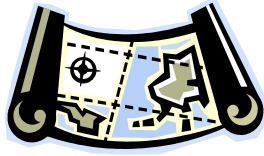


Writing a fabulous exam essay

Read the question carefully and underline key words. Ensure you know what the question is asking you BEFORE you start writing.



Always write a plan so you know where you are going before you set off and so the examiner has an idea of where you intended to go if you run out of time.

It can be a bullet point list like this:

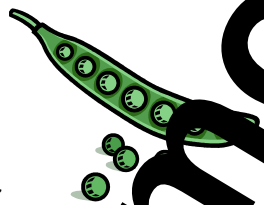
- Stage directions – seating of Mr and Mrs Birling.
- Characters' conversations with each other – Sheila / Gerald: last summer.
- Lighting.

Put one diagonal line through your plan when you have finished your answer. If you still think the examiner might muddle up your plan with the rest of your answer, write PLAN in really big letters above that bit of your writing.

Write an introduction to your essay, even if it is only one or two sentences but avoid merely repeating the essay title. Something like:

In *An Inspector Calls* Priestley conveys the change of atmosphere through the rising tension of the conversations between the Inspector and the other characters; through the stage directions and lighting and the juxtaposition of the characters' obvious wealth and material comfort with the reality of Eva's poverty.

will do.



Remember

POINT → Birling treats his son and daughter as if they are children, at one point telling Sheila to 'run along'. ← **EVIDENCE. ANALYSIS** →
 His manner is patronising and his behaviour signals to the audience that he is ignorant of his children's developing maturity.

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An Inspector Calls

Refer to the playwright. Remember, the play probably took him a long time to write and he was proud of it, so don't leave him out of your essay: Priestley presents the Inspector in this way because ... Priestley wants the audience to understand / sympathise / empathise / recognise / see / remember

Use formal language:

Birling becomes defiant because he is anxious about the Inspector's motives.

rather than:

Birling freaks out because he reckons the Inspector is on to him.

Write about the play in the present tense. Remember it is a play, not real life, so it is always happening, it never ends – the Birlings are always celebrating and the Inspector is forever coming in and spoiling their evening.



Refer to the play and the audience: not the reader and the book.

Be very specific with your language and use a variety of vocabulary. If necessary, write yourself a list before you start your essay so you can refer to it whilst you're writing. Don't refer to anything as 'nice'. What does that mean anyway? Is 'being nice' a compliment?

Always have a conclusion – don't leave your essay 'hanging'. Draw your points together. Imagine you are leaving a friend's house – it's a bit rude to leave without saying goodbye and shutting the door behind you; essay writing is the same (but not as draughty).

Up until the Inspector's entrance in Act 1 the audience might believe that, despite a few hints of tension, the Birlings and Gerald are having a very pleasant celebratory dinner. However, after the Inspector's arrival any appearance of happiness rapidly disappears as Priestley draws the audience's attention to the many things wrong with the Birlings' complacency: through their interaction with the Inspector and each other; the stage directions and the lighting.