

What is the function
of the inspector in the
play an inspector
calls



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The play 'An Inspector Calls' was written by J. B Priestly in 1945 although it is set in 1912.

This is interesting because it was written after WWII but was set post - WWI because of J. B Priestley's message and warning of war which is presented as one of the functions of the Inspector! The play is set in the dining room of the Birling's mansion -The Birling family are spending a happy evening celebrating the engagement of Sheila Birling to Gerald Croft - a marriage that will result in the merging of two successful local businesses. Yet, just when everything seems to be going so well, they receive a surprise visit from an Inspector Goole who is investigating the suicide of a young girl. Inspector Goole causes arguments between the family, breaks up Gerald and Sheila's engagement and exploits hidden truths about certain characters. He does all this and he turns out to be a fake! With this shocking evidence the Birling's and Gerald try to restore the celebratory mood until Arthur Birling receives a phone call from a real Inspector who is investigating the same suicide.

The play was first performed in Moscow, Russia because at the time it was the beginning of The Russian revolution - which ultimately was the upbringing of communism in Russia. J. B Priestley had many political views but he especially focuses (and is against) social inequality in Britain, so to aware the audience of this he had a hidden message of communism in the play which is why it was first performed in Russia. Priestley deliberately set his play in 1912 because the date represented an era when all was very different from the time he was writing. In 1912, rigid class and gender boundaries seemed to ensure that nothing would change. Yet by 1945, most

of those class and gender divisions had been breached through acts like The Suffragette Movement.

Priestley wanted to make the most of these changes. Through this play, he encourages people to seize the opportunity the end of the war had given them to build a better, more caring society. Other types of social/historical context within the play are touched upon by certain characters such as; The Suffragette movement (Sybil, Eva, and Sheila), The Rise of Industry (Arthur and Gerald) and The Issues surrounding the state of welfare (Inspector Goole and Sybil). He has a large dramatic impact on the characters and audience. The Inspector creates shock at the very beginning of the play. Just after he enters he drops in the point that " she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant".

This shocks the audience and characters as you can tell by Eric's expression " My God" immediately afterwards. This demonstrates the impact on the Birling family and the audience would have the same feelings. Priestley put this in at the beginning to make everyone feel shocked by what had happened. One of the many functions of the Inspector was for him to be a warning. This was achieved by the Inspector's name - ' Goole' which sounds like the word ' Ghoul' which is a type of ghost, also the fact that he wasn't a real Inspector in the Police Force adds to the impression of one of the functions of the Inspector being a ghost. This has being portrayed in the play as: " Gerald: I met a police sergeant I know down the road.

I asked him about this Inspector Goole and described the chap carefully to him. He swore there wasn't any Inspector Goole or anybody like him on the

force here. " This is done because of one of the functions of the Inspector were for him to be a warning - of the real Inspector at the end of the play. In similarity to this, the Inspector was also used as a function to be a time traveller and a warning. This was achieved in the play because he wasn't a real Inspector and after he left a real Inspector rang and said he was coming over inquiring the same suicide of a young girl - this was basically the play repeating itself again but this time for real so Inspector Goole could have been the Inspector from the future and he has come back to prepare and warn The Birling's and Gerald.

The reason why I believe these functions were used is that J. B Priestly is the same in the sense he is warning of war and has travelled back in time with his play as it is set in 1912 but written in 1945. So his voice in the Inspector is a warning of the investigation so the characters should change the way they act. Priestley's voice as the play is a warning of war for the world - for them to act like the characters in ' An Inspector Calls' and should change the way they act. In an addition to this, a further function of the Inspector is; that he is trying to teach us to follow and obey moralistic values (so he represents social reasoning) such as; to be aware that there is a community, you are part of it and that community should be as one.

This is shown in the play in Goole's final crux speech: " We don't live alone, we are members of one body, we are responsible for each other. " The use of repetition, list of 3 and use of emotive language (in the speech - Act 3) is used to draw out attention to it and help us remember the point that; We don't live alone! We are members of one body and are responsible for each other. Also these devices in the speech are used because of some of the <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-the-function-of-the-inspector-in-the-play-an-inspector-calls/>

historical/social context which was about the industry blooming causing selfishness. Also the use of second person pronouns which directly speak to the characters and audience suggests the message is directed at us, the audience. These are the functions of the Inspector in the play but in the play The Birling's and Gerald are against and don't follow this - especially Arthur even though Priestley wanted society to come over these bad habits such as selfishness, wealth prejudice, sexism and abuse to the lower classes .

This final point about who the Inspector is and what he represented with his function is that Priestley wanted us to treat everyone as an equal no matter what their race, social class, or gender. This point is backed in the play again in Goole's final speech: " there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smith's and John Smith's whose lives are intertwined with ours and what we say or think a do. " I think the use of repetition of first person plural emphasises the point that we are not individuals but part of a community - we have a collective responsibility for each other. Also the use of repetition draws attention to the large numbers of working class people in society. Another effective device used in Goole's speech which links back to the essay question is the use of a plural when referring to Eva suggests that she is really a symbol - she represents all the poor working class people out there. The final effective device used in Goole's speech which links back to the essay question is the use of emotive language to make us feel pity and empathy.

This is shown when: " Inspector: One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of
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happiness. This is done to emphasise Priestley's message. The Inspector sets up and controls the structure and pace of the play by him asking direct questions and the way he sets the mood through out the play; straight from his introduction to his departure, he is portrayed as commanding and authoritative. Upon his entrance he creates, "...

t once an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. " And proves The Birling's wrong. The Inspector continues to create this impression as he progresses through his speeches and through his interrogation of the family. He is in control of the events because he is control of the other characters! Even in the end he leaves characters in shambles thinking about what happened; thinking about who was Goole? How did he know so much? So the function of him doing this is that as he is in control and is the most focused on, so if the audience focuses on him his messages will be heard loud and crystal clearly! The Inspector affects the characters by causing conflict between what was a happy and united family into a broken distorted family. Goole interrogates each cooperate one - one with short snappy question which are simple to answer, leaving them no time to improvise and lie. He brings hidden truths about certain individuals to everyone's attention, this conduces to adding tension.

This is shown in the play when he gets Eric to admit to him being an alcoholic, breaking up Sheila and Gerald's engagement which ultimately breaks relations with Birling ; co and Crofts Ltd. This is done by Priestley to show how people's lives can be fake, and that all you see about them is only the tip of the iceberg. E. g. Sybil Birling was unaware of Eric's drinking habits and the fact that he will steal from his farther.

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Goole exploits truths and embarrasses the characters. He even ruins a to be marriage and a prosperous business formation, causing the characters react to the Inspector in a negative way: Arthur Birling reacts quite viciously and treat the Inspector like dirt, Sybil Birling was in denial and treated Goole worse than Arthur did! Gerald Croft was ashamed and embarrassed and tried to cover up the truth, but Goole puts an end to that nonsense about the affair Daisy Renton (Eva Smith) and he knew it was going to be game over at some point so he didn't disrespect Goole. Sheila Birling at first reacted very violently towards the Inspector but as the play progresses she calmed down and tried helping her family from utter embarrassment and pain but she was ignored by her patronising parents. Eric Birling was the most calm and relaxed to reacting to Goole (maybe because of the alcohol).

He knew it was game over and just wants to get everything out in the open. The Inspector affects the audience by him being a very unrevealing character in as he is very serious and speaks with a monotone but dominant voice, his body language is always uniform. He also changes the audience's first impression of the characters by showing what they are really like. He also makes the audience speculate: about ho he is? Is he a real Inspector? Why was he there if he wasn't on any type of police force? Is he the voice of Eva, or God? Is he Eva's Farther? He causes a cliff hanger, but that isn't important - what is important is that the audience take J. B Priestley's message away and puts the guidance into affect.

J. B Priestley affects the audience by the way he wrote this play, as every time his acts ends, each time, the Inspector ends an act with a shocking discovery causing a cliff hanger. We are ' forced' to think about in the time <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-the-function-of-the-inspector-in-the-play-an-inspector-calls/>

we have after the acts. He makes us ponder over all that happened in that act. He adds to the tension and suspense that is already building and close to saturation.

In conclusion I believe that Inspector Goole is the voice of J. B Priestley and voice of social responsibility - he had many messages. For the audience of this play to receive and understand these messages Inspector Goole had many functions within his part of the play! J. B Priestley wanted us to take responsibility of our actions and to take responsibility of less fortunate in society.

These lessons are relevant today because without it we wouldn't be in this civilized society today. From reading 'An Inspector Calls' I have learnt that I am an individual that is part of one community consisting of many individuals and no matter of their race, class or gender they are equal to me! The inspector leaves the play with a powerful speech and expresses some important points. "We are members of one body" which symbolises Priestley's socialist views on society. "If men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught in fire, blood and anguish" this conveys the message that if people don't co-operate then there will be another war and many will die and this point will go to the audience and make them take home that point as the play was first performed just after World War Two. In conclusion, the inspector played a big part in people's lives and that the play has many messages to it.

For example, one message of the play could be "don't judge the book by its cover" as every one in the play thought the inspector was real and they

released information but the fact is he was a fake and they didn't find out until Gerald came back and told them. Another message could be "careless actions can affect people's lives" as Sheila got Eva fired from her job because she was in a bad mood this impacted Eva's life and was the beginning of her life falling apart. Priestley was a socialist and thought that every one should be equal so he could have made the play to symbolise what happens when people are not equal and that people's lives get ruined when they are not as well-off as others.