An Inspector Calls
by J.B. Priestley

In Act One of 'An Inspector Calls' how does J.B. Priestley use dramatic devices to convey his concerns and ideas to the members of the audience, as well as interest and involve them in his play?

Introduction

You need to give some details about the playwright's concerns, as well as the social and historical background to the play. Some ideas you need to comment on are:

- what it is that the Inspector wants to show or teach the Birlings;
- what Priestley's main concerns were;
- why the dates 1912 (when the play is set) and 1945 (when the play was first performed) are important;
- the genre 'An Inspector Calls' belongs to (the type of play it is).

The main part

You need to show how the playwright uses a variety of different dramatic devices to influence the audience. The main devices you should write about are:

- the use of dramatic irony very early on in the play;
- the significance of the lighting at the start of the play compared to the way it changes when the Inspector enters;
- the use of the doorbell as a sound effect;
- the effect the introduction of a new major character has on the rest of the characters;
- the way character exits are used to further the plot;
- the effect of the end of Act One on an audience;
- the fact that much of Act One is actually ironic in retrospect.

Conclusion

You should write a paragraph which relates back to the question about the effect of the dramatic devices in Act One on an audience. Some ideas you could comment on are:

- how the playwright changes your opinion of the Birlings during Act One;
- the methods Priestley uses to interest and involve the audience;
- what you think the playwright's message and why it is still relevant today.