

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	<i>"a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own"</i>	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	<i>"We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other"</i>	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	<i>"But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people"</i>	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>"I used my influence to have it refused"</i>	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	<i>"if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish"</i>	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

Point:

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