

Plot summary:

Act One: The Birling family are celebrating **Sheila and Gerald's engagement**. Mr Birling talks about his **capitalist ideas**. **An inspector arrives** and reveals the **suicide of Eva Smith**. He **questions Mr Birling (who sacked Eva Smith from his factory)** and **Sheila Birling (who got her fired from her next job, at a department store.)**

Act Two: The inspector **questions Gerald Croft (who had an affair with Eva, who had changed her name to Daisy Renton.)** Eric, becomes distressed and leaves. The Inspector **questions Mrs Birling (who refused to give Eva help when she came to Mrs Birling's charity.)** It becomes clear that **Eva was pregnant**. Eric comes back.

Act Three: The inspector **questions Eric (who got Daisy pregnant and then stole money for her.)** **The inspector gives a final speech** about how **'we are responsible for each other.'** The family discover that the inspector might not be real. The police then call to say **another young girl has committed suicide and another inspector is on his way.**

Structure:

Writer's message: The message in the play is **shamelessly socialist**: everyone in society is responsible for everyone else. People with money should help those who are in need. The story of Eva Smith shows what can happen if they don't. Priestley did this to **highlight the inequalities in Edwardian Britain (1912)** and try to **show the way towards a new, more equal Britain in the aftermath of the war (1945).**

Cyclical structure: J B Priestley makes the end of the play very similar to the start, so the whole thing is a 'cycle' and has a 'cyclical structure.' It starts with a working class girl committing suicide. It ends with the possibility that another girl has committed suicide. **Priestley does this to show that very little has really changed during the play.** Many of the characters have not changed their attitudes towards women or the class divide, even though they had terrible consequences. **Until they do, girls like Eva Smith will continue to lead hopeless lives.**

'An Inspector Calls' knowledge organiser

Exam Requirements:

English Literature: Paper 1

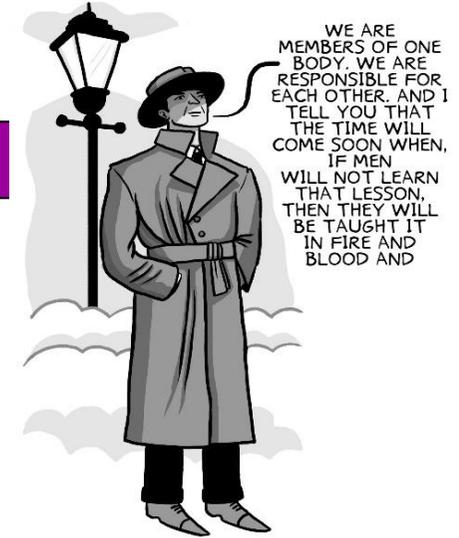
1hr 45

Shakespeare ('Macbeth') & pre-19th century novel ('A Christmas Carol')

English Literature: Paper 2

2hr 15

Modern texts ('An Inspector Calls') & poetry (Power & Conflict) & unseen)



English Literature Grade Descriptors:

Grade 8

- sustain a convincing, informed personal response to explicit and implicit meanings of texts
- sustain a perceptive critical analysis of the ways in which writers use language, form and structure
- use judicious and well-integrated textual references to develop personal responses
- show perceptive understanding of how contexts shape texts and responses to texts
- make illuminating comparisons between texts

Grade 5

- develop a generally coherent and engaged response to explicit and implicit meanings of texts
- develop a clear understanding of the ways in which writers use language, form and structure
- use apt textual references to support responses
- use understanding of contexts to inform responses to texts
- make credible comparisons between texts

Grade 2

- make straightforward comments about explicit meanings of texts
- describe straightforward aspects of language, form or structure
- make general references to obvious details of texts
- show awareness that texts are related to contexts
- make basic links between texts

Skills: The 7 Steps

Point: what has been used and why?
“Evidence”

- 1) This suggests / on the surface / this conveys...
- 2) The word “___”
- 3) Has connotations of...
- 4) Metaphorically / at a deeper level...
- 5) Symbolically / this becomes a symbol for...
- 6) Priestley is showing...
- 7) The audience is made to think / feel / understand

Themes:

Social responsibility	Belief that everyone has a duty to look after each other.
Socialism	Belief that privileged people should use their advantages to help the community.
Capitalism	Belief that businesses should be run to make their owners profit.
Social status	The desire to show how you are more successful and important than others.
Gender gap	The fact that men and women are treated differently.
Generation gap	The difference between how older and younger people think and behave.
The class divide	The division of working-class people from the middle and upper classes.

Key Quotations

“The lighting should be **pink and intimate**...then...become **brighter and harder**”

“Unsinkable. Absolutely unsinkable”

“**Impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness**”

“Community and all that nonsense... *we hear the **sharp** ring of the front doorbell*”

“I accept no blame for it at all”

“Now look at the pair of them – **the famous younger generation** who know it all”

“If men will not learn that lesson, when they will be taught it in **fire and blood and anguish.**”

“The point is, you don’t seem to have learnt anything.”

“There are **millions and millions and millions** of Eva Smiths and John Smiths...”

Characters:

Mr Arthur Birling: A wealthy businessman, capitalist

Mrs Sybil Birling: his wife and social superior

Sheila Birling: their young daughter (younger generation)

Eric Birling: their son (younger generation)

Mr. Gerald Croft: engaged to Sheila, son of Lady Croft and Sir Croft

Inspector Goole: socialist

Eva Smith / Daisy Renton: a young working-class woman

Context:

Edwardian Britain: Priestley set his play in 1912, in Edwardian Britain (when King Edward VII was King.) This was a time before the two World Wars, when **deep inequality** existed between working-class people (80% of the population in 1912) and those above them.

Society in 1945: **The two World Wars brought people from different classes together** in the army, and helped them to see that people are all the same. **They also gave women the chance to show that they could work** as well as men. After the two wars, **many people wanted these changes to continue.**

Labour Strikes: From the 1920s to the 1940s, **many workers went on strike** – refusing to work unless they got better pay and conditions.

Women’s Rights: In 1912, **women did not have the vote.** Because there was **no benefits system**, some women in poverty had to turn to prostitution. The suffragettes **achieved the right to vote for some women in 1918.** By then, **unemployment insurance** also existed for women.