

An inspector calls,
great story



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

'An Inspector Calls' was written in September 1945.

This story takes place in 1912, right before the 1st World War in Brumley, an industrial city in the North Midlands. Priestly set the play in 1912 on purpose, so that he could allow the characters to be naive about what was going to happen in the future. At the beginning we can see that Mr. Birling is a man of political status and enjoys giving lectures and having long discussions.

He makes a lot of points on worldly matters, and gives his predictions on the future. Most of these discernments seem to be wrong. For example he puts forward that, "Nobody wants war". Though it was very clear that at the time Europe was splitting into two groups called the 'Triple Alliance' and 'Triple Entente'. He went further on to say, "The Germans don't want war" However we all know this wasn't true, as the arms race began between England and Germany, and this would bring chaos to England.

But Priestly was not only trying to show that Mr. Birling was somewhat confused or less informed with the World's status. He was emphasising the knowledge of any other person living in England at that time. Thus many people shared the same opinions of Mr. Birling, and this might have been a cause for the downfall of England.

Mr. Birling extends his ignorance, by saying "Titanic is unsinkable". Though again, he was wrong, as the "greatest steamer in the world" was sunk by an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean. But the biggest predicament he gave was about Sheila, his daughter, and Gerald, his son-in-law's outlook.

It is shown when he says, “ In twenty or thirty year’s time, let’s say 1940; you may be giving a little party like this.” But again as we all would have known by 1945, the Second World War had started in 1939 and ended in 1945. So it would have been impossible to have a party of the same importance in a war, where rations were short and moods were down. From this we can clearly see how Priestly has shown the time and situation the characters in ‘ An Inspector Calls’ were in. But not only were opinions and situations very different at the time, so was social class. People were very much put into their own Class, even as soon as they were born.

They were expected to understand their role in society and to accept it. Therefore people that were less wealthy than others were frowned upon. But by 1912 people were slowly trying to break these social barriers. Workers were beginning to demand more say in society and did so through strikes and forming trade-unions.

Just as ‘ Eva Smith’ had done. But Priestly has shown the decline of this ‘ breakthrough’ by not giving into the workers demands. Suggesting it was going to take a fair amount of time. The ‘ bosses’ of those times expected to be in control of wages, labour, and conditions of jobs. Mr. Birling looks at himself highly in this social ‘ ladder’, as he owns a profitable factory.

This allowed him to live as a wealthy middle class land owner. He talks of his ‘ Knighthood’, due to his service to the magistrate and being Lord Mayor, again expressing his high social role. Priestly cleverly, uses ‘ Arthur Birling’ to express his feelings on the ‘ upper classes. Obviously he has intended to make them look somewhat naive and wrong placed in society.

The message conveyed from this is that at that time, the 'older' generation were only interested in making money and acquiring high social ranks.

Arthur Birling and Inspector Goole have very contrasted personalities.

Priestly may have done this on purpose, using Inspector Goole to put down the people like Mr. Birling, that believe in capitalism. Arthur Birling's words are very formal and contain no slang.

He is a portentous man in his mid fifties, and regards himself as a 'hard headed business man'. He constantly links his life to the social 'ladder' that his society is built upon. For example he welcomes Gerald Croft warmly in to the family, as this creates a business link between himself and Gerald Croft's father, who is a rival of his business. He shows no evidence of feelings towards his daughter in this marriage.

Only that he will have the chance to unite the company's. With a business deal that will allow him to "work together for lower costs and higher prices". Mr. Birling knows that Gerald would be regarded as socially lower than his family; this is why he refers to himself receiving a 'knighthood', therefore relieving the social 'pressure'. Priestly uses Mr.

Birling's mistakes, in foreseeing the future, to receive the audience's interest. By using these dramatic devices, Priestly was again trying to illustrate that the 'upper class' people liked to think that everything was good for them. This method is called 'dramatic irony'. On the other hand Inspector Goole is presented with a more formal status. He speaks very carefully, though he can be sharp at time, he remains quite calm in his tone of voice.

He has very clever attitudes, towards the people he speaks to, giving the other characters a sense of him already knowing what they are about to say. This is evident, at the end of Act 1, where Sheila Birling, almost ‘ clocks on’ to the method of the Inspectors investigation. She almost reads him like a book, though she is very far away from what he is actually trying to prove with the case. In a way, Priestly has projected his feelings through the Inspectors Character. Inspector Goole constantly brings up the problems with the social ‘ hierarchy’ if you will. He refers to the people of society being, “.. members of one body. We are responsible for each other”. He expresses his feeling on how there shouldn’t be ‘ class systems’ and everyone should be equal, quite the opposite to Mr. Birling’s opinion on Brumley.

Nevertheless, creating an interesting clash of moral beliefs and adding to the tension in the play. Inspector Goole and/or Priestly try to draw attention to the situations the ‘ lower class’ was put through. Hence ‘ Eva Smith’s’ story, Inspector Goole, beautifully illustrates the in-justice she had been through. In such a way, each character present in that room had a distinct feeling of guilt.” Both her parents were dead, so that she’d no home to go back to and she hadn’t been able to save much out of what Birling and company had paid her.” But not only does this message get to the characters in the play, but the audience as well.

Especially at the time it was published, people were still being reminded of the dramatic change in community and the roles of people with certain jobs. But yet after, making his point very abundant, he still carries his point on

very sharply, again overpowering his role in that room with," One Eva Smith has gone-but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths...

left with us." Mr. Birling surprisingly take the Inspectors call, as a joke," A joke really". But reactions change dramatically after the Inspector begins to question and inquire. Mr.

Birling reassures himself that he has no reason to be questioned, in such a manner. Therefore he again confirms his ' social' status and almost warning Inspector Goole he has had relations with the police force and knows many of the Inspectors employed there;" ...and lord mayor two years ago – and I am still on the bench, so I know the Brumley police officers pretty well..

." Though the Inspector and Mr. Birling have very little in common, their language and tone is very similar. They tend to use long and important words, instead of slang, in their speeches.

Though the context and meaning of their language is bitterly different, Mr. Birling often relates everything with Business and social righteousness. Whereas Inspector Goole, tends to talk to the point and shows use of clever influential techniques in his speech, which not only capture the character attention, but also the audiences. Throughout, he shows sympathy to young Eva Smith, yet Arthur Birling, shows no sympathy towards her at all. When he is first accused of being a major cause, of the ' chain of events', he instantly denies them. Again referring to his status, and this time also makes regards to Gerald's side of the business (Croft's Ltd.

). This just adds to Inspector Goole's fury with the 'upper classes'. Then the Inspector goes further on, to question why Mr. Birling refused to increase her wages. Mr. Birling takes this as an insult, to him and his business, and seems deeply offended.

No doubt, what the Inspector had intended to do. Arthur Birling tries to justify his actions, by giving a speech on how few people are at a 'business standard' of thinking. Bewildered in the frustration of constant questioning, he attempts to threaten the Inspector by referring to him, as being very close to the 'Chief Constable of Inspectors'. Yet this fails to bemuse the Inspector and he subsequently continues to question him.

Throughout the play, Inspector Goole and Arthur Birling continue to threaten and warn each other off. Both reminding each other of their 'roles' in society. Inspector Goole uses harsh ways of making Mr. Birling guilty.

Informing him, not only of the past but the future (something Arthur Birling, took a lot of care into). "You made her pay a heavy price for that. And now she'll make you pay a heavier price still". By now he has made an impact on all of the characters, Priestly has effectively brings the tension at its peak. But not surprisingly Mr. Birling again refers to money in reply to the Inspector,".

.. I'd give thousands-yes thousands" This emphasises the very selfishness and 'money obsessed' thinking that the 'upper-class' people had. This is what Priestly has been trying to show through these very contrasted men.

Inspector Goole proves to be the more intellectual man, through the constant battle. His final point may be the most valid, not only for Arthur Birling, but all the characters that played a part in the young girl's tragic death. Despite the mysterious ending, where the question of whether 'a young woman had actually committed suicide or not?' had arose. It was irrelevant, and further more showed the stubbornness of Mr. Birling, where after confirming, no such girl had died. The tension completely plummeted and the atmosphere was merrier than ever.

Not only was there a sense of relief, but Mr. Birling was experiencing anger. While the audience observe this they too are relieved. Though after the phone call, with the news of a girl committing suicide, reaches the house.

Suddenly, Priestly has built up this tremendous feeling of hatred and discontent towards Mr. Birling. Successfully creating sympathy for the girl, whether it was 'Eva Smith' or not, this wasn't the point. The message put across was, that the consequences, of 'upper and lower class' structure were dire.

Conclusion: In conclusion the characteristics and role, of Inspector Goole and Arthur Birling, are very different. Mr. Birling is used, to show hatred towards the 'upper class', whereas Inspector Goole, reinforces Priestley's socialistic opinions. The two men constantly threaten each other, and try to justify their purpose and role in the case in hand.

Priestly uses various dramatic devices, to capture the audience's attention. For example, making the entrance of Inspector Goole's mysterious. Also the 'dramatic irony' of Mr. Birling's predicaments of the future.

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We can now understand how Priestly uses Inspector Goole, to question Mr. Birling. Not just of his actions, but of his moral beliefs, and how they are, in Priestley's opinion, wrong. Priestly has achieved in putting this strong message across to the audience, through the role of Inspector Goole.