

An Inspector Calls

by J.B. Priestley

Essay Plans & Templates

Point-Quote-Analysis structure for exam success

2 completed essay plans

Blank templates for self-practice

Clear line of argument for each question

PQA structure for every paragraph

GCSE English Literature | AQA Paper 2, Section A

Grade 9 Targeted

EXAM QUESTION

How does Priestley present ideas about responsibility in An Inspector Calls?

LINE OF ARGUMENT

Priestley presents responsibility as the central moral test of the play – those who accept it (Sheila, Eric) represent hope, while those who refuse it (Mr & Mrs Birling) represent the moral failure that caused two World Wars.

INTRODUCTION

Establish the 1912/1945 dual time frame. State that Priestley uses the Inspector as a mouthpiece to argue for collective social responsibility and against capitalist individualism.

ESSAY PLAN – POINT · QUOTE · ANALYSIS

	POINT	QUOTE	ANALYSIS
Point 1	Birling rejects responsibility – represents capitalist individualism	"a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own"	Repetition of 'his own' = selfishness. Positioned before Inspector arrives so the play dismantles it. Dramatic irony of Titanic discredits his authority.
Point 2	The Inspector asserts collective responsibility as moral truth	"We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other"	Anaphora of 'We are' = collectivism. Organic metaphor 'one body' echoes Body of Christ. Declarative statements = moral imperatives. Priestley's mouthpiece.
Point 3	Sheila accepts responsibility – represents younger generation's hope	"But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people"	Antithesis exposes dehumanisation. Simple language = moral truth isn't complex. Her progression models the audience's journey.
Point 4	Mrs Birling weaponises her position to refuse responsibility	"I used my influence to have it refused"	Charity becomes instrument of class cruelty. Had final chance to save Eva. Priestley exposes institutional hypocrisy.
Point 5	The cyclical structure warns that responsibility cannot be avoided	"if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish"	Prophetic tricolon = dramatic irony (1945 audience knows Wars happened). Final phone call = cyclical structure. Moral lesson will repeat until learned.

CONCLUSION

Return to the argument: Priestley uses every dramatic tool – irony, structure, characterisation – to prove that

social responsibility is not optional. The 1945 audience must choose: learn like Sheila, or repeat the catastrophe like Birling.

EXAM QUESTION

How does Priestley explore the conflict between old and young in An Inspector Calls?

LINE OF ARGUMENT

Priestley presents a stark generational divide: the older generation (Mr & Mrs Birling) are incapable of moral change, while the younger generation (Sheila & Eric) represent the hope for a more just post-war society.

INTRODUCTION

Establish context: written in 1945 for an audience choosing Britain's future. The play dramatises the choice between clinging to the pre-war status quo or embracing change.

ESSAY PLAN – POINT · QUOTE · ANALYSIS

	POINT	QUOTE	ANALYSIS
Point 1	Mr Birling represents the older generation's ideological stagnation	<i>"The whole thing's different now. Come, come, you can see that, can't you?"</i>	Patronising tone ('Come, come') = attempt to reassert patriarchal authority. Birling learns nothing – dismisses moral lesson when consequences disappear. Values reputation over redemption.
Point 2	Mrs Birling dismisses the young as hysterical rather than engaging with truth	<i>"You're overtired. In the morning you'll feel better"</i>	Gendered, patronising dismissal. Refuses to engage with substance of Sheila's moral argument. Represents wilful ignorance of the ruling class.
Point 3	Sheila transforms from naive socialite to moral authority	<i>"I'm ashamed of you as well – yes both of you"</i>	Role reversal: child judges parents. Moral authority earned through conscience, not inherited. 'Ashamed' = she judges by the Inspector's moral standard.
Point 4	Eric confronts his father's failure as both parent and moral leader	<i>"You're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble"</i>	Strikes at patriarchal failure – wealth without wisdom. Displaced self-reference ('a chap') reveals deep emotional damage. Birling = representative failed father of the nation.
Point 5	The cyclical ending places moral hope with the young	<i>"That was the police. A girl has just died... an Inspector is on his way here"</i>	The test will repeat. For the older Birlings = devastating return of denied truth. For Sheila/Eric = validation. Priestley asks: which generation does the audience belong to?

CONCLUSION

Priestley leaves no doubt: the older generation has failed. The play is a call to the 1945 audience – the young

who must build a better Britain – to reject the Birlings' complacency and embrace the Inspector's moral vision.

Blank Essay Plan Template 1

Question:

Line of Argument:

Introduction

Point 1

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 2

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 3

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Quote:

Analysis:

Point 4

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 5

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Quote:

Analysis:

Conclusion

Blank Essay Plan Template 2

Question:

Line of Argument:

Introduction

Point 1

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 2

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 3

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 4

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Point 5

Point:

Quote:

Analysis:

Conclusion