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| <b>Context: key ideas</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>J. B. Priestley:</b> a broadcaster and playwright, he also served in the army in World War One (1914 - 1918). During the war, he witnessed men from different paths in life/ classes coming together and working for the common, greater good. He believed that this principle should be taken forward in a broader context to make people in society more responsible for one another. When working for the BBC as a broadcaster during World War Two (1939 - 1945), Priestley broadcast a series of short propaganda radio shows which were credited for strengthening civilian morale. His left-wing beliefs brought him into conflict with the government, but they did influence the birth of the Welfare State after the war. The programme was eventually cancelled by the BBC for being too critical of the government. |
| <b>1912:</b> when the play is set, just before the outbreak of World War One (1914) and the sinking of the Titanic (1912). Priestley wanted to make sure audiences in 1945 recognised the problems that existed in Edwardian society in 1912 before the wars (the class system, capitalism and sexism) and weren't tempted to go back to living like that. He wrote the play to highlight the dangers of living in a capitalist society.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>1945:</b> when the play was written and performed. After World War Two, society changed for the better. The benefits system was introduced, there was more equality for women and less of a class divide due to different classes and different genders mixing in the war effort. Priestley supported and encouraged these changes and wanted to make sure he promoted them in his play by making capitalists like the older Birlings appear ignorant and selfish.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Socialism:</b> Priestley was a keen socialist. He believed society should be founded upon responsibility, where people looked after each other rather than just caring about themselves. In the play, socialist characters like the Inspector are far more respectable, compassionate and thoughtful than the capitalist ones.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Capitalism :</b> Priestley despised capitalism, as he believed it promoted selfishness and prioritised money and profit over human rights. He created Mr and Mrs Birling as capitalists in order to make capitalism seem outdated, selfish and blinkered.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Outdated ideas:</b> in 1912 the social classes were segregated, women were paid less than men for the same work and there was no benefits system or help with unemployment or housing. Society was patriarchal (male dominated) and there was a great deal of inequality.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

| <b>Year 10 HT4: 'An Inspector Calls'</b> | Plot  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Characters         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                          | ACT 1 | The family are celebrating Sheila and Gerald's engagement. Birling makes speeches saying there will be no war, and the Titanic is unsinkable. An Inspector arrives and tells them Eva Smith has committed suicide. He gets Mr Birling to admit sacking her. He doesn't take the blame. The Inspector gets Sheila to admit getting her sacked for laughing. She feels guilty and ashamed of herself.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Mr Birling</b>  | An arrogant and capitalist businessman who despises the notion of social equality and loves money. He sacks Eva from his factory when she asks for equal pay for women and threatens a strike.                                                                                |
|                                          | ACT 2 | The Inspector gets Gerald to admit having an affair with Eva Smith (now called Daisy Renton after a name change). Sheila is upset and questions her relationship with Gerald. Inspector gets Mrs Birling to admit not helping Eva when she came to Mrs Birling's charity for help when she became pregnant. Mrs Birling says it should be the father's responsibility. At the end of the act, we realise that the father of Eva's baby was Eric.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Mrs Birling</b> | A snobbish and cold-hearted capitalist who believes everyone is responsible for themselves. She refuses to help Eva when she comes to the charity for help.                                                                                                                   |
|                                          | ACT 3 | Eric's involvement with Eva is revealed and a possible rape is hinted at, as he says he forced Eva. The Inspector gives his final speech about fire, blood and anguish. He is warning the family that if they don't start to take responsibility for others, they will live to regret it. The Inspector then leaves. Gerald finds out that the Inspector wasn't a real inspector. Mr Birling rings to check and there is no Inspector Goole. Also, there is no dead girl! Mr and Mrs Birling (and Gerald) celebrate and act like nothing has happened. Sheila and Eric still feel guilty and can't go back to how they were before. Right at the end, the telephone rings and they are told that a girl has just committed suicide and an inspector is on his way over to ask some questions. | <b>Inspector</b>   | Priestley's mouthpiece (representing his ideals), he is a keen socialist who advocates community responsibility and forces the Birlings to face up to what they have done.                                                                                                    |
|                                          |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Sheila</b>      | The daughter, who has Eva sacked from the shop for smirking at her. She begins as a spoilt bourgeois girl but quickly changes her views, feels sorry for Eva Smith and starts to become more of a socialist as the play progresses. She is ashamed of her parents at the end. |
|                                          |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Eric</b>        | The son, who is a young man of privilege. He drinks too much and has a one-night stand with Eva. He gets her pregnant and steals from his father to give Eva money. He begins to regret his actions, change his ways and is also ashamed of his parents at the end.           |
|                                          |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Gerald</b>      | Sheila's fiancé. A businessman who has capitalist ideals and is similar to Mr Birling politically. He shows some regret for his affair with Eva, but eventually relinquishes all sense of responsibility for his actions.                                                     |

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| <b>Key themes</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES:</b> the older generation (Mr and Mrs Birling) are a symbol of capitalism, so they do not change their ways and they are reluctant to accept blame for their role in Eva's demise. The younger generation, on the other hand (Sheila and Eric), become a symbol of socialism as the play progresses. They accept blame and want to change; they change throughout the play, for the better.                                                                                               |
| <b>RESPONSIBILITY / JUSTICE:</b> the Inspector, as Priestley's mouthpiece, is a symbol of socialism - he wants everyone to look after each other and to view community as very important. He is sent to uncover the family's wrongdoings and to make them see that they should take responsibility for others. Sheila and Eric realise this, but Mr and Mrs Birling do not.                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>GENDER INEQUALITY:</b> Priestley intended to show his audience that there was a lot of inequality back in 1912 when it came to how women were treated. By making certain characters out to be sexist, he highlighted this problem and tried to shame audiences into changing their own views about gender equality too. This is perhaps why the victim of their actions is a woman, and why she is working class (working class women were at the bottom of the hierarchy and the most vulnerable in those times). |
| <b>CLASS DIFFERENCES:</b> Priestley wanted to show that inequality between the classes still existed and that the upper-classes looked down upon the working-class in post-war Britain. In 'An Inspector Calls', Priestley explores the theme of class through the treatment and exploitation of working-class Eva Smith by the wealthy Birlings and Gerald Croft.                                                                                                                                                    |

# Subject terminology

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dramatic irony     | When the audience knows something that the characters do not. Dramatic irony is used usually to create tension or humour.                                                               |
| Real time          | When the stage time is real time; this makes the play more naturalistic. In 'An Inspector Calls', the Birlings' actions are unveiled in real time, making their downfall more dramatic. |
| Tension            | A dramatic device used to create a sense of suspense or to make the audience feel on edge; tension is often created through the use of cliff-hangers.                                   |
| Monologue          | A speech of some length which is usually directed to a second person, without them interrupting.                                                                                        |
| Act                | The division of a play ('AIC' is organised into three acts, and each one offers a dramatic twist in the plot).                                                                          |
| Interruptions      | When characters cut into the speech of other characters and stop them from speaking.                                                                                                    |
| Metaphor           | A descriptive technique that names a person, thing or action as something else.                                                                                                         |
| Contrast           | When two things are strikingly different to one another, serving to heighten their differences further.                                                                                 |
| Direct address     | When a speaker communicates directly to the person that they are speaking to, usually by addressing them with the pronoun 'you'.                                                        |
| Repetition         | When a word or phrase is noticeably repeated throughout a sentence/ paragraph/ whole text.                                                                                              |
| Cyclical structure | When the opening of the story is mirrored, or is repeated, at the end of the story. In the play, this is used to convey a message about change (or lack thereof).                       |
| Religious allusion | When a line references or reflects something to do with religion or the Bible.                                                                                                          |

# Literary context: morality play

Morality plays were first performed in the late middle ages. They are a type of **allegory** (a story which can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one). Morality plays were popular during the 15th and 16th centuries.

In these types of plays, the main characters are met by supporting characters who are personifications of good and evil. They are used to prompt the main character to **choose a good life over one of evil**. The point of a morality play was to **educate the audience and get them to lead a better life** so that they would determine a better fate for themselves in the 'after-life'. The supporting characters sometimes represented the **Seven Deadly Sins**. These were vices that people believed could lead to the eternal damnation of your soul if you committed them - you would go to hell forever. The Seven Deadly Sins were lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride. Whilst characters who committed these sins were punished, **morality plays showed that if a character repented, then they could redeem themselves**.

'An Inspector Calls' is a morality play because all of the Birlings and Gerald Croft commit crimes which are similar to the Seven Deadly Sins. Mr Birling is **greedy** because he wants more money, Sheila is guilty of **wrath and envy** when she spitefully complains about Eva Smith and so on. Not all of the characters manage to redeem themselves. Priestley uses the morality play structure to teach a 20<sup>th</sup> century audience a series of lessons that relate to his beliefs about **social responsibility, age, gender and class**. The audience is invited to enjoy judging these characters; they are also **forced to question their own behaviour**. Priestley would have hoped that people watching the play would have **left the theatre as better people**.

# Literary context: the well-made play

A well-made play is a popular dramatic genre from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a well-made play **the plot is intricate and complex** and the action builds to a **climax**. This is often concerned with **events that happened before the events of the play**.

A well-made play usually ends with a return to order but Priestley moves away from this genre with the revelation at the end. 'An Inspector Calls' is a well-made play because the events are all influenced by what happened to Eva Smith before the play takes place. This structure allows Priestley to **manipulate the audience**. They do not know what happened to Eva Smith and so each revelation about her treatment by the Birlings and Gerald Croft adds to the drama. Each revelation is more shocking than the last and so Priestley cleverly builds to the climax.

In 'An Inspector Calls' there is a **twist at the end of the plot**: the characters are unsure if the Inspector existed at all. This gives the audience time to reflect on the events of the play. When it is revealed that another inspector is on their way and the curtain falls, the audience would be stunned.

## HT4 'An Inspector Calls' - Vocabulary List

| Word             | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                            | In a sentence                                                                       | Synonyms |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Socialism     | A political ideology that believes society should be equal with everything – money, profits, business – shared equally between everyone.                                                              | Equality is one of the fundamental beliefs of socialism.                            |          |
| 2. Capitalism    | An economic system based on private ownership of property and business, with the goal of making the greatest possible profits for the owners.                                                         | Within capitalism, people are motivated by the idea of personal profit and success. |          |
| 3. Proletariat   | The class of people who do unskilled jobs in industry and own little or no property.                                                                                                                  | The members of the proletariat felt neglected by the capitalist system.             |          |
| 4. Bourgeoisie   | The part of society, including employers and people who run large companies, that has most of the money and takes advantage of ordinary workers/ the social group between the very rich and the poor. | The bourgeoisie were not always sympathetic to the plight of the proletariat.       |          |
| 5. Patriarchal   | Ruled or controlled by men.                                                                                                                                                                           | The patriarchal household was oppressive for those living there.                    |          |
| 6. Egocentric    | Thinking only of oneself, without regard for the feelings or desires of others.                                                                                                                       | The egocentric attitude of the politician angered his constituents.                 |          |
| 7. Hubris        | Excessive pride or self-confidence.                                                                                                                                                                   | His hubris prevented him from ever accepting that he had acted unfairly.            |          |
| 8. Affluent      | Having a lot of money and owning a lot of things.                                                                                                                                                     | They were envious of their affluent neighbours.                                     |          |
| 9. Influential   | Having a lot of power on someone or something.                                                                                                                                                        | The celebrity's beliefs were influential to many teenage girls.                     |          |
| 10. Exploitation | The act of using someone unfairly for your own advantage.                                                                                                                                             | The ruthless exploitation of the workers did not go unnoticed.                      |          |

#### HT4 'An Inspector Calls' - Vocabulary List

|                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                         |  |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 11. Antagonistic | Showing active opposition or hostility towards someone/ something.                  | The writer was antagonistic towards her critics.                                        |  |
| 12. Unrepentant  | When you do not feel sorry for something you have done.                             | The girls were unrepentant at their poor behaviour.                                     |  |
| 13. Omniscient   | All knowing/ having or seeming to have unlimited knowledge.                         | The character's omniscience made him seem invincible.                                   |  |
| 14. Petulant     | Easily annoyed and complaining in a rude, childlike way.                            | His petulant and ungrateful attitude during the school trip angered the other students. |  |
| 15. Submissive   | Allowing yourself to be controlled by others.                                       | He expected the children to be submissive and obey his every word.                      |  |
| 16. Supercilious | Behaving in a superior way towards others.                                          | The supercilious head teacher refused to help the neighbouring schools.                 |  |
| 17. Contrite     | Feeling or expressing sincere remorse.                                              | She clearly regretted her actions and was contrite in her apology.                      |  |
| 18. Impoverished | Very poor.                                                                          | The impoverished young actor relied on the help of others.                              |  |
| 19. Disempowered | To take away someone's confidence and feeling of being in control of their life.    | By not letting them speak, the leader left his workers feeling disempowered.            |  |
| 20. Contentious  | Likely to cause a disagreement or argument.                                         | The topic of Brexit is very contentious.                                                |  |
| 21. Feign        | Pretending to be affected by something i.e. a feeling.                              | She feigned enthusiasm at the very disappointing play.                                  |  |
| 22. Culpable     | Considered responsible for something bad that had happened/ deserving to be blamed. | He was held culpable for what had happened in the house.                                |  |
| 23. Narcissistic | Having too much interest in and admiration for yourself.                            | She was self-absorbed and narcissistic.                                                 |  |

#### HT4 'An Inspector Calls' - Vocabulary List

|                |                                                                                     |                                                                             |  |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 24. Abhorrent  | Something that provokes disgust or loathing.                                        | To watch someone being hurt and purposely do nothing about it is abhorrent. |  |
| 25. Regressive | Returning to a former or less developed state/ situation.                           | I saw at first-hand what a regressive prison regime does to prisoners.      |  |
| 26. Altruistic | A person unselfishly concerned for or devoted to the welfare of others.             | It is very rare that a large corporation behaves altruistically.            |  |
| 27. Emblematic | Representing a particular person, group or idea.                                    | A sword is emblematic of power.                                             |  |
| 28. Culpable   | Considered responsible for something bad that had happened/ deserving to be blamed. | He was held culpable for what had happened in the house.                    |  |
| 29. Repugnant  | Extremely distasteful; unacceptable.                                                | His selfishness is utterly repugnant.                                       |  |
| 30. Apathy     | A lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern                                          | He condemned the apathy of a society that was unwilling to change.          |  |