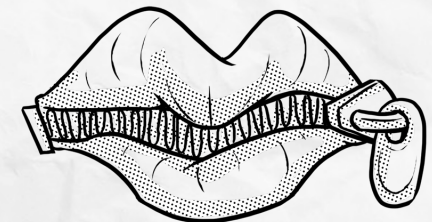
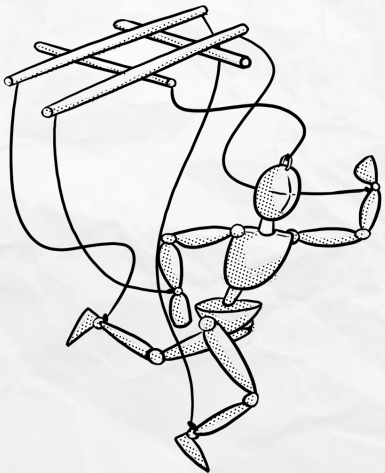
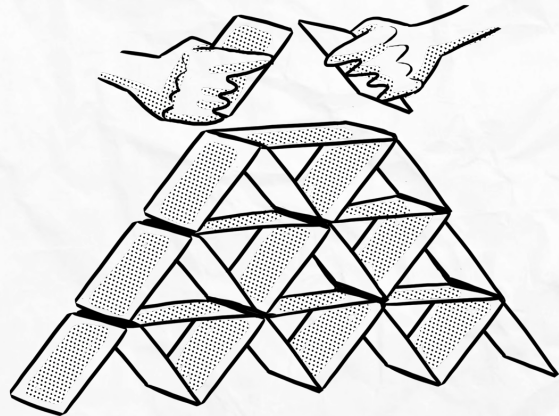
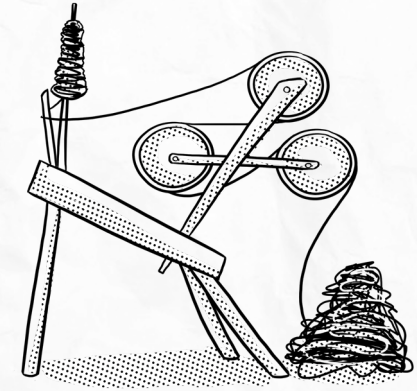


# GCSE An Inspector Calls

J B Priestley



ThinkIT

## Structure

Aristotle's Classical Unities are ways of reading and constructing what he considered to be 'good' theatre.

**Unity of Action** a play should have one action that it follows, with minimal sub-plots;

**Unity of Time** the action in a play should occur over a period of no more than 24 hours;

**Unity of Place** a play should exist in a single physical space and should not attempt to compress geography, nor should the stage represent more than one place.

Can you use these ideas to explore how Priestley structures An Inspector Calls? What affect does each of the unities have on the narrative?

*"It's the way I like to go to work. One person and one line of enquiry at a time. Otherwise there's a muddle."* How does Priestley use the character of the Inspector to drive and structure the narrative? How does Priestley drop hints in the opening scenes about where the cracks in the relationships are likely to appear?

**Mr B:** "so long as we behave ourselves, don't get into the police court or start a scandal eh? (laughs complacently)

**Sheila:** "Yes – except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you."

## Context and Marriage

How is marriage presented in An Inspector Calls? Does it mean different things to different genders?

*"When you're married you'll realize [sic] that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had to."*

In what ways is marriage presented as a business transaction?

## Irony

How does the Inspector use irony to draw attention to the characters' flaws?

**Mr B:** We were having a nice little family celebration tonight. And a nasty mess you've made of it now, haven't you?

**Inspector:** That's more or less what I was thinking earlier tonight, when I was in the infirmary looking at what was left of Eva Smith. A nice little promising life there, I thought, and a nasty mess somebody's made of it."

**Dramatic irony** when the audience are privy to information that the characters on stage are not.

How does Priestley use dramatic irony to show how foolish the Birlings are?

- arguing that war will not happen
- the Titanic is 'unsinkable'

What other effect does this have? Does it help to build a rapport with the audience?

## Theme: Blame

How and when do different characters lay the blame on each other?

How does Priestley exploit this for dramatic effect?

Consider the below quotation from Eric:

*"Then – you killed her. She came to you to protect me – and you turned her away."*

Which characters are more accepting of their blame than others?

## Stage Directions

Priestley's stage directions, especially at the start of the play, are extremely prescriptive. Why do you think this is?

*"The lighting should be pink and intimate until the INSPECTOR arrives, and then it should be brighter and harder."*

What impression does this establish about the Inspector, even before he enters the stage? What does Priestley tell us about the different characters through the stage directions? e.g. Sheila: "half serious, half playful", "trying to be light and easy"

## Status

How does Priestley express the status changes in the play? Consider the opening and conclusion of each Act? How do different characters react to those with higher status? Consider as a starting point how Mr Birling speaks to Gerald. Consider status in relation to class. Is there a status difference between 'old money' and 'new money'?

Which characters accept and promote traditional social hierarchies, and which ones challenge them? How is this shown?

**Gerald:** After all, y'know, we're respectable citizens and not criminals.

**Inspector:** Sometimes, there isn't as much difference as you think. Often, it was left to me, I wouldn't know where to draw the line."

**Nepotism:** Birling to the Inspector

*"Perhaps I ought to warn you that he's an old friend of mine, and that I see him fairly frequently"*

## Seven Deadly Sins

Consider the 7 Deadly Sins: *Pride, Lust, Greed, Envy, Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth*  
Can you use these sins to discuss the flaws in the characters?

## Political Ideology and Terminology

*"Working together – for lower costs and higher prices"*

How is *business* and the free market presented in the play?

*"We employers at last are coming together to see that our interests – and the interests of Capital – are properly protected"*

What do different characters mean by the term *'progress'*?

## Theme: Individualism / Community

How does Priestley present tensions between characters who think they should look out for themselves and those who think we should all look after each other?

Do any of the characters allegiances change over the course of the play?

**Birling:** Still, I can't accept any responsibility. If we were all responsible for everything that happened to everybody we'd had anything to do with, it would be very awkward, wouldn't it?

**Inspector:** "Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges."

*"We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other."*

## Generations

Generally speaking, are there different attitudes across the generations? Why do you think that might be? Do Eric, Gerald and Sheila change more than the older characters? In what ways?

*"You and I aren't the same people who sat down to dinner here."*

## Context and Etiquette

How much importance do the different characters place on etiquette and social pleasantries?

How does Priestley present the idea that characters use etiquette to control behaviours and ideas that they find unpalatable?

Are certain characters shown as having more tact than others?

**Mr B:** "I have an idea that your mother – Lady Croft – while she doesn't object to my girl – feels you might have done better for yourself socially"

How the characters object to the Inspector's manner?

*"Well, I must say his manner was quite extraordinary; so – so rude – and assertive"*

How do the Birlings react when someone dares to act above their station? How does Priestley use euphemism in the play?

*"He's admitted that he was responsible for the girl's condition" "women of the town"*

## Context and Representation of Women

In what ways can Sheila be seen as both challenging and conforming to traditional gender roles?

*"He means that I'm getting hysterical now"*

How do the other characters treat Sheila when they think she is 'acting up'?

Birling on Eva: *"She'd had a lot to say – far too much – so she had to go."*

How does the Inspector turn the characters' perceptions of gender roles on their head?

*"And now there isn't the slightest reason why my daughter should be dragged into this unpleasant business." "*

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

How does money and class relate to the perception of women?

*"Yes, but you've got to remember, my boy, that clothes mean something quite different to a woman. Not just something to wear – and not only something to make 'em look prettier – but – well, a sort of sign or token of their self-respect"*

*"And in any case I don't suppose for a moment that we can understand why the girl committed suicide. Girls of that class –"*

Consider the quotations below, what does it tell you of the expectations of women in society? Does Eva's class have an impact?

**Gerald:** "I'm not very clear about it, but afterwards she told me she didn't want me to go in but that – well, I was in that state when a chap easily turns nasty – and I threatened to make a row"

**Inspector:** "Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person"

## The Inspector

How does Priestley show the Inspector's ability to manipulate and control the other characters?

*"If he is, then we know what to do, don't we? Mrs Birling has just told us?"*

What do you think the Inspector presents? Supernatural? Judgement? Social Conscience?

Title: Is there a clue in the title? AN Inspector. How is that different to THE Inspector?