



THE INSPECTOR

THE INSPECTOR'S ROLE IN THE PLAY

Inspector Goole presents himself to the Birlings and Gerald as a police officer who has come to investigate the suicide of a young woman, Eva Smith. During the play he:

- interrupts the celebratory dinner.
- questions each of the other **characters** in turn.
- establishes that each had an unwitting part in Eva Smith's death, through either cruelty or disregard for her welfare.
- gradually takes more control of the situation and has little regard for social class or status.
- is concerned about honesty and justice.
- makes a powerful speech about our responsibility to each other in the wider society.

THE INSPECTOR'S IMPORTANCE TO THE PLAY AS A WHOLE

Priestley uses the character of Inspector Goole to present his ideas about the need for a just society and a communal sense of responsibility. As well as increasingly governing events at the Birling house, the Inspector also links all the characters to the '**chain of events**' (p. 14) that culminates in Eva Smith's suicide.



TOP TIP

A01

Make sure that you note how the Inspector controls events and why. Ask yourself: What are your first impressions of him? How does he regard the Birlings and Gerald? How does his control increase as the play develops? What is the purpose of his visit?

TOP TIP

A02

Note the way Priestley presents the relationship between Chief Constable Colonel Roberts and Mr Birling, then ask yourself: How is Inspector Goole different? Why does Mr Birling think the Inspector would not '**play golf**' (p. 16)? Why does the Inspector ignore Mr Birling's demands (p. 17)?

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT THE INSPECTOR

A01



Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inspector is an imposing figure who will dominate the play and will achieve his aims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is a man of 'massiveness, solidity and purposefulness' (p. 11). • Shows how the Inspector's physical presence matches his identity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He likes to do things in an orderly way. This allows J. B. Priestley to build the play as a 'chain of events' (p. 14). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'One person and one line of enquiry at a time. Otherwise, there's a muddle.' (p. 12) • Indicates that all the Birlings and Gerald are involved in the inquiries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inspector has high moral standards, revealing that the others characters have not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'It's my duty to ask questions.' (p. 15) • He takes his responsibilities seriously.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inspector's distinctive and mysterious presence sets him apart from the other characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'He never seemed like an ordinary police inspector' (p. 59). • Suggests he was different in some way or that he was somehow 'extraordinary', more than human.

TOP TIP: 'GOOLE' OR 'GHOUL'

A01

Note the Inspector's key **character traits**, in particular his single mindedness when questioning the characters and ability to overrule them (Act One, pp. 12, 17, 21–3; Act Two, p. 30; Act Three p. 51, 56); his power and magnetism (Act One, pp. 11, 26; Act Two, pp. 30, 37); his **oratory** (Act Three, p. 56) and the way in which he affects Sheila and Eric so that they confront their actions (Act One, pp. 19, 20, 23; Act Three, pp. 58, 59).

Also consider his name, 'Goole', a **homophone** for 'ghoul', suggesting a phantom and also a morbid interest in death, reminding us that his concern is Eva Smith's death. The Inspector's origins are unknown. Remember that Gerald discovers from a police sergeant that there is no Inspector Goole on the force (Act Three, p. 63) and this is confirmed by Mr Birling when he rings Chief Constable Colonel Roberts (pp. 62–3). The audience is, therefore, bound to ask themselves: who or what is Inspector Goole?



TOP TIP

A01

Look at the **stage directions**. They give additional information to the actors. What do the stage directions tell you about Inspector Goole?

RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2**. They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation) and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and Don'ts
<p>Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response ● Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations 	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use some of the literary terms you have learned (correctly!) ● Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way) ● Show that you have thought for yourself ● Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations 	<p>Don't write ... Gerald tells Mrs Birling 'apologetically' that Eric drinks. So that tells us he is unhappy.</p> <p>Do write ... Priestley presents Eric as a troubled young person. The stage directions tell us that Gerald confirms 'apologetically' to Mrs Birling that Eric drinks. The adverb 'apologetically' suggests that Gerald is aware that Eric's drinking is a social embarrassment.</p>

IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words to show effects:

Priestley suggests ..., conveys ..., implies ..., presents ..., explores ..., demonstrates ..., describes how ..., shows how ...

I/we (as readers) infer ..., recognise ..., understand ..., question ..., see ..., are given ..., reflect ...

For example, look at these two alternative paragraphs by different students about Gerald Croft. Note the difference in the quality of expression:

Student A:

Suggests that Priestley is actually speaking — Priestley **says** that Gerald is **really** **nervy** when he says that he has been to the Palace Theatre bar. He says that 'women of the town' go there and what he **really** **means** is **call girls**. Sheila says 'women of the town' again in order to make Gerald feel worse.

No adequate interpretation —

Informal speech

Better to say: is suggesting/implying

Student B:

Shows us how Gerald is feeling at this point in the play — Priestley presents Gerald in an **uneasy** mood in Act Two, when he describes his visit to the Palace Theatre bar. These **feelings of disquiet** are conveyed when he is obliged to refer to the women who go there. He euphemistically calls them 'women of the town', **implying** that they are prostitutes. Sheila's reaction is to repeat the phrase, as though she wants to increase Gerald's discomfort.

Varied vocabulary —

Allows for an exploration of the meaning —

Precise language

Offers an interpretation

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and Don'ts
<p>Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.</p>	<p>'Analyse' – comment in detail on particular aspects of the text or language.</p> <p>'Language' – vocabulary, imagery, variety of sentences, dialogue/speech etc.</p> <p>'Form' – how the story is told (e.g. comedy, tragedy, crime drama, morality play, act, scene)</p> <p>'Structure' – the order in which events are revealed, or in which characters appear, or in which climaxes occur</p> <p>'create meaning' – what can we, as readers, infer from what the writer tells us? What is implied by particular descriptions, or events?</p> <p>'Subject terminology' – words you should use when writing about plays, such as 'character', 'dialogue', 'stage directions', etc.</p>	<p>Don't write ... Sheila is rude to Gerald so I know she is angry with him.</p> <p>Do write ... Priestley conveys Sheila's anger with Gerald when she uses the metaphor 'Fairy Prince' to describe his behaviour with Daisy Renton. The metaphor suggests both a gallant hero who comes to the rescue and the element of fantasy, implying the affair could not last.</p>

THE THREE 'I'S

- The best analysis focuses on specific ideas or events, or uses of language and thinks about what is **implied**.
- This means drawing **inferences**. Sheila's description of Gerald shows us how angry and hurt she must feel about his affair, but what deeper meanings does it convey if, for example she can use **sarcasm**? What does it suggest about their relationship, and whether or not it can last?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own **interpretation** – a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a person, relationship or idea.