

J B PRIESTLEY'S  
CLASSIC THRILLER

# AN INSPECTOR CALLS

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Tension & Drama in  
*An Inspector Calls*

LIMITED SEASON FROM  
4 NOVEMBER 2016

PLAYHOUSE THEATRE  
EMBANKMENT WC2

Let's review the plot by watching [this video](#):

How does the narrative progress?

What is the chain of events?

**1. The Beginning**  
Introduce the main characters and describe the setting. What will your opening sentence be?

**2. The Build-Up**  
What things happen? What clues are there? What is said? How do you build up the excitement?

**3. The Problem or Dilemma**  
Things might go wrong! Is there a mystery, or do terrible things happen? Are there any disagreements?

**4. The Resolution**  
How are things going to be sorted out? Problems have to be solved, and people made happy again.

**5. The Ending**  
Does the story end happily ever after? What have people learned? Have characters changed?

**THE STORY MOUNTAIN PLANNER** Name ..... Date .....

## ***How does the writer create tension and drama in this extract?***

***Sheila:*** No, but you haven't finished asking questions – have you?

***Inspector:*** No.

***Sheila:*** *(to Gerald)* You see? *(to Inspector)* then I'm staying.

***Gerald:*** Why should you? It's bound to be unpleasant and disturbing.

***Inspector:*** And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?

***Gerald:*** If possible – yes.

***Inspector:*** Well, we know one young woman who wasn't, don't we?

# Key Terms

<b>Tension:</b>	a nervous, anxious feeling
<b>Mystery:</b>	something unknown or unresolved
<b>Suspense:</b>	waiting to find out
<b>Drama:</b>	conflict between characters or problems achieving goals
<b>Irony:</b>	the unexpected or deliberate opposite
<b>Dramatic Irony:</b>	when the audience knows something that the characters don't

# Using Key Terms

There is **tension** when...

We feel **tense** when...

**Mystery** is used to...

It is **mysterious** when...

**Suspense** is used to...

We are **held in suspense** when...

It is **dramatic** when...

This creates **drama** because...

**Irony** is used to...

It is **ironic** when...

**Dramatic irony** occurs when...

**Dramatic irony** is used to...

# Investigating Tension

Can you identify any of the four types of tension?

- 1. The tension of relationships**
- 2. The tension of the task**
- 3. The tension of surprise**
- 4. The tension of mystery**

# Investigating Tension

## 1. The tension of relationships

A engaging story will contain layers of interpersonal conflict. The tension of relationships is shown both through dialogue between characters and what they don't say: the unspoken undercurrents beneath the dialogue.

➤ *What difficulties exist between the characters in the story?*

## 2. The tension of the task

Think about what the protagonist is trying to accomplish, and what obstacles are put in their way.

➤ *How is it difficult for the main character to accomplish their goals?*

# Investigating Tension

## 3. The tension of surprise

These are the moments you want to shake things up a bit and turn the reader's expectations on their head. Often a surprise is used as a cliff-hanger at the end of a chapter, such as:

- A plot twist we didn't see coming.
- A new reveal of information.
- A shot of humour in the middle of a bleak situation.
- The appearance of an unexpected character.
- A crisis or major event that catches us by surprise.
- A character who does something unpredictable, even shocking.

➤ *What surprises occur as the plot unfolds?*

## 4. The tension of mystery

A mystery is any unanswered question you place in your reader's mind. These questions are what keep your readers turning pages. Often there is a central question or mystery that runs throughout a whole book, with the final reveal left for the climax.

➤ *What remains unsolved until the climax and conclusion of the novel?*

# Investigating Tension

Can you identify any of the four types of tension?

## 1. The tension of relationships

➤ *What difficulties exist between the characters in the story?*

## 2. The tension of the task

➤ *How is it difficult for the main character to accomplish their goals?*

## 3. The tension of surprise

➤ *What surprises occur as the plot unfolds?*

## 4. The tension of mystery

➤ *What remains unsolved until the climax and conclusion of the story?*

## Look at the extract again and see if you can use a greater variety of terminology to analyse it.

**Sheila:** No, but you haven't finished asking questions – have you?

**Inspector:** No.

**Sheila:** (to Gerald) You see? (to Inspector) then I'm staying.

**Gerald:** Why should you? It's bound to be unpleasant and disturbing.

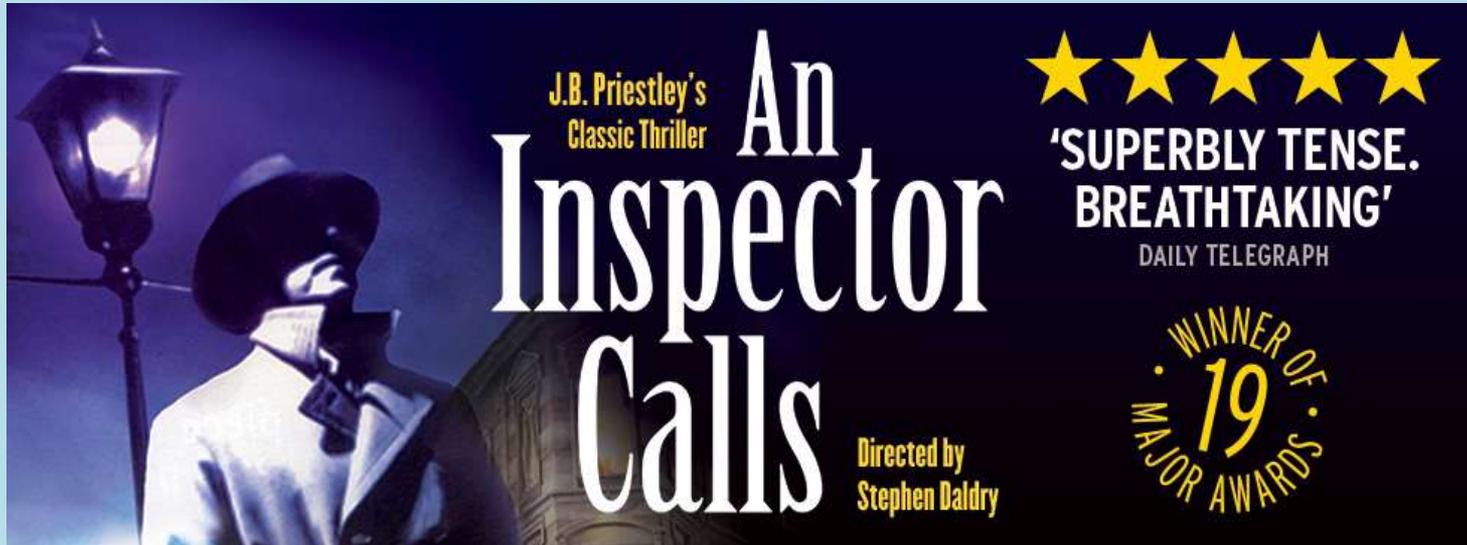
**Inspector:** And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?

**Gerald:** If possible – yes.

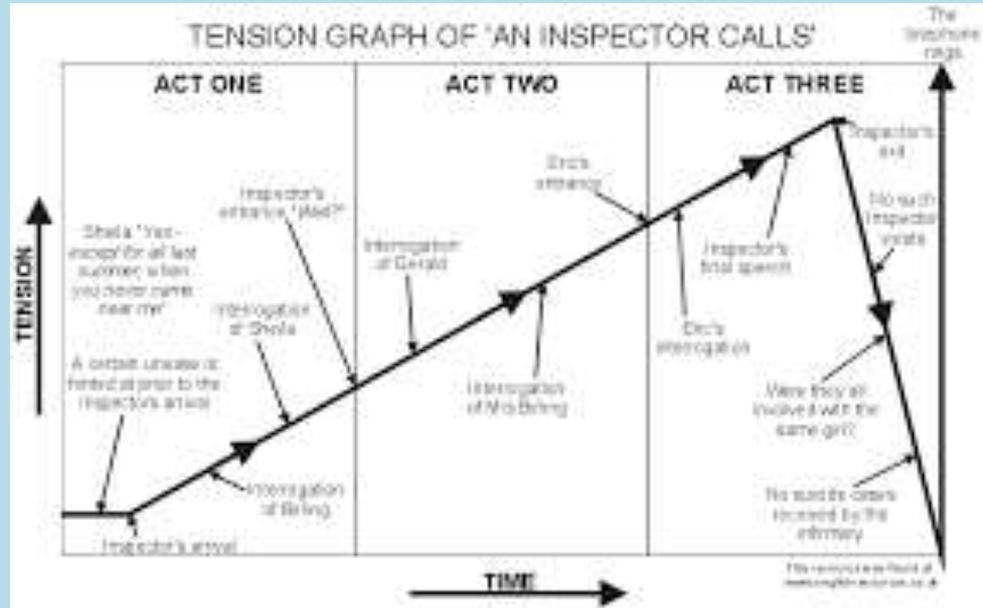
**Inspector:** Well, we know one young woman who wasn't, don't we?

# An Inspector Calls

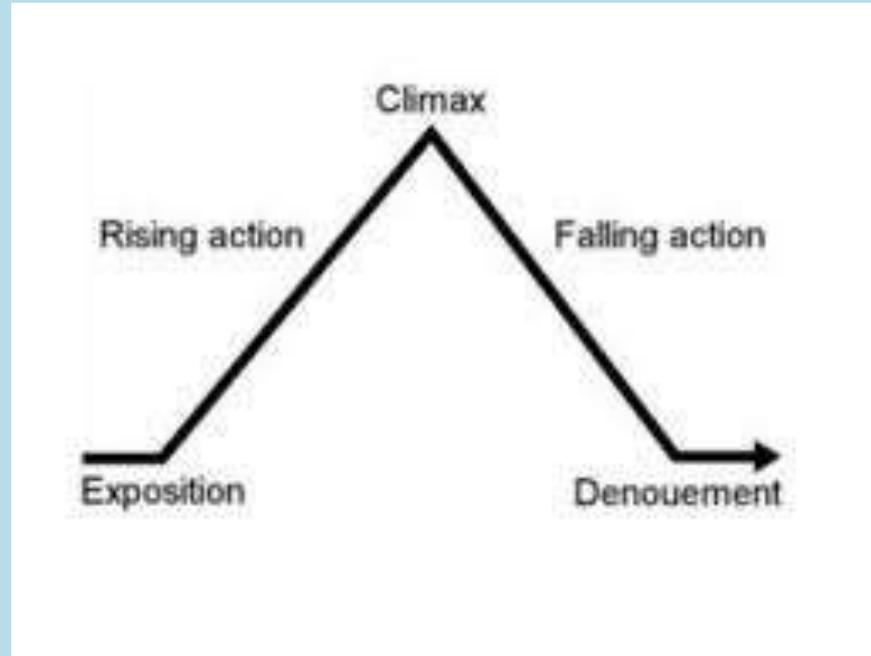
Dramatic & Stylistic  
features



# Graph outlining the tension through Act 1 to Act 3:



This demonstrates the order of the features within a well made play:



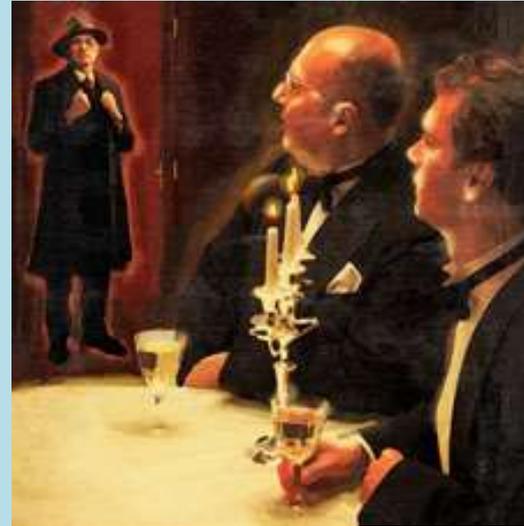
# 1. Exposition



"about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior."

## 2. Entrances and Exits

The Inspector arrives immediately after Birling has told Gerald about his impending knighthood and about how "a man has to look after himself and his own."



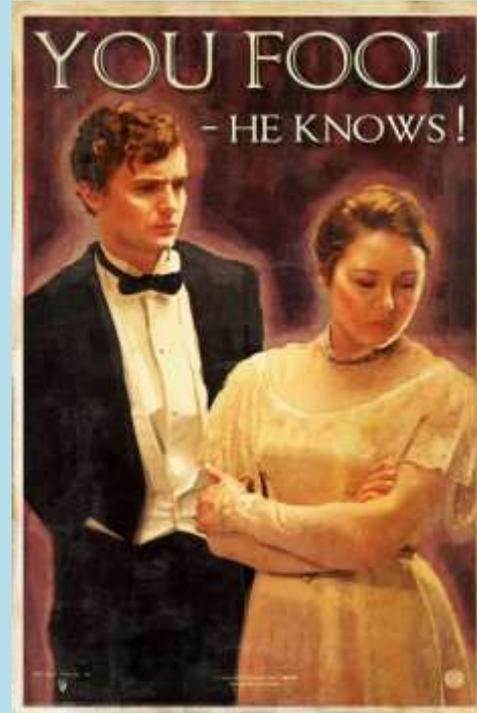
### 3. The obligatory scene



“Two hours ago a young woman died in the infirmary. She’d be taken there this afternoon because she’d swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out, of course.”

## 4. The climactic curtain

At the end of act one after Sheila has explained to Gerald that the Inspector is waiting for an explanation from Gerald he uses a short sentence saying “Well?” to create tension. After that short sentence the curtain immediately falls. As the audience wait for the curtain to rise they are eager to find out what Gerald has to say.



## 5. Mistaken identity



In Act 3 we begin to wonder whether Eva Smith ever really existed. Gerald says, "We've no proof it was the same photograph and therefore no proof it was the same girl." Mr Birling adds, "There wasn't the slightest proof that this Daisy Renton really was Eva Smith." Yet the final phone call, announcing that a police inspector is shortly to arrive at the Birlings' house to investigate the suicide of a young girl, makes us realise that maybe Eva Smith did exist after all.

## 6. Plot

No situation throughout the play is irrelevant or insignificant and issues and clashes between them help to add tension. These clashes are always for the same reasons: different classes, which generation deals better with the blame and the most important, who can take responsibility, bearing in mind that everything is around Eva's suicide.



## 7. The Dénouement



The final denouement is the phone call announcing that a police inspector is on his way to ask some questions about a girl who has just died in the infirmary. It is shocking and surprising and ensures that the audience will leave the auditorium in a state of real shock.

# Weblinks - AIC

- Tension in AIC - some notes [here](#)
- Another school's revision guide with extracts [here](#)
- BBC Bitesize notes on Dramatic Effect [here](#)
- Outline of other dramatic devices used [here](#)