

An inspector calls essay

Literature



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'An Inspector Calls' is a play that revolves around a prosperous family whose evening is intentionally interrupted by an inspector of whom his enquiries relate into the death of a young girl. I will be required to write about the characteristics of the inspector making clear observations of his cross-examination techniques, the way in which he approaches the Birling family and his general function in the play as a whole. This play was written in 1944-45 which was near to the end of World War II although the author of the play 'J. B Priestley' decided that the actual setting would be Spring 1912.

All three acts are continuous and all set in the dining room, where they are celebrating a family engagement. Events unfold in their 'substantial' middle-class family home with the arrival of inspector Goole and each family member having their own secrets and skeletons brought out of the cupboard. Mr Goole enters and Mr Birling's speech is interrupted, the significance of this is Mr Birling was just advising the other family members on how you should 'look after yourself' and how a man has to 'mind his own business'

Upon the inspectors entry his appearance automatically shows that his visit has a purpose as at once he 'creates an impression' as being 'purposefulness'. The image that is created is suggestive that he could be between mid - forties and fifties. He is wearing a 'plain darkish suit', which evokes that his visit is of some importance. He is a very serious man this becomes aware to the audience in Act I as it is revealed that he has a 'habit' of 'looking hard' at the person he is talking to. He has a mysterious look but at the same time formal.

We see that the inspector's manner is very different to the Birlings, he wishes to have this problem solved and addressed whereas the Birlings are more worried about him spoiling their 'little family celebration'. On the other hand Mr Birling is the type of character who is very strong minded he is positive and optimistic about the future and wants to ignore 'silly pessimistic talk'. It is already aware to the audience that he is pleased with this marriage due to business reasons. Mr Birling believes that Gerald has brought 'rivals in business together'.

He is also very sure of himself but is proven wrong especially when he mentions the ship 'Titanic' as being 'unsinkable' he is a strong believer of 'we've had experience and we know'. He can also be very arrogant, liking the sound of his own voice and dominating conversations. Mr Goole however does have a slightly pessimistic outlook as he believes that this family are 'partly to blame' he mentions this when Sheila is feeling slightly responsible for the death of this girl. In my opinion the inspector instantly suspects that it is their fault and doesn't give them much chance to put their point across.

He is very polite upon his arrival 'Thank you, sir' but this quickly deteriorates as the play goes on 'and my trouble is I haven't much time' It is almost as if as he gets to know the family more he feels there is no need to be polite anymore. Mr Goole's interrogation methods are very life-like his questions are short, very sharp, he uses open discussion 'well?' and can also be very probing. He is a very intimidating character and at first holds information back, He uses this technique so that he can force characters to give him information and occasionally to surprise or shock them.

He does speak firmly but often 'slowly' or 'harshly' which creates dramatic tension. 'Well?' is used often as he is imposing on the characters. He does pause with some silences there for yet again dramatic tension is created. Repetition is used a lot which could be his way of making sure that his point has been taken into account, also he uses emotive words and sometimes steps out of character in a way that he is sarcastic to the family members 'I'm a police inspector, Miss Birling'.

The more questions that he asks the more this family loose their close bond as their Relationship amongst them is slowly seen to break down. They become further apart and don't respond as quickly to the question that they are being asked. 'after a pause with a touch of impatience' He does use photos to show the family who the girl was but in a dramatic way so that the family may recognise her and give the inspector more information, may also be touched by it and may even get upset.

The inspector does interrupt others whilst they are trying to prove their point, he is very focused and not distracted by small talk, he likes to take charge and in a way it seems that he is not interested in some of the things that the Birlings have to say ' Let's leave offence out of it shall we? ' although this is an example of being unprofessional as a real life inspector would be quite happy for the other person speak in case any relevant information is about to be given to you.

Mr Goole has a large amount of authority over this family, we see their close relationship fall apart and the more he interviews them the more they begin to trust him answering every one of his questions. He had the power to tear

this family apart and at certain points some family members had to leave the room 'excuse me' but he still continues to ask the questions as it's 'my duty to ask questions' These dramatic exits will help the audience to realise the power he has over this family. He is even able to make grown women and men believe that he is a real inspector.

Mr Goole has the ability to enter ones home, take charge and then create an 'uneasy' atmosphere not forgetting him causing complete uproar to this household. The inspectors role in the play was to solve the problem and be able to get to the bottom of this story but whilst carrying out this role he does present a message. He tries to signify that there are lots more girls like Eva Smith and this inspectors visit should be a lesson for you, especially with the way you treat others. The inspectors final speech is in conflict with Mr Birlings speech in Act I.

Both characters have different outlooks on the community around them Mr Birling implies that he has to 'mind his own business' and also 'look after himself and his own' where as Inspector Goole implies in his final speech that 'we don't live alone' and not forgetting 'we are responsible for each other' also 'we are members of one body' They have totally opposite views but everyone is entitled to their own opinion. The inspector does present a message to both the Birling family and the audience.

This message is to let this be a direct warning to them all and hope there are no repeats of this terrible trauma. There are 'millions' of girls like Eva Smith and if we are not 'responsible' the they will be taunted in 'fire, blood and anguish'. Mr Goole could be representing a ghost of the future my reasons

behind this are that when he first arrives he makes a point of spelling out his name 'Goole' and we do know from reading the end of the play that what the inspector was inquiring about was false but later becomes true. a girl has just died' Mr Goole does have a major effect on this family and completely disrupts their happy party atmosphere, more importantly we see the family slowly falling apart, with each member passing the blame on and there is a lot of bickering amongst them 'you're the one I blame for this' Also we see that Mr Birling becomes increasingly concerned about the family's reputation there will be no more 'drinking around town'. We see him start to worry about the inquest and how it won't do the family 'much good'.

However its not just the family that are affected, we do see that the inspector does seem to step out of his role, he does become increasingly sarcastic which is not what a professional inspector would do. This can intimidate the audience - it could make them scared of being questioned by an inspector. The structure of the play is held together with each act flowing into the next. To keep the audience interested dramatic tension is used which can also help to create a good, strong atmosphere. An example of a dramatic device is when the telephone rings.

This good writer's intention is to keep the audience in suspense. The writer does achieve this with the telephone 'ringing sharply' making the audience alarmed and anxious, not forgetting it is only Mr Birling who can hear what the person at the other end of the line is saying so the audience are again left in suspense until the phone call has ended. We can see that the Birling family finally does realise the consequences of what has happened they realise just how serious it is - that someone has being killed.

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There are pauses in the play which gives the audience a chance to think and time to question what has been said, at the same time it will give them chance to think about the play and put ideas into their minds. This would have an effect in the audience and the way in which they think. At the end of the play they realised that it was all going to be a misunderstanding and everything would be okay - they had learnt their lesson. However they were proven wrong by the dramatic device at the end which was the telephone.

I think this was an unusual ending for a play and I questioned myself wondering if the writer will do a follow up play. I think that Mr Goole could be a ghost of the future and in a way either trying to warn them or prepare them for what happens, my reasons behind this are why would he make a point of spelling his name ' G-O-O-L-E' and also because everything that he questions the Birling family on does actually come true. He is also a very pale character but not forgetting mysterious and wearing black.

The ultimate effect that there is on both characters and the audience is that all the characters are relieved to hear that there is no real Mr Goole but again they are devastated when this enquiry comes to life. After all they have been put through questioning once and now they will have to repeat all of that for a second time. The play ends with all the characters feeling 'guilty' and 'dumbfounded' and as 'the curtain falls' you could imagine the sighs of the audience as this play has been left as a cliff - hanger although there could be another part to this play - a follow on play maybe.