

Essay summary of an inspector calls

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John Boynton Priestley was born in 1894 and died in 1984. He was famous for contemplating science, philosophy and writing many plays which displayed his Socialist views which advocates a socialist viewpoint since it is about caring for everyone and not just the wealthy. 'An Inspector Calls' is one of these. The play is about a wealthy upper-middle class family, the Birling's, and how their views on living have changed since a visit from an Inspector. The main characters of 'An Inspector Calls' are the Birlings', Inspector Goole, Gerald Croft and Eva Smith/Daisy Renton.

The main characters in the play are: Arthur Birling is a successful businessman; his wife, Sybil, is very pretentious; and their unusual son, Eric, is an alcoholic. Eric's sister, Sheila has recently got engaged to Gerald Croft, a gentleman of a slightly higher social class than the Birlings'; which makes the Birlings' feel somewhat inferior. Society in 1912 was very appalling, poor people were outworked and underpaid and were treated as servants. The working class were victims of this and it was still hard for the middle class.

It was only better for the upper class, the nobles and the factory workers. 'You ought to like this port, Gerald. As a matter of fact, Finchley told me this is the port your father buys'. This shows us the family is high in society as in 1912, port was only available to those who had money to buy it, also it shows that Mr Birling is trying to flatter Gerald as he feels inferior. Priestley uses the Birlings' to show us that even if you're rich you can still be wrong. Priestley is saying that people in society wasn't always aware of the whole picture, normally the upper class.

Rose-tinted glasses' is what Priestley describes the Birlings' as wearing; he is saying rich people only see what they want to see. Priestley wanted us to know each other and be members of one body, caring for one another and support each other as is the socialist views. Around the time the play was written, 87% of the country's wealth belonged to only 5% of people, leaving 13% of the country's wealth to 95% of people. This means that most of the world population were poor. Priestley uses lots of dramatic irony as, the audience know more than the actual characters on stage.

For example, 'Titanic ... forty-six thousand eight hundred tons... five days ... unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable'. Priestley uses this quote to show that Mr Birling is rich and thinks he knows everything. Here dramatic irony is used as we know that the Titanic sunk in 1912 which shows that what Mr Birling says is meant to be viewed as ludicrous. Also, Priestley uses Inspector Goole to expose weaknesses and wickedness of all the characters, whilst being interrogated by the Inspector, lots of lies were revealed and deceit was shown.

Many of these characters are hypocritical and lie to themselves, by showing the personalities among the characters; Priestley also gets the audience to question their own behaviour and how they treat each other in society.

Arthur Birling demonstrates weakness and wickedness. He shows iniquity as he treats Eva Smith/Daisy Renton very badly. Whilst Eva/Daisy was working for Birling, she asked for a higher pay, Birling said no then sacked her for going on a protest. 'They were all rather restless, and suddenly they decided

to ask for more money'. Birling sacked her for many reasons like being the leader of the protest.

He refuses to believe that Eva/Daisy had a valid point and just fired her without a thought of the consequences. Birling is also a weak character. His weakness is power. Mr Birling's narrow minded and assertive beliefs and his greed for money added to the death of Eva Smith/Daisy Renton as he used his power - his authority, class and wealth - to force Eva Smith to leave, making her redundant and unable to provide for herself. Mr Birling and the Inspector are always fighting for power. They are constantly interrupting each other, ' Birling (cutting in) ...

Inspector (cutting in, massively). Mr. Birling likes to think of himself as a hard-working, upper class citizen who does nothing wrong. However, we see throughout the play that he is very devious and arrogant. He does what he thinks is good work. He doesn't help others but still expects of the knighthood. Sheila Birling is again both weak and wicked at times although she changes as she embraces. She is wicked because she got Eva Smith/Daisy Renton sacked from her job in Milwards.

Sheila got Eva/Daisy sacked because she was trying something on and thought Eva/Daisy was laughing at her. I was looking at myself in the mirror I caught sight of her smiling at the assistant. I was furious with her'. Sheila lied to the manager that Eva/Daisy was impertinent. She believed Eva/Daisy wasn't showing her the respects she deserved. Sheila also shows weakness, when she finds out that she could be involved with Eva/Daisy's death, Sheila falls apart, ' Sheila (almost breaking down) ... I'm desperately sorry'. When

Sheila realises what she done could've made Eva/Daisy commitsuicide, she feels so ashamed of it, ' I behaved badly too. I know I did, I'm ashamed of it'.

Another weakness of Sheila's is that she is jealous of Eva/Daisy's attractiveness because being jealous is something most people can admit to or we can all imagine being envious of someone, here Priestley is asking the audience to question their own actions more closely, would we have gone over the top and got Eva/Daisy sacked merely because she was in a bad mood caused by jealousy? Gerald Croft is the son of Sir George Croft of Croft's Ltd, a competitor of Birling & Co. At the night that the Inspector calls, Gerald Croft was celebrating his engagement to Sheila Birling.

During he's interrogation with the Inspector; it is revealed that Gerald had secretly known Eva Smith/Daisy Renton in which she had become his mistress. Gerald stated that he was " the mostimportant person inher life", before ending their relationship. Sheila praises Gerald for his honesty and showing Eva/Daisy some sympathy, although he is shown as a gutless and inconsiderate man for taking advantage of a vulnerable woman. Gerald is a weak character. Gerald shows weakness and deceitfulness when he gives in and admits to having an affair with Eva/Daisy.

Gerald knows that the affair was wrong as he told Sheila he was busy. ' I'd been very busy at the works all that that time'. He also shows weakness by rescuing the Daisy when she was in trouble, when he ended the affair it left Eva Smith/Daisy Renton more distraught than when he first met her and probably felt used too. Gerald used and exploited Eva/Daisy. Gerald is engaged to Sheila Birling, a women of a class similar to his but has slept with

Eva Smith/Daisy Renton, a woman of the lower class. He just used her for sex and would never intend to date or marry Eva/Daisy. Mrs Birling, Sybil, shows weakness and wickedness.

She shows wickedness as when Eva/Daisy got pregnant she went to a counselling meeting which Mrs. Birling worked at to get help, but she turned her down because she said her name was, Mrs Birling, and Sybil found this ‘a piece of gross impertinence-quite deliberate’. This can be seen as a weakness. Mrs. Birling knew she had the power and used it in a wrong way. Eva/Daisy wanted help and because she used the name Mrs. Birling, the real Mrs. Birling turned her down and sent her away. The real Mrs. Birling is wrong and misunderstood because there are other people in world that have the same forenames and surnames.

The fact that Eva/Daisy used the name Mrs Birling is because of the hypocrisy of the upper classes, she thought it would give her a veneer of responsibility. Mrs. Birling is one of the honest characters; she admits she knew Eva/Daisy, turned her down, prejudiced against her and did nothing to help her. Bearing in mind, she doesn't believe that she has done wrong. Her deceit is presented by her being two faced as she lies to herself. She says that ‘... the father of the child who is responsible’, she also doesn't want to believe that her son drove Eva/Daisy to suicide. Sybil is a snob.

Someone who will set rules for herself and upper-middle class, but still deny the same rights for “ girls of that sort” as she refers to Eva Smith. This shows that Mrs Birling had a hypocritical view about society. Eric Birling is obviously a weak character; he has a weakness for alcohol. He is an alcoholic who

became deceitful about it because he hides it from his parents. Priestley uses a character like Eric as he says that we should be more aware and care for people that are most vulnerable, like Eric with his addiction. His parents ignore the fact that their son has a problem. Like Gerald, Eric met Eva/Daisy in The Palace bar.

When he knew that she was going to have a baby and saw that she had no money, and stole from his family, to keep her stable. ‘ She refused to take anymore... ’. Another weakness that Eric has is that he believes his own mother kill his child and her grandchild. ‘(nearly at breaking point)... – my child – your own grandchild... ’ Eric is also wicked as he exploits Eva/Daisy and uses her for sex, something which he wouldn’t do to a girl of his social class. Priestley uses Inspector Goole as a tool; he is used to make each character realise what their responsibilities are and how they’ve had an impact on others, like Eva/Daisy.

The Inspector is used as a dramatic device to represent the characters consciences; he uncovers all the lies and secret that they hide. The Inspector is a very clever person, he doesn’t give the person he’s interrogating all he knows, he drip feeds it to them and lets the characters have a chance to confess. Eva Smith/Daisy Renton is an unseen working class woman who the Inspector claims had committed suicide whilst she was pregnant with Eric Birling’s baby. She had been mistreated by each member of the Birling’s family and Gerald Croft.

From what the characters have been saying, Eva/Daisy was a “ pretty” woman with soft brown hair and big dark brown eyes. Gerald also confirms

that Eva/Daisy had no family and must work to support herself. Each character had commented on Eva/Daisy's beauty, it affects both Gerald and Eric. Eric sexually exploited her. Sheila commented unsympathetically on how Eva/Daisy looked when she tried on the dress that Sheila liked and looked better. It seemed that Sheila was threatened by Eva/Daisy's beauty. Eva/Daisy is seen as a decorous woman as she refuses to accept the stolen money from Eric, despite her financial situation.

Eva/Daisy appears to be a victim of her class, and is judged by the female characters for not acting appropriately for her class. Sheila imagines that Eva laughed at her and did not act respectfully towards her and so punishes her by having her fired. Sybil also disapproves of Eva for appearing proud and for being "impertinent" rather than being humble and grateful to her. Eva Smith/Daisy Renton is a weak and possibly the weakest character because she is in a weak position where she needs help whereas the other characters all use and exploits her revealing their wicked side.

Priestley uses a range of ages to show how each generation react to what they have done. It's funny because the elder generation don't accept that they were part of Eva/Daisy's death, whereas the younger ones do. Nearer the end of the play, the Inspector last speech could encourage the characters and the audience, how to live the rest of their life. Would they finish it caring for one another, like the message of the play is or carry on living like the Birling's were, not caring for anyone but themselves. Basically, Priestley wrote this play to show 'we are members of one body.'

We are responsible for each other. This is part of the last speech that the Inspector informed the Birlings'. This reveals his socialist views and asks us to turn against the capitalist viewpoint which is about profit rather than people. In conclusion to the play, I think that all the characters except for Eva/Daisy are the wicked characters of the play. They have all contributed to Eva/Daisy's death and have used their power and this led her to her death. In this play the weakest character is Eva/Daisy as she is in a weak position and all of the other characters used and exploited her.