**How and why does Sheila change in An Inspector Calls?  
Write about:  
• how Sheila responds to her family and to the Inspector  
• how Priestley presents Sheila by the ways he writes.**

**Answer 1**

Throughout the play 'An Inspector Calls' the character of Sheila Birling changes from being fairly obnoxious and also quite childlike to being more grown up and responsible for her own actions. In the beginning of the play, Sheila calls her mother Mummy. 'Yes, go on, Mummy'.

The word 'Mummy' has extremely childlike and young connotation as it suggests that Sheila is of a very young age as normally only small children call their parents Mummy and Daddy. It is also a stereotypically posh thing to say, reflecting Sheila's class and upbringing and shows that she is quite highly strung and reflects that she values a high class of person.

Alternitively, the word 'Mummy' can be seen to reflect how Sheila is ignoring the fact that she is growing up and shows her immaturity as a character. Her character almost makes herself seem younger on purpose because growing up is associated with having more responsibility and maybe taking responsibility and seeing the bigger picture which was very much opposite to the capitalist society at the time.

In contrast, after Preistley introduces the character of the Inspector and he reveals how Sheila helped to kill the girl, Sheila's character undergoes a transformation, The character of the Inspector forces Sheila to grow up and she then begins to respond differently to her family particularly Mrs Birling. At the start of Act Two, Sheila begins to call Mrs Birling 'Mother' rather than 'Mummy'. 'Mother, I couldn't possibly go'. The word 'Mother' in this quote shows how Sheila has changed because she addresses Mrs Birling as another adult and not as if Sheila herself is a child. This shows how Sheila's character has changed as it is evident of her growing up and becoming more mature as it shows that she is no longer being childlike as she was before. Preistley presents Sheila as a character who realises she is responsible in the bigger picture and presents the character of Sheila as exploring socialist themes much like the character of Inspector Goole. Towards the middle of Act Two, Sheila begins to defy her family (particularly her parents) and take sides with the Inspector. 'You wait, Mother.' This short phrase reflects this as she begins to talk back to Mrs Birling. The word 'you' could be used by Preistley to emphasize that Sheila is definitely addressing her Mother and shows that she has began to wake up to the world around her and see that things are wrong with way she has been living because she has seen how her actions can affect others. The Inspector says that 'the young ones' are 'more impressionable' in response to Mrs Birling which reflects that the Inspector has changed Sheila's character as he kick starts her bad response to her parents. This technique of making Sheila's character feel responsible and changing the way she thinks is used by Preistley in the play to emphasize generations being seperate from each other and how society was changing from capitalist to socialist at the time and reflects that Sheila changes because she can see how what she does has a knock on effect on others.

Sheila is also presented by Preistly as a character who feels great guilt and remorse for what she has done, considerably more than the other characters in the play. Throughout the play Sheila keeps publicly reminding herself of what she has done and wishes she wasn't involved or at the forefront of the attention which shows her character has changed because at the beginning of the play she often was presented as making jokes and comments so people would look and listen to her and also as judging other characters.

'You're squiffy'. This short phrases emphasizes how Sheila's character is making statements and the word 'squiffy' suggests Eric is drunk which is a kind of secret in the Birling house at the time. Preistly presents Sheila's character as possibly trying to highlight the wrongs with other characters in the beginning as Sheila knows that by pointing out that Eric is drunk will get Eric into trouble.

Later on in the play, in contrast to this, Sheila's character changes to pointing out wrongs with herself rather than others which shows another transformation of her character: 'it was I who had the girl...' The word 'I' in this quote is used by Preistly to show that Sheila has begun to feel bad about herself as 'I' is a possessive word whereas earlier in the play Preistley used the word 'you' more often when Sheila spoke which reflects that Sheila has changed. This is because her character feels guilty and remorseful so she finds faults with herself rather than others as she feels she is to blame. As a result of this change she responds to her family in a less obnoxious way and also to the inspector in a more accepting and agreeable manner.

***SUMMATIVE COMMENT - Overall, this is a coherent and considered response to the task. There are a range of apt references integrated into the argument being presented. The candidate deals with Sheila as a construct, analyses aspects of language very effectively, and has a firm grasp of contextual ideas.  
  
SPaG=4  
  
Remember:  
Think about the effects of methods on the audience.***

***MARK – 23 (Grade 7)***

**Answer 2**

At the beginning of the play, Sheila is presented as a delicate, subdued and proper young lady who is quite fragile. Her fiancée Gerald asserts that Sheila should be left out of the investigation as it would be 'unpleasant and disturbing' for her, suggesting she has pehaps not been involved with 'unpleasant' bussiness before as she has lead a very sheltered and comfortable life in her upper class family so far, or that she doesn't have the stomach for matters beyond her usual day to day life. The other characters in the play pity her and feel she is a bit pathetic and perhaps unimportant they treat her like a child saying she's had a 'long exciting and tiring day' and wish to dissmiss her, showing they have no real respect for her as a character.

However, as the audience, we start to see subtle hints that there is more to Sheila than the other characters seem to percieve. When trying to object to Gerald about what he was doing the last summer, Priestly writes that her tone should be 'half serious, half playful' indicating she may know more than she lets on to, or that she has a stronger opinion she feels she can't express. This appears to be down to her situation within the family, that nobody there truly respects her, and also at the time of the play is set, in the early 1900s, the fact that she was a women meant her opinions would more than likley be dissmissed, so she remains subdued.

Once the Inspector has arrived, however, Sheila starts to assert herself more. When Gerald suggests that she leaves, she tells him 'I'm staying', and even calls him a 'fool' when Gerald suggests they try and keep his affair with Daisy Renton secret. The turning point for her character seems to be when the Inspector exposes what she did to Daisy Renton. Originally she 'gives a half-stifled sob, and then runs out,' the reaction the audience was probably expecting from the way she is first presented. Then she returns and confesses the whole story and promises she'll 'never, never do it again'. The Inspector bringing out this story has exposed her temper and true nature to her family and fiancée, so after that, there is no point in Sheila putting up pretences and hiding her true feelings. This is why she changes after the inspector arrives and why she stands out as different from the family; she is the first to be exposed and therefore the first to accept responsibility for her actions and feel remorse.

By the end of the play, Sheila has completely changed from the character first presented. Originally she wouldn't express herself, by the end she is contradicting her parents as well as trying to bring to their attention the fact they should have learnt something; Sheila has really matured and opened up as a character. In the final scene, Priestly's note on the tone of her voice is 'passionatley', a stark contrast to the beggining. She points out to her parents that they 'began to learn something', but that they stopped. She recognises the fault in her parents thinking and expresses herself on it. The guilt of her part in the girls death and the realisation of her responsibility in the matter caused Sheila to open up and stand up for herself. The Inspector's visit changed her viewpoint on matters, and by the end she has changed to become a strong and forthright woman.

***SUMMATIVE COMMENT - A very clear and thoughtful response to Sheila which engages with her as a character. There is focus on some parts of the task but doesn't deal with why she changes, and therefore doesn't really address context in a thorough way.  
  
SPaG=3***

***MARK – 18 (grade 5)***

**Answer 3**

The character of Sheila Birling undergoes the most dramatic character reformation out of all the others in 'An Inspector Calls'. She is used as a vessel for Priestley to present his Socialist ideas, and his belief that the young are the future. This is evidenced in the scene in which the Inspector tells Sheila's mother that 'the young are more impressionable'.

The play starts off at Sheila's engagement party. She is presented almost immediately to be childish, and more than a little naive. The first words we hear her say are said 'gaily and possessively', as instructed by the stage directions. This concealed possessiveness also hints at an undercurrent of unease. This is later reinforced with her asking Gerald to 'go on, you just object!', in a mock aggressive tone. Allegorically, this is symbolic of all children of well-off capitalist families sensing something wrong with this way of thinking.

However, all the discontent they feel is glossed over with banality and vapidity, hence the heavy use of the word 'mock'. A sense of tension is established between Sheila and her fiancée fairly early on when she mentions 'last summer, when you hardly came near me'. This is done half seriously, half playfully. The rest of this particular conversation with Gerald continues in this tone, instilling a sense of anticipation on the audience.

Sheila also calls her mother 'Mummy', a childish affectation, deliberately done to present her as spoilt and innocent of the world. She is a representation of all the upper class stereotypes, done so as to make the audience relate to her personally, or at least recognise a character trait she has in a friend or relative.

Sheila is the second member of the Birling family to be interrogated by the Inspector about the death of Eva Smith. She begins to sympathise with the girl's plight, saying warmly that 'it's a rotten shame', with regards to her father firing Eva. Later on, she noticeably defends the girls, by exclaiming that 'they're not cheap labour-they're people.' This scene begins her metaphorical transformation from blithe, class orientated capitalist, into a believer and advocator of Socialism. Although not said explicitly, Sheila's lines definitely become more profound and left leaning. Then, we learn how Sheila was involved. She confesses to getting the girl fired in a fit of temper. We are told it is 'the last steady job she had'. Unlike her father before her, Sheila is physically distressed and begins to cry. Her anger at herself also manifests itself as she snaps at Gerald, when it is clear he hadn't actually done anything to provoke it. She projects her anger at herself onto him as a coping mechanism. This is a metaphor, hearkening back to capitalism blame culture, and the upper classes refusal to accept any responsibility for anything. The reason Sheila fires the girl is that she believes the girl to be mocking her in the dressing room at a prestigious department store. It is later revealed that this is only because Eva Smith looks prettier in the dress than Sheila. Firing someone over a fit of pure vanity is a blatant statement of Priestley's opinions of the upper class- whom he believes can be utterly callous, as demonstrated here with Sheila, and later on with her mother. When the inquiry is finished, Sheila almost breaks down. The use of remorse helps the audience to again sympathise and relate to her, but on a more human level than in the beginning. Near the end of Act 1, she is described as 'laughing hysterically', when Gerald says that there is no need to tell the inspector about his connections to Eva Smith. She tells him that 'he knows'. This reflects Sheila's acceptance, and willingness to share blame as a reason for Eva's suicide.

The beginning of Act 2 shows us Gerald telling Inspector Goole that Sheila has 'had a long and exciting day'. This is another example of people treating her like a child, except this time around, she fiercely rebukes him, telling him she couldn't possibly leave now. This is also done calmly, with an air of someone accepting their fate. She admits to being hysterical, although this is only done as an explicit translation of what Gerald is trying to get across. Interestingly, Gerald refers to Sheila (who is his fiancée) as 'Miss Birling', here, suggesting a mental disconnection. This is used to represent the difference between Socialist and capitalist ideals.

***SUMMATIVE COMMENT - This is a very well-structured, conceptualised argument. There is fine-grained and insightful analysis of language and a willingness to engage with challenging ideas. There is a clear sense that this candidate is engaging with the text as a play; character as construct, structure of scenes, use of stage directions, and so on.  
  
SPaG=4***

***MARK – 27 (grade 8/9)***

**Answer 4**

**How does Priestly explore responsibility in 'An Inspector calls'?**

In 'an inspector calls' responsibility is explored by Priestly to show how your social status would determine your responsibility in life.

Priestly uses the inspector as a catalyst to elevate the severity and seriousness of the situation. However when Mrs Birling comes under the inspectors scrutiny, her response to his accusations 'I accept no blame for it at all' which only shows how little she cared as a girls death was partly a consequence of her actions. Eventhough Sheila has accepted blame for getting her fired and feels great remorse, it highlights how the young and old respond to these situations, Sheila taking full responsibility for her actions and Mrs Birling refusing to show any emotion. However a reason for her response could be because of her social status (higher than her husbands) as she thinks 'a girl in her position' cannot have 'elaborate feelings' for a man who has a much higher social status. Mrs Birling refers to the girl's 'position' which could suggest that its her own fault for getting pregnant out of wedlock or that because she has virtually no social status and that she deserves no help and should live with her consequences.

Unlike her mother Sheila has a much more modern view on society and she sympathises with the girls situation. The inspector is quite influencial upon Sheila and her makes her see things from a different perspective – 'but theses girls aren't cheap labour, they're people' which is almost the opposite of what her mother and father think. She tries to normalise the working people by referring to them as 'people' as oppossed to her mother referencing to them as if they almost weren't human. However this also makes the reader think about how we treat or how we are treated by people of a different class and really what a small or big difference it makes to our lives.

Preistly uses the inspector to make the characters feel guilt so that they accept responsibility for what they have done. He passes comment to Sheila 'but she had been pretty – very pretty' which only exaggerates the guilt of the Birling's and Croft but also makes what they did seem all more worse. The Inspector says 'had been' and this is suggesting that makes it even worse a young, pretty girl died because of their actions.

***SUMMATIVE COMMENT - This is a clear and sustained response to task, with relevant comments on a range of details and clear understanding of Priestley's use of character and language.***

***SPaG=3***

***Remember:***

***Think about ways of developing some of the ideas in more detail. In order to achieve the next level, it would be very useful to start to focus more on the 'bigger picture' of the play in terms of the ideas and themes.***

***MARK – 15 (grade 4)***