

# Getting the most from this book and website

## How to use this guide

You may find it useful to read sections of this guide when you need them, rather than reading it from start to finish. For example, you may find it helpful to read the *Context* section before you start reading the play, or to read the *Plot and structure* section in conjunction with the play — whether to back up your first reading of it at school or college or to help you revise. The sections relating to assessments will be especially useful in the weeks leading up to the exam.

The following features have been used throughout this guide:

### ● What are the play's main themes?

#### Target your thinking

A list of **introductory questions** to target your thinking is provided at the beginning of each chapter. Look back at these once you have read the chapter and check you have understood each of them before you move on.

#### Build critical skills

Broaden your thinking about the text by answering the questions in the **Pause for thought** boxes. They are intended to encourage you to consider your own opinions in order to develop your skills of criticism and analysis.

Pause for thought



#### Grade-boosting advice

Pay particular attention to the **Grade booster** boxes. Students with a firm grasp of these ideas are likely to be aiming for the top grades.

Grade **booster**



**Key quotations** are highlighted for you, and you may wish to use these as evidence in your examination answers. Page references are given for the Heinemann edition of the text (ISBN 978-0-435232-82-5). For example, a reference to H56, L12 means that a quotation appears on line 12 of page 56 in the Heinemann edition.

**Key quotation**

**'As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!'**

(Mrs Birling,  
H47, L1-2)

**Be exam-ready**

The **Grade focus** sections explain how you may be assessed and distinguish between higher and foundation responses.

**Grade focus**



**Get the top grades**

Use the **Text focus** boxes to practise evaluating the text in detail and looking for evidence to support your understanding.

**Text focus**

**Develop evaluation skills**

**Review your learning**

Use the **Review your learning** sections to test your knowledge after you have read each chapter. Answers to the questions are provided in the final section of the guide.

**Test your knowledge**



Don't forget to go online for further self-tests on the text:  
[www.philipallan.co.uk/literatureguidesonline](http://www.philipallan.co.uk/literatureguidesonline)

# Tackling the assessments

- What assessments will you face?
- How will your assessments be marked?
- What sort of questions will you face?
- How can you prepare for your assessment?
- How can you plan your response?
- How can you structure your response?
- How can you ensure the best grade?

## Assessments

Depending on which board and specification you are following, you may have to respond to *An Inspector Calls* in an English Literature examination or Controlled Assessment, so knowing the text well is very important. The sort of response you will make in a Controlled Assessment may be written, spoken or multi-modal (a combination of written and spoken).

Whichever board you are studying towards for Literature GCSE, *An Inspector Calls* is an option either as part of your exam or Controlled Assessment. The following table explains which unit the play appears in and gives you information about the sort of question you will be asked and whether you can take your text into the exam or Controlled Assessment.

| AQA  | Edexcel   | WJEC  | OCR   | CCEA  |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Unit 1: Modern Prose or Drama exam                                     | Unit 3: Shakespeare and Contemporary Drama Controlled Assessment  | Unit 2a: Literary Heritage drama and contemporary prose exam                                  | Unit A662: Modern drama exam  | Unit 2: The Study of Drama and Poetry               |
| A written response to one out of two questions based on the whole text | A written, oral or multi-modal response to a question out of a choice on characterisation, stagecraft, theme or relationships | Two written questions on the play: one based on an extract, the other based on the whole text | A written response to one out of a choice of two questions, one of which will be an extract-based question and one of which will be an essay question | A written essay response to one question out of two |

| AQA                      | Edexcel  | WJEC            | OCR                              | CCEA                      |
|--------------------------|--|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Unannotated text allowed | Unannotated text allowed<br>Notes<br>Dictionary or thesaurus<br>Grammar and spelling checker | No text allowed | Unannotated text allowed         | Unannotated texts allowed |
| 45 minutes               | Up to 2 hours  | 1 hour          | 45 minutes                       | 1 hour                    |
| 30 marks                 | 20 marks   | 30 marks        | 27/40 marks<br>Foundation/higher |                           |

## Marking

The marking of your responses varies according to the board and the options you or your school have chosen. If you are studying *An Inspector Calls* for examination, an external examiner will mark your response; but if you are responding to it in a Controlled Assessment, your teacher will mark your work and it will then be moderated by someone else. In all cases your ability to respond to the play in a critical way is important. Assessment Objectives for individual assessments are explained in the next main section of the guide (p. 70).

## Higher and foundation tiers

All the boards set their English Literature GCSE exams at higher and foundation tiers. If you take the higher tier you can get grades A\*–D, with the possibility of an E. If you take the foundation tier you can get grades C–G, with the possibility of a B. You and your teachers (and probably parents) will decide which is the more suitable level for you.

While higher- and foundation-tier questions are similar in content, foundation-tier questions provide students with more guidance — usually in the form of three or four additional bullet points. (Please see the Questions section later in this chapter.)

## Essay writing

Whether you are responding in an exam or a Controlled Assessment, knowing how to plan, structure and write an essay is important. You are probably familiar with essay writing so you should have some idea of how to go about it, but the following tips may be helpful:

- Write in the present tense when you analyse texts.
- Only use the past tense when referring to a historical or social fact from the past.
- Address the question immediately.

- Provide evidence for your statements.
- Link your paragraphs.

## Essay structure

Essays are made up of three sections: introduction, main body and conclusion.

The **introduction** is made up of three or four sentences directed at the question. You could use the question as a lead and outline the main ideas you will cover in your essay. Look at the following example introduction written in response to a typical AQA question.

What role does Priestley give the Inspector in the play?

The Inspector serves an important role as the voice of conscience in the play. **1** He is used by Priestley to expose the hypocrisy of the upper classes at the time of the play. He conveys a message of collective social responsibility and asks us to question the part that we play in others' lives. **2**

**1** First sentence immediately addressing question

**2** Further sentences indicating areas that will be covered in essay

### Grade *booster*

Avoid beginning your essay by spelling out exactly what you intend to do ('In this essay I will show that...'): just get on with it.

The **main body** is the central part of the essay and is usually formed of at least three and up to five or six paragraphs. Each paragraph deals with a different point and is linked to the previous paragraph.

The **conclusion** gives your summing up of the evidence and your final words. It should restate main points but throw new light on the subject, rather than just repeat the introduction. An example might be:

By the end of the play Priestley's political message is clear. **1** We and the characters on stage are left in no doubt about the fact that 'we are members of one body'. **2** The omniscient Inspector leaves us with an uncomfortable awareness of the need to accept collective responsibility, so that, by the end of the play, we, like Sheila and Eric, have indeed learnt something. **3**

**1** Clear statement concluding essay

**2** Second sentence reinforcing opening one and indicating impact of play

**3** Final sentence: refers to key theme of essay, linking back to question (Inspector's role); comments on playwright's success in conveying his message, with implied reference to structure of play and the movement from ignorance to knowledge

### Grade *booster*

Your entire essay builds an argument based on evidence, like a lawyer in court arguing a case, so writing and structuring your essay well and providing evidence are very important.

## Using PEE

When you write a paragraph in a critical essay, you should think of PEE:

- P — Point
- E — Evidence
- E — Explanation

Essentially, you make a statement (or point), you support it with evidence from the text, which may be a quotation, and then you explain how the quotation supports what you said in your statement. It is a good idea to embed your quotation — in other words, to put it into your own sentence — as this is a sign of a higher-level candidate. It is a good idea to link your explanation to the question you are answering, so that you stay on track:

**1** The statement (point)

**2** The evidence — an embedded quotation

**3** The explanation, analysing particular words, explaining how they support the statement, and then linking the essay back to the question. A very good example of using PEE

We are aware of the Inspector's role in the play when he first enters. **1** He is described as creating an impression of 'massiveness, solidity and purposefulness'. **2** By describing him as having 'massiveness' and 'solidity', Priestley shows that he is a character of substance — one with a presence, whose role is important. **3**

### Grade *booster*

To check how good you are at embedding quotations, read your sentences out to someone who has not read the play. See if they can tell where Priestley's words begin and end. If not, you've integrated his words smoothly.

## Developing an argument and linking paragraphs

Part of essay technique is making sure that the examiner or teacher knows that you are developing an argument. You can make this clear by using **signal words** to signpost your argument.

| Word/phrase                             | What it does   |
|---|--|
| however, although, yet                  | Suggests an exception:<br>Mr Birling talks of war as being unlikely. However, we recognise the irony in Mr Birling's words.                            |
| nevertheless, nonetheless, despite this | Signals a contradiction:<br>Eva Smith is homeless, alone, penniless and pregnant. Despite this, Mrs Birling still believes she has done nothing wrong. |
| similarly, likewise, in a similar way   | Indicates a similarity:<br>Sheila recognises that what she has done is wrong. Similarly, Eric accepts some responsibility for his actions.             |

| Word/phrase                                  | What it does  |
|--|---|
| in contrast, conversely, differs from, while | Suggests a contrast or opposite idea:<br>To Mrs Birling, Eva Smith is immoral, having got herself pregnant. Conversely, Mrs Birling is insistent that she has the moral high ground.  |
| moreover, furthermore, in addition           | Builds on the previous point, making a stronger point:<br>She blames Eva Smith and the man who got her pregnant. Moreover, without knowing it, she suggests that the person who should be held responsible is her own son Eric. |
| above all                                    | Introduces the most important point:<br>Both Mr and Mrs Birling fail to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Above all, Mr and Mrs Birling are blind to their failings.                                   |
| in summary, in conclusion                    | Concludes the essay:<br>In conclusion, we can see that, while Eric and Sheila appear to have learnt something, the older Birlings have learnt nothing.  |

## Grade **booster**



It is really important that you show an awareness of the play as a constructed work. Make clear that you know this is a play and the characters are constructs through which Priestley expresses his thoughts and ideas. To do this, you need to foreground the playwright. You will gain marks by using statements such as these: Priestley highlights..., illustrates..., makes clear..., reinforces..., elaborates..., shows..., portrays..., demonstrates...

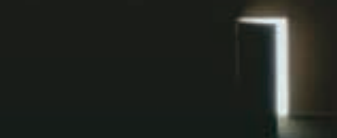
## Questions

The questions you will face in your exam and Controlled Assessment could be about characters, themes, structure, the writer's intentions, the play in context or stagecraft. The Controlled Assessment questions are untiered general ones that will be applied to *An Inspector Calls* by your teachers. An example of a question for a Controlled Assessment is:

*An Inspector Calls* was written and first produced in 1945, and it remains a popular play. Why do you think this is? (Edexcel Literature stagecraft Controlled Assessment)

Examples of questions for an exam are:

How does Priestley demonstrate the misplaced confidence of the Birlings in their position? (OCR Literature higher-tier exam question)



Compare and contrast the way Birling and the Inspector view society. (OCR Literature higher-tier exam question)

What role does Priestley give the Inspector in the play? (AQA Literature higher-tier exam question)

The Inspector says, 'We don't live alone. We are members of one body.' How does Priestley convey his message of collective social responsibility in the play? (AQA Literature higher-tier exam question)

Look at how Priestley presents Gerald Croft. He is shown to be both selfish and thoughtful in his relationships with Sheila and Eva/Daisy. What is your opinion of him? Give your reasons. In your answer you should consider the language and dramatic devices used in presenting:

- Gerald's treatment of Sheila during the engagement party at the start of Act One
- Gerald's responses to the Inspector about his behaviour towards Eva/Daisy in Act Two
- anything else you think is relevant

(CCEA Literature higher-tier exam question)

### Grade **booster**

Many two-part questions ask you to comment on (a) how a character is presented in the passage, then (b) how that character reflects a particular theme. Prepare for these by making sure you know which themes especially relate to each character.



Compare and contrast the way Arthur Birling and Sheila Birling respond to the Inspector's presence and his questions. Look at:

- what they say and do before the Inspector arrives
- what they say and do when they are questioned
- what they say and do after the Inspector leaves

(AQA foundation-tier exam question)

What important role does Priestley give Eric in *An Inspector Calls*?

Look closely at:

- what Eric says and does
- other characters' opinions of Eric
- how Priestley describes Eric

(AQA foundation-tier exam question)

In what ways is Eric a more likeable character in Act Three? Remember to support your ideas with details from the play. (OCR foundation-tier exam question)

For which character in the play do you have the **most** sympathy?  
Give reasons for what you say. (WJEC foundation-tier exam question)

## Preparation and planning

Preparing yourself for your assessment will involve a combination of rereading and revision of the text, research, and essay or presentation practise. If you are producing a written response then focusing on writing skills and approaches to questions is important. Choosing the right question is an important part of this. Make sure you choose the question that you are able to answer best. Candidates often find character questions more straightforward than others but there are no set rules. The best thing is for you to get as much practise as possible in the types of questions you might face. This means planning and writing timed essays.

### Grade **booster**



A useful exercise in preparation for your essays is as follows:

- 1 Write down the key events of the play.
- 2 Write a one-paragraph description of each of the major characters.
- 3 Write a brief summary of what the writer set out to do.

## Identifying key words and planning ideas

To give shape to your essays, you need to write in a cohesive way. This means that you need to plan and organise your ideas and link your paragraphs.

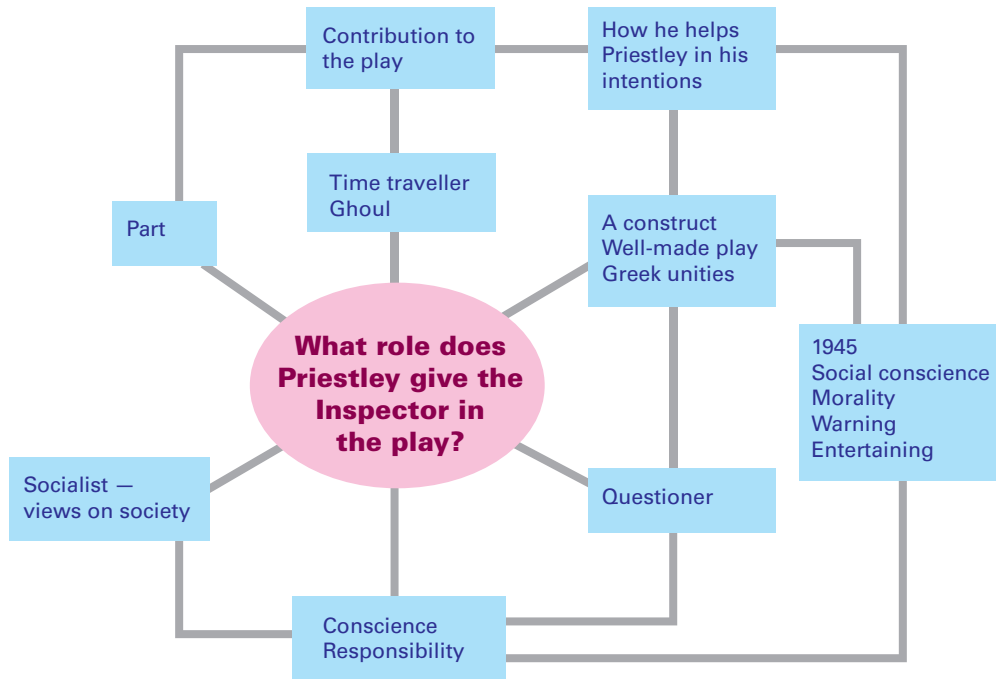
Whatever question you face, you need to consider what it is asking you. Foundation-tier questions will help you by providing you with some bullet points; but if you are taking the higher-tier GCSE, you won't get much guidance in terms of what areas to explore, so you will need to come up with a planned approach yourself. A good way of doing this is to look at how the question starts and to identify the key words in the question.

Questions often start with words like *What*, *How*, *Why* and *Who* but they can start in other ways too. Words like *What* and *Where* suggest straightforward retrieval of information. The word *How* indicates the need to explain and analyse, and the word *Why* suggests that you need to give reasons. Questions that start *To what extent* or *How far do you agree* are asking you for your opinion and setting up a debate. Read the starts of questions carefully to understand what is being asked of you.

Then identify the other key words and consider what each word means and implies. The next step is to come up with ideas of what points you might include in your essay and what events you might refer to. Finally,

you need to organise your ideas and decide on the order in which you will cover them.

Consider, for example, the question used earlier:



You know that you need to provide information but you can also see that the key words are *role*, *Priestley*, *Inspector* and *play*, so you would then consider each of these words. The word *role* suggests part, contribution to the play, how he helps Priestley in his intentions. The word *Priestley* shows the importance of foregrounding the playwright and remembering that the play is a construct and the Inspector is a created character serving a purpose, Priestley's. It might also occur to you, therefore, that Priestley was a socialist and had strong views about society. The word *play* suggests the following: on stage, over time, effect on the audience. The word *Inspector* might lead you to Goole/ghoul, one who inspects, questioner, conscience, responsibility, time traveller and so on.

This would give you a number of ideas for different points to make in your essay, for example about the Inspector as:

- a social conscience for the characters and for us
- a questioner exposing the Birlings' hypocrisy
- a ghostly figure or time traveller
- a narrator

- Priestley's voice
- someone who scrutinises family dynamics and the relationship between the individual and society

Your next stage of planning would be to organise these points according to where in your essay you would like them to appear. You might then jot down some events and quotations from the play to support each point. It would also be worth thinking about any play adaptations you have seen and what you know of the context of the play to see if any of this would help you support your points.

If this question were set at foundation tier it could be worded as follows:

What role does Priestley give the Inspector in the play? Consider:

- how he makes the characters think and feel about their actions
- what he says about society
- why Priestley uses him

If you were answering this question then you would use the bullet points to help guide you but you might also consider some of your own ideas. Remember to find events and quotations from the play to support your ideas. Think also about how the play is performed and the context of the play to help make your answer as good as possible.

An example of a first paragraph in this essay might be:

It is clear that the Inspector is the voice of conscience, as he arrives shortly after Mr Birling has been selfishly criticising the idea of 'everyone looking after everyone else'. **1** His questioning throughout the play exposes the impact that the Birlings have had on Eva Smith, so that when he talks of the 'millions of Eva Smiths' and 'John Smiths' and says 'We are responsible for each other', we recognise that what he is saying is true. **2** By having the Inspector mention 'fire, and blood and anguish', Priestley uses the fact that the play was written just before the Second World War and is set just before the First World War to suggest that the Inspector is a messenger, warning both the Birlings and the audience of the price they must pay for being collectively irresponsible. **3**

**1** A strong topic sentence

**2** Evidence and explanation of how Inspector acts as social conscience

**3** The point is developed and the candidate introduces the way the playwright uses the Inspector as a voice for his own message of social responsibility to the characters and the audience, expanding the way the word 'conscience' is seen. This sentence also refers to the play's social and historical context. Embedded quotations are used throughout, helping to make the argument fluid and indicating a higher-level candidate. This is a very good response from an A\* candidate.

## Grade **booster**

As a revision exercise, go through the five higher-tier questions on pp. 63–64 and suggest the bullet-point guidance you would expect to see if they were offered at the foundation tier. This is a useful activity whichever tier you are entered for.

As you can see, higher-tier and foundation-tier questions are similar. The main difference is that foundation-tier candidates will generally receive more guidance about how to tackle the question.

## Oral and multi-modal responses

If you are doing the Edexcel Controlled Assessment and have opted to respond by talking about the play, then you need to make sure that you prepare just as thoroughly as you would do for a written response. You will have plenty of time to research, so use it. The internet is a useful source of information, as is this guide. Follow the advice given previously when thinking about your chosen question. In addition, make sure that you organise your ideas and work out what you will say and how you will support your statements.

Similarly, if you are producing a multi-modal response, using video clips and talking, for example, make sure that you research properly, plan your talk well beforehand, and have everything you need on the day.

Even though you will be presenting information or talking about the play rather than writing about it, you still need to structure what you say and present it in an organised way, using Standard English.

## Grade **booster**

If the meaning of a question seems unclear or too open to interpretation, consider choosing another question if there is a choice. If you still decide to tackle this question, make it clear what your interpretation of the question is.

## Achieving an A\*

In order to gain an A\* you have to respond with confidence and enthusiasm, exploring through well-selected quotations how writers use language and structure to create certain effects. You need to show sophisticated critical analysis and originality in your interpretations of the play. You should show how the social and historical context affects how the play was written and is received, and you need to shape your essay well.

## Achieving a C

In order to gain a C you need to show understanding and knowledge of how Priestley uses ideas, themes and setting to affect the reader or viewer. You should respond in a personal way to the effects of language and structure and use quotations to support what you say. You should show some awareness of the social and historical context of the play and write clearly.

**Review your learning**

(Answers on p. 85)

- 1 What is an essay?
- 2 How can you plan your answer?
- 3 How do you use PEE effectively?
- 4 Which words can you use in an essay to suggest contrast and which to suggest an exception?



More interactive questions  
and answers online.