

Language, structure and form

NAIL IT!



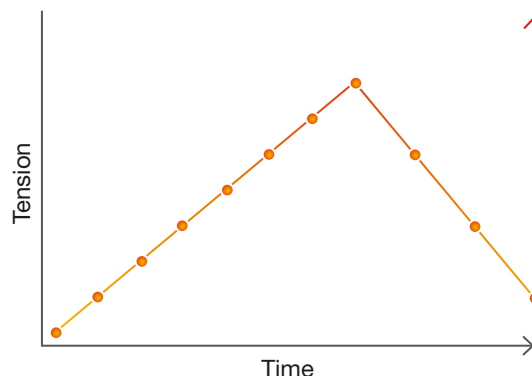
In your examination you are expected to show your understanding of a writer's methods. These are the things a writer uses on purpose to manipulate the audience. **Dramatic devices** are one of the methods that a writer can use.

Language: how Priestley creates tension

The play begins with a family celebration of an engagement, bathed in pink lighting, but very soon the audience begins to notice an undercurrent of tension within this happy scene. Sheila teasingly questions Gerald about his absence the previous summer; characters mention Eric's drinking. Then a ring on a door bell signals a new arrival; the lighting changes to become '*harsher and brighter*' and the Inspector enters the scene. From this point onwards the tension increases until we reach a climax with the Inspector's final political speech where he declares the need for collective responsibility and issues a clear warning that if they do not learn they will be 'taught' that lesson in 'fire and blood and anguish'. Following this climax, we see Priestley playing with tension through his use of plot twists. The audience and the characters release tension when Gerald reveals that there is not a police officer named Goole in the local force, only to have it dramatically raised again with the sound of the telephone and the news that an inspector is on his way.

Tension through a series of dramatic devices

- The **action** takes place in one room, intensifying the emotion. It happens in **real time** and is continuous, with each act beginning where the last left off.
- **Entrances and exits** add to dramatic tension by characters shown to be oblivious to what has happened within the room. For example, Eric re-enters the room as the audience realises that he is the father of Eva/Daisy's unborn child.
- **Use of cliffhangers** to end each act. For example, at the end of Act 1, the Inspector re-enters the dining room looking '*searchingly*' at Gerald and Sheila. He asks, 'Well?' This one-word question is repeated to open Act 2. There would usually be an interval at the end of each act, so the audience would have to wait to find out what happens.
- Priestley uses **dramatic irony** when Mr Birling makes his predictions about the future, such as the unsinkable *Titanic*. The audience also picks up that Mr Birling's talk of a knighthood 'so long as we behave ourselves' is truly tempting fate.



- **Use of sound effects.** Priestley uses the door bell to signal the Inspector's arrival; a second ring alarms the characters when they think it is the Inspector returning but it is Gerald instead, and the ring of the telephone at the end of the play introduces the plot twist.

DO IT!



Create a diagram similar to the one shown, to show how tension builds in the play. Annotate major events on the diagram. What event signals the climax of the play?