



AN INSPECTOR CALLS: RESPONSIBILITY V2: MODEL ANSWER

Adapted from Nimao's Answer

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AN INSPECTOR CALLS: RESPONSIBILITY V2: QUESTION

Explore How Priestley presents the theme of responsibility in the play.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]





AN INSPECTOR CALLS: RESPONSIBILITY V2: 100% MODEL ANSWER OUTLINE

ESSAY OUTLINE

Introduction

Hook (quote, question, metaphor, shocking fact/statistic)	“The point is, you don’t seem to have learnt anything”:
Building sentences (some background/contextual info)	one particular theme which Priestley revisited in plays such as <i>Dangerous Corner</i> , <i>I have Been Here Before</i> (1937) and <i>Time and the Calways</i> (1937) that was to feature in <i>An Inspector Calls</i> was that of the effects of an individual’s actions over time. The audience and, to a certain extent, the characters in these plays are shown possible projections of their actions which contrast poignantly with their present conditions. A second major theme which occurs is that of responsibility, both individual and collective, for those actions and the consequences.
Thesis statement (your position on the argument you are presenting)	Similarly, the Inspector’s final speech illustrates that Priestley does not treat responsibility as an obligation (unlike Dickens’ <i>Bleak House</i>), but as an imperative.

Body paragraph 1

Topic sentence (introduce what this paragraph is about)	An <i>Inspector Calls</i> is about the death of a young woman but it is not a whodunnit, at least not of the conventional, forensic kind.
Supporting sentences	An inspector arrives to investigate the death, but the questions he asks the well-heeled, complacent Birlings are not those of your typical policeman. In any case, the death is a suicide: there is no killer to be unmasked. Instead, a different kind of





<p>(your your analytical and contextual evidence)</p>	<p>culpability is being investigated, as we, and the Birlings, are led through a series of revelations which pass the moral blame for the girl’s death from one family member to another and, ultimately, to a whole social system and set of values. Therefore, the play can be seen as a criticism of class prejudices; for example, the upper class in Priestley’s experience, would have been made up of men like Gerald, Eric and Birling who lived by Birling’s mantra that ‘a man has to look after himself’. Priestley demonstrated his own attitude towards these class prejudices when he turned down a knighthood and a peerage, as both would be awarded by political parties. This also allows us to see how critical he would like us to be about the titles in the play: Sir Croft, Gerald’s father, is so much of a snob he doesn’t even celebrate Gerald’s engagement to Sheila, who comes from a family he sees as socially inferior. However, this class snobbery has a deeper effect than simply making the Birlings and Crofts unlikeable; it leads to tragedy and loss of life.</p>
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<p>Concluding sentence(s)</p> <p>(final thoughts this paragraph)</p>	<p>In particular, the way they treat Eva, as a simple casualty of capitalism, is exactly the way he accused the generals of throwing away the lives of their men, the “John Smiths” in World War 1 and World War 2.</p>
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Body paragraph 2

<p>Topic sentence</p> <p>(introduce what this paragraph is about)</p>	<p>An Inspector Calls is a straightforward three-act play where the action is continuous and the pace brisk.</p>
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<p>Supporting sentences</p> <p>(your your analytical and contextual evidence)</p>	<p>Priestley’s language is also not difficult to understand; the dialogue is composed of what he himself called ‘that familiar flat idiom’. He deliberately chose a wide channel of communication and wanted to reach the widest audience possible because simplicity to Priestley was a virtue. He once wrote that he ‘wanted to write something that at a pinch could be read aloud in a bar parlour. And the time soon came when I was read and understood in a 1000 bar parlours’. Consequently, An Inspector Calls has been heard and understood in thousands of theatres around the world, its simplicity a large factor in its enduring appeal. However, Priestley also incorporates other strategies for language such as subtext, ambiguity and shock. For example, when addressing Eva’s death, he says, “Suicide of course”; here, the curtailed sentences perhaps mimics her curtailed life, however, with the throw away tag “of course” The Inspector suggests it is completely normal for a working-class girl to react this way – the implication being that the oppression of the upper classes leaves them no choice.</p>
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<p>Concluding sentence(s)</p> <p>(final thoughts this paragraph)</p>	<p>It also suggests that the manner of Eva’s death is a common occurrence and that Eva is simply a statistic among many suicides of working-class men and women.</p>
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Body paragraph 3 (OPTIONAL)

<p>Topic sentence</p> <p>(introduce what this paragraph is about)</p>	
<p>Supporting sentences</p> <p>(your your analytical and contextual evidence)</p>	
<p>Concluding sentence(s)</p> <p>(final thoughts this paragraph)</p>	

Conclusion

<p>Restated thesis</p> <p>(your position of the argument you are presenting)</p>	<p>To conclude, the second death carries with it Priestley’s political point that the lessons of World War 1, represented by the death of Eva, were not learnt, so the Birlings now face, in the final word of the play, “questions”.</p>
<p>Summary of controlling concept</p> <p>(central theme)</p>	<p>Priestley’s question in 1945 is about how the ruling classes allowed World War 2 to occur, so that millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths lost their lives again. Eric and Sheila, therefore, represent the younger generation who grew up in the interwar years and failed to live up to their responsibility. To emphasise this point, in the climactic speech of the play, the Inspector warns the Birlings that ‘We don’t live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other’; he is echoing Priestley’s wartime message, and his hopes for the postwar world. In fact, it can be argued that Priestley more directly answers the question Dickens posed about responsibility a hundred years before. We need only substitute Eva Smith for Joe, the sweeper and he goes further than posing it;</p>
<p>Author’s purpose</p> <p>(why the author wrote the text)</p>	<p>he warns us, realistically, the disaster that continued irresponsibility will bring. Priestley’s play, therefore, reflected the mood of the country, who ousted Winston Churchill and his Conservative government, that had taken them to war and replaced them with the socialist Labour government; it’s not Sheila and Eric, but their children who have learnt the Inspector’s lesson.</p>





Final thought

(What key idea(s) do we learn?)

However, through all the tragedy and disaster of the two world wars, Priestley may be telling us that second chances do come, even out of the most unpromising circumstances; and if the vision was lost in 1914, and even in 1945, all may not be lost forever.

MAKE SURE YOUR ESSAY CONTAINS ALL OF THESE QUALITIES

Tick these off when you have added them to your essay

- Methods - author's techniques
- ~~Context~~
- ~~Effects of the author's methods on the audience/reader~~
- Link to another part of the text - talk about the meaning of the connection
- Symbolism
- Themes
- Author's purpose

MCELSTA





AN INSPECTOR CALLS: RESPONSIBILITY V2: 100% MODEL ANSWER

Explore How Priestley presents the theme of responsibility in the play.

“The point is, you don’t seem to have learnt anything” - one particular theme which Priestley revisited in plays such as *Dangerous Corner*, *I have Been Here Before* (1937) and *Time and the Calways* (1937) that was to feature in *An Inspector Calls* was that of the effects of an individual’s actions over time. The audience and, to a certain extent, the characters in these plays are shown possible projections of their actions which contrast poignantly with their present conditions. A second major theme which occurs is that of responsibility, both individual and collective, for those actions and the consequences. Similarly, the Inspector’s final speech illustrates that Priestley does not treat responsibility as an obligation (unlike Dickens’ *Bleak House*), but as an imperative.

An Inspector Calls is about the death of a young woman but it is not a whodunnit, at least not of the conventional, forensic kind. An inspector arrives to investigate the death, but the questions he asks the well-heeled, complacent Birlings are not those of your typical policeman. In any case, the death is a suicide: there is no killer to be unmasked. Instead, a different kind of culpability is being investigated, as we, and the Birlings, are led through a series of revelations which pass the moral blame for the girl’s death from one family member to another and, ultimately, to a whole social system and set of values. Therefore, the play can be seen as a criticism of class prejudices; for example, the upper class in Priestley’s experience, would have been made up of men like Gerald, Eric and Birling who lived by Birling’s mantra that ‘a man has to look after himself’. Priestley demonstrated his own attitude towards these class prejudices when he turned down a knighthood and a peerage, as both would be awarded by political parties. This also allows us to see how critical he would like us to be about the titles in the play: Sir Croft, Gerald’s father, is so much of a snob he doesn’t even celebrate Gerald’s engagement to Sheila, who comes from a family he sees as socially inferior. However, this class snobbery has a deeper effect than simply making the Birlings and Crofts unlikeable; it leads to tragedy and loss of life. In particular, the way they treat Eva, as a simple casualty of capitalism, is exactly the way he accused the generals of throwing away the lives of their men, the “John Smiths” in World War 1 and World War 2.

Additionally, Priestley conveys his message about responsibility through a straightforward three-act structure where the action is continuous and the pace brisk. Priestley’s language is also not difficult to understand; the dialogue is composed of what he himself called ‘that familiar flat idiom’. He deliberately chose a wide channel of communication and wanted to reach the widest audience possible because simplicity to Priestley was a virtue. He once wrote that he ‘wanted to write something that at a pinch could be read aloud in a bar parlour. And the time soon came when I was read and understood in a 1000 bar parlours’. Consequently, *An Inspector Calls* has been heard and understood in thousands of theatres around the world, its simplicity a large factor in its enduring appeal. However, Priestley also incorporates other strategies for language such as subtext, ambiguity and shock. For example, when addressing the cause of Eva’s death, the Inspector simply says, “Suicide of course”; here, the curtailed sentence perhaps mimics her curtailed life, however, with the throw away tag “of course”, The Inspector suggests it is completely normal for a working-class girl to react this way – the implication being that the oppression of the upper classes leaves them no choice. It also suggests that the manner of Eva’s death is a common occurrence and that Eva is simply a statistic among many suicides of working-class men and women.

To conclude, the second death carries with it Priestley’s political point that the lessons of World War 1, represented by the death of Eva, were not learnt, so the Birlings now face, in the final word of the play, “questions”. Priestley’s question in 1945 is about how the ruling classes allowed World War 2 to occur, so that millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths lost their lives again. Eric and Sheila, therefore, represent the younger generation who grew up in the interwar years and failed to live up to their responsibility. To emphasise this point, in the climactic speech of the play, the Inspector warns the Birlings that ‘We don’t live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other’; he is echoing Priestley’s wartime





message, and his hopes for the postwar world. In fact, it can be argued that Priestley more directly answers the question Dickens posed about responsibility a hundred years before. We need only substitute Eva Smith for Joe, the sweeper and he goes further than posing it; he warns us, realistically, the disaster that continued irresponsibility will bring. Priestley's play, therefore, reflected the mood of the country, who ousted Winston Churchill and his Conservative government, that had taken them to war and replaced them with the socialist Labour government; it's not Sheila and Eric, but their children who have learnt the Inspector's lesson. However, through all the tragedy and disaster of the two world wars, Priestley may be telling us that second chances do come, even out of the most unpromising circumstances; and if the vision was lost in 1914, and even in 1945, all may not be lost forever.

