

Literature Paper 2: Section A		‘An Inspector Calls’ – J.B. Priestley	
1: Act One Summary	2: Act Two Summary	3: Act Three Summary	
<p>Act 1 opens with a celebration of Sheila and Gerald’s engagement, showing capitalist confidence and false optimism. Sheila is immature and dependent, while Eric’s drunken behaviour foreshadows his moral failure. Birling acts as a microcosm for the bourgeoisie businessman, promoting individualism and dismissing responsibility for others in his lengthy monologues. The Inspector’s arrival disrupts this, and he represents socialist ideas that challenge the bourgeoisie. Birling admits exploiting the proletariat by firing Eva Smith for asking for higher wages. Sheila initially reacts selfishly but undergoes an anagnorisis and accepts responsibility by rejecting capitalist values. The revelation that Eva Smith became Daisy Renton links Gerald to her exploitation, exposing further bourgeoisie hypocrisy.</p>	<p>In Act 2, Gerald tries to remove Sheila to protect his reputation and maintain control. However, Sheila refuses, showing moral growth and rejecting superficial bourgeoisie values. Gerald confesses his relationship with Daisy Renton, revealing his role in her exploitation, even if he presents it as sympathetic. The Inspector then questions Mrs Birling, a powerful matriarch who uses charity to reinforce social hierarchy rather than show genuine compassion. She denies knowing Eva and refuses her help, exposing clear capitalist hypocrisy. Mrs Birling refuses responsibility and blames the father, whom she calls a criminal who should be punished. This creates strong dramatic irony, as the audience and Sheila realise the father is Eric, further exposing the family’s hypocrisy and Priestley’s criticism of the capitalist system.</p>	<p>In Act 3, Eric admits his coercive exploitation of the proletariat, revealing how his abuse of privilege led to Eva’s pregnancy. His confession and anger towards his mother shows growing moral awareness. Birling tries to protect his reputation with money, but the Inspector rejects this and delivers a powerful socialist message: “we are responsible for each other,” warning of “fire and blood and anguish” if society does not change. After the Inspector leaves, Sheila becomes a moral mouthpiece, taking on his role and criticising her parents, highlighting the generational divide. The older bourgeoisie question the Inspector’s legitimacy, but the final phone call, announcing a real Inspector and the death of a young girl, creates a cyclical structure that reinforces Priestley’s socialist warning.</p>	
4: Key Context (AO3)	5: Key Vocabulary	6: Key Quotations – Eva Smith	
<p>An Inspector Calls was written in 1945 but set in 1912, a time of rigid class division. Society was deeply unequal: the working class faced exploitation, and women were oppressed and treated as commodities. There was no welfare state (no NHS or benefits), meaning the proletariat relied on limited charity controlled by the bourgeoisie. Priestley criticises this capitalist system and highlights the need for socialist change.</p> <p>Writing after two World Wars, Priestley reflects a 1945 desire for social reform, shown by Labour’s victory and the creation of a welfare state (e.g. the 1948 National Assistance Act). The Inspector acts as Priestley’s socialist mouthpiece, promoting collective responsibility and challenging the selfishness of the bourgeoisie.</p>	<p>anagnorisis: a character’s sudden realisation of the truth</p> <p>bourgeoisie: the wealthy middle/upper class, often seen as selfish</p> <p>capitalism: a system where businesses are focused on profit</p> <p>Edwardian: relating to the time of King Edward VII</p> <p>mouthpiece: someone who speaks for someone else’s views</p> <p>proletariat: the working class</p> <p>socialism: a system where resource are shared to benefit everyone</p> <p>cyclical structure: when a text ends in a similar way to how it began</p> <p>privilege: having advantage or benefit over others</p> <p>microcosm: a small example that represents a larger society</p> <p>hypocrisy: saying one thing but doing the opposite</p> <p>exploitation: unfairly using someone for personal gain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “young and fresh and charming” – Inspector Goole “one of my employees... a lively good-looking girl” – Mr Birling “If she’d been some miserable plain little creature, I don’t suppose I’d have done it.” – Sheila Birling “she was young and pretty and warm-hearted” – Gerald Croft “she was pretty and a good sport” – Eric Birling “a girl of that sort” – Mrs Birling 	

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7: Key Quotations - Inspector Goole	8: Key Quotations - Mr Birling	9: Key Quotations - Mrs Birling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The lighting should be pink and intimate until the Inspector arrives, and then it should be brighter and harder.” • “creates at once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness.” • “We are members of one body. We don’t live alone. We are responsible for each other.” • “It’s better to ask for the earth than to take it.” • “Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.” • “If men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own.” • "The famous younger generation who know it all“ • “Unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.” • “The Germans don’t want war.” • “If you don’t come down sharply on some of these people, they’d soon be asking for the earth.” • “I speak as a hard-headed practical man of business.” • “There’ll be a public scandal.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a rather cold woman and her husband’s social superior” • "As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money", • “Girls of that class” • "that was one of the things that prejudiced me against her case“ • "I accept no blame for it at all“ • "He should be made an example of“ • "I did nothing I'm ashamed of" 	
10: Key Quotations - Sheila Birling	11: Key Quotations - Eric Birling	12: Key Quotations - Gerald Croft	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited” • "Look Mummy isn't it a beauty? ... now I really feel engaged" • “But these girls aren’t cheap labour, they’re people.” • “You mustn’t try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the Inspector will just break it down.“ • “We really must stop these silly pretences.” • “it frightens me the way you talk" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "not quite at ease", half shy, half assertive" • “I wasn’t in love with her or anything. She was pretty and a good sport .” • “You're not the kind of father a chap could go to when he's in trouble.” • “Why shouldn’t they try for higher wages?” • “You killed them both – damn you, damn you.” • “The girl’s dead and we all helped to kill her.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “an attractive chap about thirty... rather too manly to be a dandy but very much the easy well-bred man-about-town” • “well-bred young man about town”, • “I didn’t install her there so that I could make love to her.” • “We’re respectable citizens and not criminals.” • “I became at once the most important person in her life.” • Everything’s all right now, Sheila. What about this ring?” 	