as an immediate, honest emotional reaction rather than a delayed or forced admission (oe) **B1**

(e) Answer: Guilt is first introduced through Sheila's visible shock and self-blame once she realises her own complaint led to Eva's second dismissal, presented as an immediate, honest emotional reaction rather than one that has to be forced out of her.

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Question 3

(a) Act One: Sheila's visible shock and self-blame once she connects her own complaint to Eva's second dismissal (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Two: Eric's growing agitation and drinking as the questioning approaches his own involvement, before his part is revealed (oe) **B1**

(a) Act Three: Mrs Birling's continued, confident denial of any wrongdoing even after Eric's part is fully known (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act One (Sheila's immediate shock and self-blame); Act Two (Eric's agitation and drinking before his part is exposed); Act Three (Mrs Birling's continued denial even after her son's part is known).

(b) identifies guilt as an immediate, honest reaction in the character most directly and recently responsible (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to a dramatic method, e.g. mounting suspense in a character who has not yet confessed (oe) **B1**

(b) links the development to differing capacities for guilt as a test of each character's moral worth by the play's end (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Priestley introduces guilt in Act One as an immediate emotional reaction in the person most directly and recently responsible, builds it in Act Two through mounting suspense in a character who has not yet confessed, and by Act Three sets differing capacities for guilt, genuine in the young and absent in Mrs Birling, as the play's clearest test of each character's moral worth.

Question 4

Level 1 Simple, general comments about the generational divide between the older and younger Birlings, with little reference to specific characters or moments. **1-4**

Level 2 Some understanding of the generational divide between the older and younger Birlings, with a few relevant references and straightforward comment on method. **5-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation of how the generational divide 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 the generational divide, analysing structure, stagecraft and dramatic irony closely and integrating relevant historical context. **13-15**

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

Indicative content:

- Mr and Mrs Birling repeatedly try to reassert their usual parental authority over the interview, treating the Inspector's questions as something to be managed rather than genuinely faced, showing an older generation confident in fixed attitudes
- Sheila's early distress at realising her own part in events, in clear contrast to her father's calmer, more self-justifying reaction to his own part, marks an immediate generational difference in how guilt is processed
- Eric's initial concealment gives way, once his part is exposed, to open anger at his mother for unknowingly condemning the same girl he had wronged, showing the younger generation's willingness to let new information change their behaviour
- by contrast, Mr and Mrs Birling's relief once doubt is cast on the Inspector's identity, and their wish to treat the whole evening as a false alarm, shows an older generation unwilling to let the same information change anything
- Sheila's explicit warning that her parents' attitude will not simply be forgotten, even if the Inspector turns out not to have been genuine, positions the younger characters as the play's moral authority by its final scenes
- the play's cyclical ending, with a phone call announcing a real death and a real inspector on the way, rewards the perceptiveness of the younger generation and punishes the older generation's complacent relief
- Priestley, writing in 1945 for an audience including many who had lost family in two world wars within a single generation, uses this divide to express hope that a younger generation might build a fairer society than the one that produced those conflicts

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