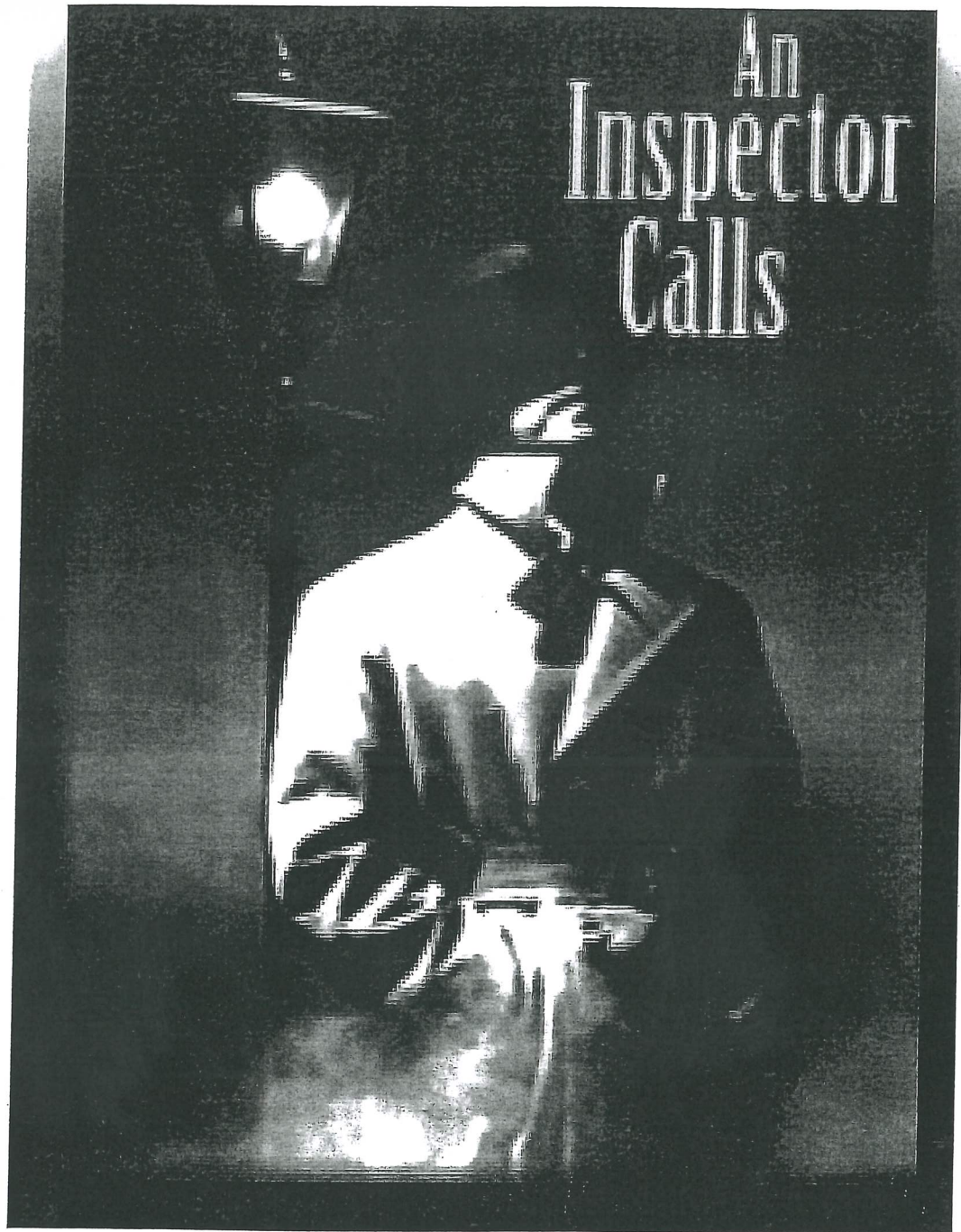


How does Dickens present...

An Inspector Calls



One question

Extract given but must make reference to the play as a whole

Practice Questions

So, by now you should know 'An Inspector Calls' pretty well, and be able to pick out important moments and details to help you analyse the plot. Try answering these quick questions in a line or two to make sure.

Quick Questions

Act One

- 1) How does the opening scene suggest that the Birlings are the 'perfect' family?
- 2) Before the Inspector arrives, Arthur Birling makes a speech about the state of the world. Name one event that the audience know will happen after 1912 which prove he's wrong.
- 3) Explain in your own words why Arthur Birling sacked Eva Smith.
- 4) Why does Eric disagree with his father's decision to sack Eva Smith?
- 5) Explain in your own words why Sheila Birling got Eva Smith sacked.
- 6) Give two reasons why Priestley would have Eva Smith change her name to Daisy Renton.

Act Two

- 1) What word finishes Act One and begins Act Two?
- 2) How does Sheila react towards Gerald once he has finished telling his story?
- 3) Give one piece of evidence which suggests that Gerald's bad behaviour was quite common among middle-class men of the time.
- 4) Give two reasons why Sybil refused to help Eva/Daisy.
- 5) Who does Sybil say is ultimately the one responsible for Eva/Daisy's death?
- 6) Why does Sheila suspect that Eric might be the "young man" who got Eva/Daisy pregnant?

Act Three

- 1) Give two examples of language that Eric uses which suggests he's immature.
- 2) What piece of news makes Eric turn on his mother?
- 3) Summarise the Inspector's final speech in three main points.
- 4) Explain how each of the four family members react to his speech.
- 5) Why do the characters start to think that the Inspector might have been a fake?
- 6) Three telephone calls are made in Act Three. Say who makes each call, and what is revealed.

Act One: who said ...?
An Inspector Calls by J. B. Priestley

These quotations demonstrate the contrast between Mr Birling's shameless belittling of Eva Smith and Sheila's pity for her. They also reveal their contrasting rejection and acceptance of responsibility for being involved in her death.

Sort the statements to fit the relevant character: Mr Birling, Sheila and the Inspector.

When you have finished, write an explanation of the tone and message implied by the Inspector's words.

'It's a perfectly straightforward case ... obviously it has nothing whatever to do with the wretched girl's suicide.'

'... what happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.'

'I can't accept any responsibility.'

'It's a free country, I told them.'

'If you don't come down sharply on some of these people, they'd soon be asking for the earth.'

'... it's better to ask for the earth than to take it.'

'Have you any idea what happened to her after that? Get into trouble? Go on the streets?'

'... I can't help thinking about this girl – destroying herself so horribly – and I've been so happy tonight ... What was she like? Quite young?'

'There are a lot of young women living that sort of existence in every city and big town in this country ... If there weren't, the factories and warehouses wouldn't know where to look for cheap labour.'

'But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people.'

'A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it.'

'Sometimes there isn't as much difference as you might think [between respectable citizens and criminals] ... I wouldn't know where to draw the line.'

'I'm trying to tell the truth.'

'It just didn't suit me at all. I looked silly in the thing.'

'How could I know what would happen afterwards?'

'It's the only time I've ever done anything like that, and I'll never, never do it again to anybody.'

An Inspector Calls

Crucial Quotes - Acts 2 and 3

Who said it? When? Why?

Act II

- 'You see, we all have to share something. If there's nothing else, we'll have to share our guilt.'
- 'They're more impressionable' (the young ones)
- 'You mustn't try to build up a wall between us and that girl. ... the inspector will just break it down.'
- 'But we really must stop these silly pretences'
- 'I must say, we *are* learning something tonight.'
- 'That's probably the best thing you've said tonight. At least it's honest.'
- 'You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here.'
- 'Public men, Mr. Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.'
- '... we've no excuse now for putting on airs ...'
- 'Unlike the other three, I did nothing I'm ashamed ofI consider I did my duty.'
- 'Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility.'

Act III

- There'll be plenty of time, when I'm gone, for you all to adjust your family relationships.'
- 'I understand a lot of things now I didn't understand before.'
- 'Because you're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble -'
- 'You'll be able to divide the responsibility between you when I've gone.'
- 'But each of you helped to kill her.'
- 'One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.'
- 'He was our police inspector all right.'
- 'You're just beginning to pretend all over again.'

General character questions

Answer the questions with the following characters in mind:

Birling, Mrs Birling, Sheila Birling, Eric Birling, Gerald Croft

1. How is he/she involved in the death of Eva Smith?
2. What themes of the play are demonstrated by what he/she says and does?
3. Think of five words to describe him/her as a person.
4. What positive attributes does he/she have?
5. How does he/she view the Inspector? How does he/she deal with being questioned by a policeman?
6. Does he/she change during the play? If so, how?
7. Is he/she a truthful person?
8. How might he/she have avoided being regarded as partly responsible for Eva Smith's death?
9. How much responsibility do you think he/she must take for the death of Eva Smith?

Character specific questions

Mr Birling

- * How does Mr Birling make his money?
- * Think of five words to describe Mr Birling as a father.

Mrs Birling

- * Mrs Birling does not work. How do you think she spends her time?
- * Think of five words to describe Mrs Birling as a mother.

Sheila Birling

- * How does Sheila spend her days?
- * How does Sheila view her parents?
- * How does Sheila view her fiancé Gerald at the beginning and end of the play?

Eric Birling

- * Where does Eric work?
- * What does Eric need to change in his life?

Gerald Croft

- * What is the 'class difference' between Gerald and the Birlings?
- * Do you think that Gerald will make a good husband for Sheila?

GCSE English Literature
Practice Exam Question

An Inspector Calls

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this question.

You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the whole play to answer this question.

Write about how the theme of responsibility is represented in the play.

In your response you should:

- refer to the extract and the play as a whole;
- show your understanding of characters and events in the play.

[40]

Inspector (*taking charge, masterfully*): Stop! They are all suddenly quiet, staring at him. And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. I don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself – and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. (He looks from one to the other of them carefully.) But then, I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did, Mrs Birling. You turned her away when she most needed help. You refused her even the pitiable little bit of organised charity you had in your power to grant her. Remember what you did –

Eric (*unhappily*): My God - I'm not likely to forget.

Inspector: Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person. No you won't forget. (He looks at Sheila.)

Sheila (*bitterly*): I know. I had her turned out of her job. I started it.

Inspector: You helped – but didn't start it. (*Rather savagely, to Birling.*) You started it. She wanted twenty-five shillings a week instead of twenty two and sixpence. You made her pay a heavy price for that. And now she'll make you pay a heavier price still.

Birling (*unhappily*): Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands –

Inspector: You're offering money at the wrong time, Mr Birling. (*He makes a move as if concluding the session, possibly shutting up notebook etc. Then, surveys them sardonically.*) No, I don't think any of you will forget. Nor that young man, Croft, though he at least showed some affection for her and made her happy for a time. Well, Eva Smith's gone. You can't do her any good now, either. You can't even say 'I'm sorry, Eva Smith.'

Sheila (*who is crying quietly*): That's the worst of it.

Inspector: But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we say and think and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.

Introduction notes

Wider text ideas:

Wider text ideas:

Conclusion

GCSE English Literature
Practice Exam Question

An Inspector Calls

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this question.

You should use the extract below and your knowledge of the whole play to answer this question.

Write about the character the Inspector and why he is important in the novel.

In your response you should:

- refer to the extract and the play as a whole;
- show your understanding of characters and events in the play.

[40]

INSPECTOR (*with calm authority*): I'll tell you. She went to your mother's committee for help, after she'd done with you. Your mother refused that help.

ERIC (*nearly at breaking point*): Then – you killed her. She came to you to protect me – and you turned her away – yes, and you killed her – and the child she'd have had too – my child – your own grandchild – you killed them both – damn you, damn you –

MRS. BIRLING (*very distressed now*): No – Eric – please – I didn't know – I didn't understand –

ERIC (*almost threatening her*): You don't understand anything. You never did. You never even tried – you-

SHEILA (*frightened*): Eric, don't – don't –

BIRLING (*furious, intervening*): Why, you hysterical young fool – get back – or I'll –

INSPECTOR (*taking charge, masterfully*): Stop!

They are all suddenly quiet, staring at him.

And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. I don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself. This girl killed herself – and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. (He looks from one to the other of them carefully.) But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did, Mrs Birling. You turned her away when she most needed help. You refused her even the pitiable little bit of organised charity you had in your power to grant her. Remember what you did-

Introduction notes

Wider text: The Inspector as a vehicle for the play's moral message

Wider text: The Inspector as a structural and dramatic device

Conclusion