**An Inspector Calls – Smug Points**

From the outset there is an air of unease and mystery – many questions remain unanswered, introducing the over-riding theme of covering up the truth

The opening exchanges clearly establish the personalities and defining traits of the key characters – these then become their weaknesses and Priestley uses the Inspector to ‘change’ them

The structural integrity of the Birling family is compromised, leading to collapse. The Birlings represent society in general, and the failings Priestley perceived. In the revival staging the house collapses to add a visual metaphor to this, and the steps fall back to create the silhouette of a cannon, giving a reminder about the wars that have taken place

Each character’s defining trait represents a different element of the society Priestley wished to highlight – none of the characters are in any way ‘loveable’. The huge dramatic irony of Birling’s big speech emphasises this

The Inspector conducts the revenge that Eva Smith never sought – in this sense, even though they never met, he was / is her one true friend

The Inspector rings the doorbell just as Birling is about to launch into another didactic diatribe about his ‘society’. By doing this, Priestley silences Birling and introduces the ‘new way’ of thinking

The play highlights the view that the established Middle Classes spend their time hiding and repressing truths in order to maintain face

The play also challenges the stereotypes of Gender at the time by making all the characters conform to them, and then making the characters negative because of it

There are many religious allusions – judgement, learning, the loss of innocence. Priestley uses the old style ‘Morality’ plays as a structural basis for the play – a preached warning against the perils of temptation and the fallibility of man, but without God

The stage directions highlight the contrasts: the Birlings are well dressed, the Inspector is plain; the lighting goes from ‘pink and intimate’ to ‘brighter and harsher’

The exits and entrances are as significant as the words that are said – it is a very ‘visual’ play

The euphemisms in the language – ‘woman of the town’ (prostitute), ‘condition’ (pregnant) – reflect many things: the ‘other world’ the Birlings inhabit; the repressing and hiding of truths; the inability of the Birlings to connect with reality; the stifled and blinkered nature of the society Priestley wished to lambast. In direct contrast, the Inspector speaks bluntly and openly, the way Priestley thinks it should be done