

How does priestly
present the character
of mr goole in an
inspector calls



Inspector Goole is the main character in the play *An Inspector Calls* which was written by J.

B. Priestley in 1945 (after the two world wars) however was set in 1912 (just before the first war) a time when politics and the economy were just starting to re-establish themselves. It can be interpreted in many ways: one of which is as a murder mystery, however I feel there is much more to the plot than "who did it" there is an awful lot of underlying political messages and promotion of the socialist outlook on economy and morals and negative portrayal of capitalism. This is produced by the juxtaposed opinions and ideologies of the Birlings (a capitalist family who, at first seem to be purely egotistical) and the inspector (a socialist man who comes to demonstrate to the Birlings how selfish they have been, and their negative effect on the world around them). * Inspector Goole enters the play about ten pages in.

He casts a shadow over the Birlings' sunny celebration, and immediately taints the image of perfection that Priestley has previously bestowed upon the Birlings. Wearing a "plain darkish suit", being of a neutral age and having no outstanding features or characteristics, he is at first presented as a blank canvas, onto which Priestley can paint any picture and bestow any qualities. However his effect on the family creates an illusion of "massiveness, solidity and purpose." This is mainly because, for the first time since we met Mr.

Birling, he shows respect and weariness even of another character. "Inspector, sit down." Mr. Birling is altogether more formal.

He is no longer ordering people about, and has lost his didactic and

vociferous manner. Instead he is requesting politely that the inspector

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should make him-self comfortable (and also assumes an equal position to himself, sitting). Yet Priestley wants the audience to appreciate that Mr. Birling does not see the inspector as a person of equal standing to himself: "I was an alderman for years - and a lord mayor for two years after that." Mr. Birling is presented as being rather pretentious, assuring that the inspector knows that, in at least Mr.

Birlings own eyes; he is an extremely accomplished "hard-headed" businessman. He is almost warning the inspector to think before he starts to accuse as he is not only a man of power but, moreover has friends in high places. The inspector is an embodiment of all Priestley's socialist views, in which "we are all of one body." And "we are responsible for each other" not just ourselves. Given that the inspector is an incarnation of all the principles Priestley believes are right he is the prevailing power in all situations and always portrayed to be fair and just, (right)." There was nothing wrong with what she was doing.

They admitted that. Priestley leaves no room for the inspector's opinion to be questioned. His point is backed up with an independent affirmation; this means that in the eyes of the audience; he must be correct. Priestley uses the character of the inspector to alter the on-stage "reputation". The inspector shows no respect towards the Birlings "reputation".

Answering Mr. Birling bluntly "no." is evidence that the inspector has no fear of the consequences that may occur if he crosses Mr. Birling. Priestley uses dramatic irony to enforce his point: the inspector, as he represents socialism, is always right.

He also uses dramatic irony to make Mr. Birling, who symbolizes capitalism (a self-prosperous ideology which Priestley strongly opposes.), appear extremely arrogant and foolish in comparison, to a comical extent. " There is a lot of wild talk of possible labour trouble in the future. Don't worry. " The audience are fully aware that not only will there be labour trouble in the near future but there will be two world wars.

This makes Birling appear totally naive and idiotic compared to the inspector who knowledgeably states " I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men do not learn that lesson, then they will be taught in fire and anguish and blood! Unlike Mr. Birling the inspector's prediction is blatantly completely correct. He predicts that there will be great suffering. What, to the Birlings would have seemed like exaggeration, proceeded to only make the inspector more correct as there was not only one war but two.

There was not only suffering but, severe suffering anguish and loss of life. Priestley is also expressing, through the inspector, his opinion that capitalist practice was the cause of the wars, (because these " men" did not change their ways). As the plot develops the inspector is presented as somewhat of a father figure to the two members of the younger generation (Sheila and Gerald). Although their first instinct is to fear this atypical man, whose philosophy and teachings completely contradicted all they had ever been taught and revealed the cracks in not just their father's opinions but the basis and foundation that their family is built on. To be afraid of the only man who had outwardly ignored her father's political banter and seemed to know too much to be normal: " I hate to think how much he knows that we don't know yet. You'll see.

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You'll see. Sheila's repetition of "you'll see" indicates a deep foreboding, and also highlights Sheila's acute analysis of the situation in hand. Sheila is able to interpret more than her father and mother, she can tell that this man knows more than any of them could ever imagine, however Sheila has not yet developed the confidence to outwardly say this. By the end of act two both Eric and Sheila's eyes have been opened to the inspector's socialist message. They have become accustomed to his unusual manner and are no longer uncomfortable with the fact that the inspector does not seem to respect their father in the way of most. They (Sheila especially) have started to empathise with those of other classes and, with the inspector's encouragement, have realised that being of a different class does not mean you can't feel: "don't you understand? And if I could help her now I would."

Sheila. "Why should she not try for higher wages? We try for the highest prices possible." Eric. Sheila is repenting and regretting her actions provoked by capitalism. Even though it benefited her she is letting go of capitalism and considering the hurt her actions caused, even if it made her feel better.

Eric is adopting socialist views and questioning his father's business ethics. They are both beginning to grasp the fact that their father (capitalism) is most certainly not always right. By the end of the play the inspector, Eric and Sheila are all presented in similar lights, all on the side of socialism. They are each being used as socialist mouth piece, meaning the affirmative message of socialism gets clearer and stronger as the play draws to a close. "The money is not important; it's what happened to the girl and what we all did."

Eric.

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" That's just how I feel Eric. They don't seem to understand. " Shelia. They have turned not against their own parents and capitalist principles. By the time the curtain falls Priestley, with the character of the inspector, has transformed the younger generation into fully fledged socialists.

Shelia leaves her materialistic ways to become independent in her own views. She leans towards feminism, refusing to take up her traditional place in society (marriage to Gerald). This has further political reference as the suffragette movement was very active at the time of the play. Priestley's character of the inspector allows Shelia and Gerald to leave their stereotypes and mature into free thinking independent people with their own opinion.

" I remember what he said and the way it made me feel. " They are not easily going to go back to the way they were. The revelation that the inspector was in fact not an inspector generates the question: who or in fact what is inspector Goole? From his first entry into the play, just his name " Goole, G-O-O-L-E" stirs thoughts of the supernatural. His mysterious and unbelievably well timed entrance; endless source of impossible information, lack of background history and seemingly average appearance all stimulate an air of mystery. The word Goole is associated with death and horror and therefore I am sure it is not a coincidence that Priestley chose this name for a character that brings news and an excruciating and disturbing suicide.

From the very first introduction of the inspector Priestley wants the audience to be subconsciously processing the name and casually registering the fact that: This character is more than first assumed. The manner in which the

Inspector speaks and way in which he behaves is a complex mix of unprofessional and professionalism: "Burnt her insides out of course. He uses shocking, blunt, monosyllabic words, obviously aiming for optimum impact and to jolt the Birlings into paying attention. The use of the phrase: "of course" trivialises the subject of death and makes the idea of severe pain and tragedy casual and approachable.

In this way the inspector seems removed from human emotion, talking of death with a natural ease. He is not acting as a common police inspector who would most certainly approach the subject cautiously, he pointedly, without warning starts out: "Two hours ago a young woman died in an infirmary. The inspector, though professional in his purposefulness, seems excessively eager to quickly supply ruthless details to be altogether normal not to mind professional. Priestley intentionally does not give you any information of background about the inspector; you are left to make your own uncertain presumptions, and results in you continually questioning: exactly who he is. When he first enters the play, the use of brief, short to the point sentences mean that the audience is given no clue to who he is. "You're new aren't you?" Mr.

Birling." Only recently transferred." The Inspector. This empty reply gives no detail in fact it hardly provides sufficient information to be a legitimate response. Where in the case of most characters Priestley would have used this question as an opportunity to reveal and explain a little more about the character; in the case of the inspector he uncovers nothing.

This pattern stays constant throughout the play. Moments where questions about the inspector may arise are avoided; if unavoidable the reply is as concise and vague as possible. The inspector may have been exposed as a fake; however this does not change the phenomenal, if not temporary effect he had on the Birlings (and Eric). He is used as a moral inspector.

“ He was our police inspector alright. ” Eric. Eric is referring to the effect the inspector had on the atmosphere in Birling household and the disturbance he caused in what was a happily shallow and ignorant socialist family. He is contrasting political ideology that questions all that the Birlings stood for.

The character of the inspector is used to congeal doubt of the Birlings ideal of perfection in the minds of the younger generation and the audience.