

Answers

An Inspector Calls

The points offered below are only indicative and highlight some key things that could be included in your response. You may cover other points as well. It's how your response is written and how it fits with the mark scheme that will determine the quality of your answer.

DO IT! ANSWERS

pp.9–37

p.9 Do it!



- Priestley depicts the abuse of social power through the character of Mr Birling, who uses his status to control and belittle others. This is mirrored through the actions of the Birling family. (AO1/AO2)
- Male characters have power and dominance over female characters. (AO1)
- Inspector Goole disrupts traditional power structures and challenges the Birlings' privilege, emphasising collective responsibility. His final speech warns of the dangers of unchecked power – 'fire and blood and anguish'. (AO3)
- The conflict between the generations highlights changing social attitudes towards power, with Sheila and Eric starting to challenge their parents' authority by the end of the play. (AO2/AO3)

p.13 Do it!



- Mrs Birling shows a judgemental attitude, especially towards Eva Smith/Daisy Renton – referring to 'Girls of that class'; this portrays Mrs Birling as uncaring and unlikeable. (AO1/AO2)
- Mrs Birling misuses her influence and social position to prevent Eva/Daisy from receiving charitable assistance, making Mrs Birling seem snobbish and petty. (AO1/AO2)
- Mrs Birling's refusal to accept responsibility for her role in Eva/Daisy's death demonstrates her lack of self-reflection. (AO1)
- While other characters in *An Inspector Calls* are also unlikeable, Mrs Birling's lack of empathy as a mother would have seemed particularly shocking to a 1940s audience. (AO3)

p.17 Do it!



- Sheila starts the play described as '*pleased with life*'. She is spoiled and insensitive, shown by her jealousy and her role in Eva Smith's dismissal from Millwards. (AO1/AO2)
- However, Sheila is arguably more naïve than uncaring, and, as the play develops, she becomes increasingly empathetic: 'these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people.' (AO1/AO2)
- Sheila eventually takes responsibility for her actions, acknowledging her mistakes and condemning her family's behaviour: 'You lot may be letting yourselves out nicely, but I can't.' (AO1/AO2)
- By the end of the play, Sheila provides a moral voice, challenging the injustice of the prevailing social structure. Her words and actions position her as the most decent character in the play. (AO3)

p.21 Do it!



- Mr Birling considers himself a 'hard-headed, practical man of business' and has a condescending, patriarchal attitude towards women, describing Sheila as a 'girl' despite her age. He fires Eva/Daisy for her role in the strike at Birling and Company rather than considering her worthy of negotiation, saying, 'She'd had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go.' (AO1/AO2)
- Gerald Croft views himself as Eva/Daisy's 'wonderful Fairy Prince' for saving her from poverty. He is shown to be a hypocrite when he acknowledges that their affair was for his own benefit and he later abandoned her. (AO1/AO2)
- Eric Birling and Alderman Meggarty ('a notorious womaniser') are two further examples of rich and powerful men who use their position to objectify and sexually exploit Eva/Daisy. (AO2/AO3)
- The Inspector represents Priestley's voice and critiques the actions of other male characters in the play. He describes Eric as having 'used' Eva/Daisy, 'as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person.' (AO2/AO3)

p.25 Do it!



- Eva Smith/Daisy Renton was a poor girl 'with no work, no money...half-starved...feeling desperate' who committed suicide by drinking disinfectant ('Burnt her inside out') – this description emphasises the emotional toll of poverty. (AO1)
- Eva/Daisy's poverty leads to her taking part in the strike at Birling and Company. She is fired (twice), falling further into poverty and becoming desperate. In this way Priestley shows how poverty can become a trap and trigger a 'chain of events'. (AO1/AO2)
- Gerald's and Eric's treatment of Eva/Daisy emphasises how poverty makes young women vulnerable to sexual exploitation. (AO1/AO3)
- The Inspector's final speech ('there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths') and his final warning that there will be 'fire and blood and anguish' between social classes emphasises the broader social effects of poverty. (AO1/AO3)

p.29 Do it!



- Mr and Mrs Birling prioritise their own interests and social status over their responsibilities to each other (or society). Mr Birling's main concern is his public reputation: 'Haven't I already said there'll be a public scandal...and who here will suffer from that more than I will?' (AO1/AO2)
- Mr Birling's relationship with his workers shows he only cares about his profits: 'if I'd agreed to this demand for a new rate we'd have added about twelve per cent to our labour costs.' His attitude towards his children is similar: he sees Sheila's marriage to Gerald as a business opportunity, and worries about Eric only to the extent that his son's actions threaten his knighthood. (AO2)
- Mrs Birling refuses to help Eva/Daisy and shows no remorse for her role in her death: 'you're quite wrong to suppose I shall regret what I did.' (AO1/AO2)
- Gerald demonstrates some affection for Eva/Daisy but reverts to self-interest. (AO1/AO2)
- Sheila and Eric are the only characters that learn to overcome self-interest. Sheila: 'I remember what [the Inspector] said...it frightens me the way you talk'. In this, Eric and Sheila reflect Priestley's hope for a society in which people embrace their moral responsibilities. (AO2/AO3)

p.33 Do it!



- The opening stage directions and dialogue in Act One establishes the Birlings as prosperous and self-assured, 'a nice well-behaved family'. (AO1/AO2)
- The Inspector's arrival and questioning of the Birlings gradually reveals their flaws and moral shortcomings as well as their role in Eva/Daisy's suicide ('each of you helped to kill her'). The Inspector's exposure and criticism changes the audience's perception of the family from 'respectable' to 'guilty'. (AO1/AO2)
- The audience begins to see a division between the older and younger characters: Eric and Sheila accept responsibility for their part in Eva/Daisy's suicide while Mr and Mrs Birling do not. (AO2)
- By the end of the play, the audience's initial view of the Birlings as a successful and confident family has been transformed – the Birlings now 'stare guiltily and dumbfounded'. (AO2)
- Eric and Sheila start the play dominated by their parents but learn to think for themselves. Priestley creates this change to emphasise the complacency and immorality of the upper classes and to express some hope for the future. (AO3)

p.37 Do it!



- Gerald's materialistic gifts to Sheila and Daisy (wedding rings, clothes, money) are shown to be shallow and superficial expressions of love, driven by social expectations and/or the desire to control. (AO1)
- There is an implied lack of love and empathy between the Birling children and their parents: 'you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble.' This links to Mr and Mrs Birling's inability to accept social responsibility and display empathy for others. (AO2)
- Male characters such as Eric and Gerald don't prioritise love in their relationships and describe women in sexual terms, objectifying them as 'fat old tarts' and 'a good sport'. (AO2)
- The Inspector continually attacks the Birlings for their lack of compassion: (to Mrs Birling) 'You're not even sorry now, when you know what happened to the girl?' The Inspector suggests a society without love is in danger: 'if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish'. (AO3)

ANSWERS TO EXAM STYLE QUESTIONS

pp.38–45

Answers to the AQA exam-style questions are indicative only and highlight the key things that should be included in your response. You may cover other points. It's how your answer is written and how it fits with the mark scheme that will determine the quality of your answer.

p.38 Question 1



- Mrs Birling is introduced as 'a rather cold woman' with a self-assured attitude. She is condescending to her children and the Inspector. (AO1/AO2)
- Mrs Birling is judgemental and dismissive about Eva/Daisy's death, displaying a lack of empathy – 'I think she had only herself to blame.' This continues when she learns how her refusal to award Eva/Daisy charity led directly to her suicide, insisting 'I've done nothing wrong.' (AO1/AO2)
- When Mrs Birling learns that Eric is the baby's father she is described as '*agitated*'. However, when she thinks the Inspector is a fake, she reverts to excusing herself and her family. This shows that Mrs Birling, like her husband, fails to comprehend the wider moral implications of her actions. (AO1/AO2)
- Overall, Priestley presents Mrs Birling in this way to criticise the unyielding attitudes of the upper classes, whom he portrays as selfish and failing to accept social responsibility. (AO3)

p.39 Question 2



- Priestley explores the gap between the generations in their differing attitudes towards society and social responsibility, especially in relation to the death of Eva/Daisy. (AO1/AO3)
- In Act One, Mr Birling confidently states 'there isn't a chance of war' or social unrest and is challenged on this by Eric. This sets up a generational division that widens when the Inspector arrives. The audience are encouraged to see Mr Birling as representing out-dated values from before the Second World War. (AO2/AO3)
- Both Mr Birling and Mrs Birling refuse to accept responsibility for their role in Eva/Daisy's death. In contrast, Sheila and Eric display immediate and genuine remorse for their part in her suicide. (AO2)
- By the end of the play, Sheila and Eric have learned to think for themselves; Sheila says to her parents: 'it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it'. They represent Priestley's hope for a more compassionate society. (AO1/AO3)

p.40 Question 3



- Priestley's message is that personal actions have wider social implications. The play aims to convince the audience that a broken society is one in which individuals fail to take responsibility for each other. This is conveyed through the way different characters react to the Inspector and to Eva/Daisy's death. (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- Mr Birling describes himself as a 'hard-headed, practical man of business'; he views his workers as 'labour costs' rather than individuals. He rejects ideas of social responsibility as 'all that nonsense'. He is characterised as the least likeable character in the play and only regrets his actions as far as they threaten to ruin his public reputation. (AO2)
- Similarly, Mrs Birling refuses to accept that her decision to deny Eva/Daisy charitable support makes her responsible – in part – for her suicide. (AO1/AO2)
- Eric and Sheila come to accept the Inspector's message about social responsibility – that 'We are members of one body'. They acknowledge that their personal actions had a direct impact on Eva/Daisy's death. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.41 Question 4



- The audience's initial view of Gerald is of a flawed character but not a villain. Although he is unfaithful to Sheila he comes to Eva/Daisy's aid, helping her out of poverty and prostitution: 'I made her go...because I was sorry for her... I didn't ask for anything in return.' (AO1/AO2)
- Gerald seems to have genuine affection for Eva/Daisy and is described as '*distressed*' when he realises she is dead. (AO1/AO2)
- However, as the Inspector's questioning reveals, Gerald used Eva/Daisy for sex ('I didn't feel about her as she felt about me') and, although he saw himself as her 'wonderful Fairy Prince', he ended their relationship when it became inconvenient. (AO1/AO2)
- In Act Three, upon finding out Inspector Goole is not a real policeman, Gerald encourages the Birling family to relinquish their collective responsibility for Eva/Daisy's death. By the play's end, therefore, Gerald – alongside Mr Birling – represents capitalistic values of self-interest over social responsibility; in Priestley's eyes, this makes Gerald a villain. (AO1/AO3)

p.42 Question 5



- Act Three is unsatisfying for several reasons:
 - There is a lack of narrative closure: the plot seems to be resolved when the Birlings learn that Goole was not a real inspector, but the play then ends ambiguously with the revelation that 'A girl has just died – on her way to the Infirmary – after swallowing some disinfectant. And a police inspector is on his way here – to ask some – questions.' The actual identity of 'Inspector Goole' and the purpose of his visit remains unclear. (AO1/AO2)
 - There is a lack of moral closure: the audience is left not knowing whether the girl who died was Eva/Daisy and if anyone will be held accountable for the death. (AO1/AO3)
 - The play's character arcs are not fully resolved – although Sheila and Eric have learned a lesson, the older characters remain largely unrepentant. (AO1/AO2)
- The play's ending can be seen as deliberately ambiguous to prompt self-reflection and debate in the audience. It may not matter whether Eva/Daisy is the same woman who died, or whether the Birlings are held accountable, because – as Sheila states – their individual actions were immoral ('probably between us we killed her'). (AO1/AO2)

p.43 Question 6



- Eva Smith/Daisy Renton's story shows how class inequality and gender intersected in the 20th century. As a working-class woman, she was particularly open to exploitation by wealthy male characters. (AO1/AO3)
- Eva/Daisy is shown to be vulnerable because of her lack of employment/social status, and then is abused sexually. The Inspector's accusation of Eric that he 'used' Eva/Daisy 'as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person' could also be levelled at Gerald. (AO2)
- Mrs Birling's dismissive attitude towards Eva/Daisy as a girl 'of that class' points to traditional gender norms and stereotypes held by men and women alike. (AO2)
- 'But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people': Sheila's words show how employers such as Mr Birling undervalued female workers. This statement provides the first indication that Sheila is beginning to think for herself and question gender norms and economic inequality. (AO1/AO3)
- By characterising Sheila as the most empathetic and open-minded character, Priestley encourages the audience to be appalled – as she is – by class and gender oppression. (AO3)

p.44 Question 7



- In the 20th century, Britain was rigidly divided into social classes. Priestley uses the play's characters to symbolise different classes. (AO1/AO3)
- The Birlings and Gerald represent the upper classes. Their collective mistreatment of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton demonstrates to the audience the wider exploitation of the working classes and those living in poverty. Eva/Daisy represents the working classes, emphasised by the Inspector in his final speech: 'There are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths.' (AO2/AO3)
- Priestley also explores social class through successive metaphors: 'bees in a hive – community and all that nonsense' (Mr Birling); 'You mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl.' (Sheila); 'We are members of one body' (the Inspector). (AO2)
- By the end of the play, the Inspector's questioning has repeatedly emphasised how the lives of people from different social classes are interconnected. Through the story of Eva/Daisy, the audience becomes increasingly sympathetic to the Inspector's – and Priestley's – views on social class and inequality. (AO3)

p.45 Question 8



- Mr Birling boasts that he is 'a hard-headed, practical man of business'; this emphasises everything about Mr Birling's social class that Priestley seeks to condemn: 'hard-headed' shows his lack of emotional intelligence and 'man of business' indicates how he puts wealth and status over people. (AO1/AO2)
- 'Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together – for lower costs and higher prices.' Birling sees it as the job of capitalists to collaborate and protect business profits at the expense of the workers, who he dehumanises, referring to them as 'our labour costs'. (AO2)
- Birling is individualistic: 'a man has to mind his own business and look after himself.' He doesn't recognise that his success is dependent on those who work for him. This contrasts with the Inspector's view of society ('We are members of one body') and – increasingly – the views of Mr Birling's own children (Sheila: 'But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people'). (AO2)
- By the end of the play, through the tragic story of Eva/Daisy's suicide, Priestley reveals to the audience the terrible human consequences of placing wealth above people. (AO3)