



An Inspector Calls—Theme Revision Revision Booklet

Student name:

Teacher name:

Form tutor:



Themes

AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:

- maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response
- use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.

AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the con-

Poverty and wealth

Task One

"The dining room of a fairly large suburban house, belonging to a prosperous manufacturer. It has good solid furniture of the period. At the moment they have all had a good dinner, are celebrating a special occasion, and are pleased with themselves."

Priestley uses the stage directions to demonstrate the wealth of the Birling family. How else does he show that they are rich?

Task Two

'We were paying the usual rates and if they didn't like those rates, they could go and work somewhere else. It's a free country, I told them.' *Mr Birling*

'Well, it's my duty to keep labour costs down, and if I'd agreed to this demand for a new rate we'd have added about twelve per cent to our labour costs.' *Mr Birling*

"If you don't come down hard on these people they'd soon be asking for the earth." *Mr Birling*

What are the attitudes of 'the rich' (represented by Mr Birling) towards 'the poor' (represented by Eva Smith)?

Task Three

"I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class..." *Mrs Birling*

"As if a girl of that sort would refuse money." *Mrs Birling*

How does Priestley present the attitudes of the wealthy towards the poor through Mrs Birling?

Task Four

'I have tried to make myself – and other people – aware of the harsh economic realities of our time. Again and again I have taken my typewriter to the factories, the mines, the steel mills. I denounced or jeered at those colleagues who would not look. I wrote some of the first detailed accounts of the depressed areas. I grew up among socialists. I watched the smoke thicken and the millionaires who made it ride away. I saw broken old women creep back to the mills, and young men wither because there was no work for them to do and nobody wanted them. I saw the saddest waste of all, the waste of human life'. J.B Priestley

Is 'An Inspector Calls' a play which successfully promotes socialism? Why/why not?

Men and women

Task One

Mr Birling tries to 'protect' his wife and daughter from the harsh truths the Inspector is offering.

'Sheila take your mother along to the drawing-room – ...go on Sybil.'

'Nothing to do with you, Sheila. Run along.'

How does Priestley demonstrate male attitudes towards women through Mr Birling?

Task Two

'And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?' *Inspector Goole*

What is ironic about the Inspector's response to Birling's protective nature?

Task Three

Gerald, Eric, and 'alderman Meggarty' view women as sexual objects there for men to enjoy.

How is Eva Smith/Daisy Renton a symbol of this objectification of women? How does what happens to her prejudice the audience against viewing and treating women in this way?

Task Four

The play is set in 1912 but was written in 1945. What had women done in the intervening 33 years which changed their standing in society? How was their treatment better in 1945 than in 1912? What point is Priestley making in the play about women and their role in society?

Old and young

Task One

"Now you three young people, just listen to this.. by the time you'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these Capital versus Labour agitators and these silly little war scares..."

What does Mr Birling predict is going to be the difference for his children's generation and his own generation? How does Priestley discredit this opinion?

Task Two

'You began to learn something. And now you've stopped... it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it'. *Sheila*

'Now look at the pair of them - the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke-' *Mr Birling*

Compare how Priestley has Sheila react to the irresponsible attitude of her parents with how he has Mr Birling react to the responsible attitude of his children.

Task Three

How does Priestley present differences between the generations in his play 'An Inspector Calls'?