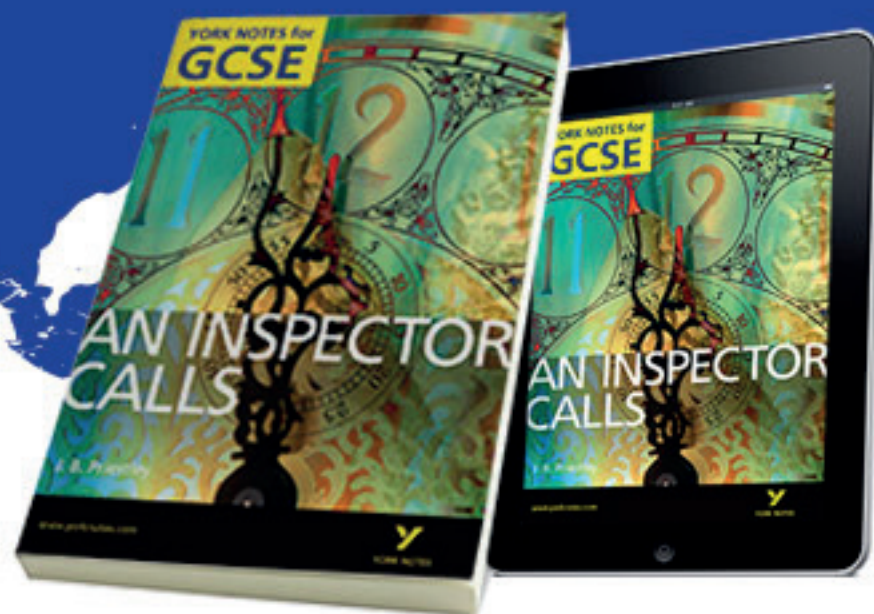


Studying AN INSPECTOR CALLS



TOP TIP

1

Read the play!

The starting point is, obviously, to read the play. You could **read it on your own**, or with your friends, **playing different parts**.

Whilst reading, **highlight** your **favourite moments/lines** and anything that really stands out for you.

Highlighter penDoing this means that you are **critically interacting with the text**, which will serve you well when you come to study the play more closely.



TOP TIP

2

Quotations

Get some **key quotations** under your belt for **themes**, **language** and **characters** – sometimes you can find quotations that touch on all three.

REMEMBER: **embed your quotations** into a paragraph in your essay for a more **sophisticated** answer.

TOP TIP

3

Literary terms

It will impress the examiner if you can **identify** and **comment** on the **effect** of the **literary techniques** used by an author. Grasping some of **Priestley's dramatic techniques** and using the proper terms is a sure way to **boost your grade**!

For example, do you know what a **euphemism** is? How about **irony** and **symbolism**? Does Priestley use **imagery**? What's a **coup de théâtre**?

REMEMBER: always comment on the **effect** of Priestley's techniques.

TOP TIP

4

Quotations

The title of the play is **An Inspector Calls**, so the chances are that he's an important figure.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ What is the Inspector's **function**?
- ✓ How does the Inspector **differ** from **Mr Birling**, for instance?
- ✓ Think about his name, **Goole** – **what does it evoke**? How does it relate to the somewhat spooky, eerie ending?



Finally, make sure you look at the **Inspector's final speech**, it is the **climax of the play**!

TOP TIP

5

Key themes

Understanding the **themes** will help you to understand both the **context** of the play and Priestley's **characterisation**.

There are four themes that immediately come to mind when considering **An Inspector Calls**. They are:

- ✓ An equitable (fairer) society
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ Love
- ✓ Time



Draw a spider-diagram for each theme, noting any **specific moments** in the play that can be linked to these **themes**. For example, for Time, one key point is Mr Birling's comment about the Titanic being 'unsinkable'. Why is this important when thinking about the time that the play is **set** (1912) compared to when it was **written** (1940s)? What are Priestley's **motives**? What is he trying to get us to **consider**?

TOP TIP

6

Dialogue and stage directions

Paying attention to the **stage directions** and the way Priestley **structures** the **dialogue** is key to picking up on **important moments** in the play and what he wants to **communicate** to the **audience**:

- ✓ Notice how, towards the end of the play, the dialogue speeds up through **short sentences** and quick **shifts in mood**. What does this do to the pace of the play? What are we building towards?
- ✓ Can you note any specific **stage directions** that convey Priestley's intentions? Which stage directions are particularly interesting?

REMEMBER: dialogue can have an effect on the **pace**, **mood** and **tension** of a play. Map these shifts as you read **An Inspector Calls**.

TOP TIP

7

Writing about two generations

By the end of the play, there is a clear divide between the **two generations** of characters in the play. On the one hand, we have the **stuffy**, **supercilious** (snobby) and **unchanging** views of **Mr and Mrs Birling**.

Then, we have the more **enlightened** and **responsible reactions** of **Sheila**, **Eric** and **Gerald**, who **acknowledge their role** in **Eva Smith/Daisy Renton's downfall**. Think about these questions:

- ✓ How does this **generational difference** link to the theme of **responsibility**?
- ✓ What link is there between the **older generation** and the ideas of a fairer society? Is it going to be the older, more powerful generation that are likely to change, or is it the **younger, more forward-looking** generation that could change society for the better, making it fairer?

TOP TIP

8

Context of the play

Think of the context like the **backdrop to the play**: without understanding it, the play will **not make complete sense**. Make sure you are familiar with:

- ✓ **Social position/hierarchy** in the early 20th century
- ✓ **Working conditions** and relationships between workers and bosses
- ✓ **Why** Priestley sets the play in 1912 and not in his day, post-Second World War?
- ✓ **The setting of the play itself** – are there many **scene changes** in the play? What does this tell us about the **focus** of the play?

Knowing the context will give your answers **more depth** and **maturity**. But make sure you apply the **social/historical context** to the play, don't just repeat what you know. For example, how does the industrial setting of Brumley **add** to the oppressiveness of the play? You may well find that understanding the context will allow you to **empathise** with the **characters** more fully.

TOP TIP

9

Progress check

Test your knowledge of the play! Try and answer these questions – if you're not sure, go back to the play, or use the **York Notes study guide** to help you.

- ✓ Why is Mr Birling so afraid of a scandal?
- ✓ How did Eric obtain the money he gave Daisy?
- ✓ In which town is the play set?
- ✓ What happens when Sheila is shown a photograph of the girl?
- ✓ Who do you think is most responsible for the death of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton? List your reasons and support them with evidence.
- ✓ Think of the play as a '**chain of events**'. What are the key turning points and why?

TOP TIP

10

Further questions

Nothing will prepare you as well as **practising some exam questions**. Here are a few to get you started. For more exam- or controlled assessment-style questions, see the **Grade Booster** section in the print and **online study guide**:

- ✓ Which of the characters is most affected by the evening? Write about:
 - i) what the Inspector's visit reveals about the different characters;
 - ii) how each is affected;
 - iii) why you feel any one character is affected more than another.
- ✓ Examine the evidence to decide whether Eva Smith and Daisy Renton are the same person. Write about:
 - i) how each character knew Eva/Daisy;
 - ii) what the Inspector told them about the girl;
 - iii) how the Inspector got his evidence.
- ✓ Explore the importance of family ties in **An Inspector Calls** and **Romeo and Juliet**.