**In what ways are the characters of Sheila and Eric Birling important in this play?**

Acknowledging the writer

Sheila and Eric Birling are the two grown-up children of Mr and Mrs Birling. **Priestley presents** them as appearing to come from a trouble-free and privileged background. **They are important because they are representative of the younger generation who are open to change.**

Showing good understanding of character development

Clear focus on the question

Sheila initially comes across to the audience as a **spoilt and selfish character. However, once the Inspector arrives, the audience see a changed and reformed character**. When Sheila learns of Eva’s death, she is horrified and repentant and displays a sensitive side of her personality. **[Quote needed for analysis.]** When Gerald’s affair is revealed, Sheila is expected by her parents to brush aside his behaviour and carry on as though nothing had happened. **[Quote to contrast with the presentation of the younger generation.]** Sheila is not prepared to do so and returns her engagement ring. **[Link to social expectations and moving with the times.]**

Like Sheila, Eric is changed by the Inspector’s visit; he is described by Priestley as **‘half shy, half assertive**’. His past drunken behaviour led to him forcing himself on Eva/Daisy; eventually she became pregnant, refused to take his stolen money and was turned away from any help by his mother **[How did this rejection change Eric? – explore]**. Eric has had enough of his parents’ pompous attitude. They castigate him at a time when he needs them both. **[Quote examples of Mr Birling’s treatment of Eric.]**

Quote used to support ideas

Eric’s mother is partly responsible for the death of his unborn child; when he discovers this, he is shocked and angry. **[Quote to support and analyse.]** Eric accepts his actions contributed to Eva/Daisy’s death; like Sheila, Eric is not the same person. The Inspector is the one who has helped them both grow up and see the errors of their ways, and not their parents. **[Explore Priestley’s purpose and intention – link to ideas of morality plays.]**

The Inspector’s arrival changes the relationships Sheila and Eric had with both their parents. Sheila becomes rebellious towards her parents. **It is the relationship between brother and sister that seems the strongest of all, especially when all other family unity seems to have dissolved**; they initially seemed to bicker and squabble, yet they share much in common, the love and care for others in need.

Clear conclusion

**In what ways are the characters of Sheila and Eric Birling important in this play? [30 marks]**

Using the essay guide above, complete the question using relevant quotations and analysing the language used by Priestley and its effect.