2.11 Literature: An Inspector Calls (J.B. Priestley): 1-hour Pack

AQA 8702 · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Analyse how Priestley presents the relationship between Sheila Birling and Gerald Croft.

(Total for Question 1 is 10 marks)

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2 Write about how Priestley presents the generational divide between the older and younger Birlings.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

3 Write about how Priestley uses the character of Eva Smith to explore social inequality, and comment on why Priestley chose to set the play in 1912 while writing and first staging it in the mid-1940s.

(Total for Question 3 is 15 marks)

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4 Write about the dramatic significance of the Inspector's closing warning about collective responsibility, and comment on why this ending would have felt especially powerful to audiences watching the play in 1945.

(Total for Question 4 is 15 marks)

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5 Starting with the moment the Inspector first arrives, write about how Priestley presents ideas about responsibility across the play as a whole, and evaluate how far a modern audience might respond differently to the play's central message than an audience watching in 1945.

In your response you should discuss:
- how Priestley presents responsibility in this moment and across the play
- the dramatic methods Priestley uses to build his argument
- how far a modern audience's response might differ from a 1945 audience's response

(Total for Question 5 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.11 Literature: An Inspector Calls (J.B. Priestley): 1-hour Pack

Question 1

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured analysis: tracks the relationship from celebratory engagement through exposure and reassessment, with judicious textual reference and confident terminology. **9-10**

Level 3 Clear analysis: explains at least two stages of the relationship with relevant textual reference. **6-8**

Level 2 Some analysis: identifies a relevant point about the relationship with some textual reference. **3-5**

Level 1 Simple, limited analysis: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little textual reference. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the relationship begins as a socially convenient, celebratory engagement, useful to both families and presented with apparent affection but little real testing
- Sheila's early teasing questions about Gerald's absence the previous summer hint at an underlying awareness that the relationship may not be as secure as it appears
- the revelation of Gerald's affair with Eva/Daisy severely damages the relationship, and Sheila's calm but hurt reaction shows a maturity and honesty that contrasts with her parents' denial
- by the play's end, Sheila's decision not to simply accept Gerald's returned ring without further reflection presents her as unwilling to return to a relationship built on the old, unquestioning assumptions

Question 2

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured response: sustained analysis of the generational divide through several characters/methods, with judicious quotation and confident subject terminology. **10-12**

Level 3 Clear response: explains the generational divide through at least two characters/methods, with relevant quotation. **7-9**

Level 2 Some response: identifies relevant moments relating to the generational divide with some supporting quotation. **4-6**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no quotation. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- Mr and Mrs Birling repeatedly try to reassert parental authority and control the interview, showing an older generation confident in its fixed social attitudes
- Sheila and Eric increasingly challenge their parents' attempts to minimise what has happened, presenting the younger generation as more willing to question inherited assumptions
- the older Birlings' insistence that nothing will really change once the Inspector has gone contrasts sharply with Sheila's warning that their attitude will not simply be forgotten
- Priestley structures the ending so the older generation's relief at a possible hoax is immediately undercut by a new phone call, siding the play's final judgement with the more perceptive younger characters
- this divide reflects Priestley's own hope that a younger, post-war generation might build a fairer society than the one that preceded two world wars

Question 3

Level 4 Convincing, critical response: sustained, perceptive analysis of Eva's function across the whole play with judicious quotation and confident terminology; contextual point about the 1912/1940s time gap integrated fully into the argument. **12-15**

Level 3 Clear, relevant response: explains Eva's role through several methods with relevant quotation; makes a clear, appropriate contextual point. **8-11**

Level 2 Some, generic response: identifies relevant moments relating to Eva with some quotation; makes a generic or partly relevant contextual comment. **4-7**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no quotation; little or no contextual comment. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- Eva never appears on stage and is known only through the other characters' accounts, making her a representative figure for the many working-class women affected by the decisions of the wealthy, rather than an individualised character
- each family member's mistreatment of Eva, in turn, builds a cumulative picture of how ordinary decisions by the privileged (dismissal, unfair judgement, exploitation, refusal of help) combine to devastating effect on someone with no social power
- her use of two names, Eva Smith and Daisy Renton, suggests how easily a working-class woman's identity could be reshaped or overlooked by those with power over her
- Priestley set the play in 1912, before both world wars and the widespread social reforms that followed, so his post-war audience could judge the Birlings' attitudes with the knowledge of exactly what unchecked inequality and complacency would lead to
- writing in the mid-1940s, immediately after a war that had reshaped British society and just before the creation of the welfare state, Priestley used the 1912 setting to argue directly for the social changes his contemporary audience was then debating

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Question 4

Level 4 Convincing, critical response: sustained, perceptive analysis of the closing warning's dramatic and structural significance, with judicious quotation and confident terminology; contextual point about 1945 audiences integrated fully. **12-15**

Level 3 Clear, relevant response: explains the significance of the closing warning through at least two methods, with relevant quotation and a clear contextual point. **8-11**

Level 2 Some, generic response: identifies relevant features of the ending with some quotation; makes a generic or partly relevant contextual comment. **4-7**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no quotation; little or no contextual comment. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the Inspector's final speech widens the play's focus from one family's guilt to a general warning addressed directly to the audience, turning a domestic drama into a broader moral and political statement
- the warning that ignoring collective responsibility will bring suffering functions as a direct threat rather than a gentle suggestion, giving the ending unusual dramatic force for a domestic play
- the timing of the speech, immediately before the ambiguous revelation about the Inspector's identity, means the audience is left to weigh its truth for themselves rather than having it confirmed or dismissed by events
- audiences in 1945 had just lived through a second devastating war within a single generation, so a warning about the consequences of ignoring shared responsibility for one another would have resonated as urgent and literal rather than abstract
- the play's original context, arriving alongside major debates about post-war reconstruction and the creation of a fairer welfare state, meant the Inspector's message spoke directly to real political choices the audience was then facing

Question 5

Level 4 Compelling, critical evaluation: sustained, sophisticated evaluation of responsibility across the whole play; judicious, precisely selected references including embedded quotation; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure with consistently precise subject terminology; contextual understanding of 1945 versus modern reception woven seamlessly into the argument. **25-30**

Level 3 Critical, exploratory evaluation: exploratory, critical response with a clear line of argument sustained across the play; judicious range of references; analyses effects of language, form and structure with precise subject terminology; contextual factors integrated fully where relevant. **17-24**

Level 2 Detailed, well-structured evaluation: consistently clear, detailed evaluation of responsibility; well-chosen range of references; explains effects of language, form and structure with subject terminology used accurately; understanding of relevant context clearly shown. **9-16**

Level 1 Simple or clear evaluation: simple or clear response with some relevant reference; some comment on language/structure with limited or accurate use of subject terminology; some or little awareness of context. **1-8**

Indicative content:

- the Inspector's calm, unhurried arrival immediately after Mr Birling's speech dismissing collective responsibility sets up a direct dramatic and ideological confrontation that structures the rest of the play
- his method of interviewing each family member in turn, revealing information at a controlled pace, builds a cumulative argument that responsibility is shared and interconnected rather than isolated to a single guilty individual
- the split between the older Birlings, who ultimately deny lasting responsibility once doubt is cast on the Inspector's identity, and the younger Birlings, who accept it regardless, dramatises a generational argument about whether moral lessons can be evaded
- the cyclical structure, ending with a phone call announcing that an inspector is really on his way, punishes complacency and denies the audience (and the Birlings) an easy escape from the play's warning
- methods: Priestley's use of dramatic irony throughout, particularly around Mr Birling's confident predictions, allows a knowing audience to judge the characters' complacency about responsibility more harshly than the characters can judge themselves
- evaluation: a 1945 audience, having just lived through mass wartime loss and facing debates about a fairer post-war society, was likely to receive the warning about shared responsibility as an urgent, immediately relevant political argument
- evaluation: a modern audience, more distanced from those specific historical circumstances, may respond more to the play's psychological and moral drama, or read it through modern debates about inequality and accountability, rather than experiencing the same immediate political urgency
- evaluation, counter-view: despite this distance, ongoing modern concerns about social inequality, exploitation and corporate or institutional accountability arguably keep the Inspector's core message widely resonant for contemporary audiences, even if the specific historical trigger has changed

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