

Would you agree that
the play is one big
metaphor



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A metaphor is where you take an object and compare it with something else, either being another object or an idea. A metaphor can be simply one-liners, such as “ the evening of a lifetime,” “ the river of time,” or “ food for thought”. They can also entail many ideas, all carefully structured to give the impression or concept of something else. A metaphor is a figure of speech that goes further than a simile, either by saying that something behaves or appears in a certain way that it could be described, using a shared quality, it also adds a new meaning.

Shakespeare used a lot of metaphors and similes in his plays and monologues and one of his best is “ All the worlds a stage and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts...

” In my opinion, the play, “ An Inspector Calls” is a very good example of an extended metaphor, which is carefully written to put over a point of view in a clever and imaginative way. Priestley uses the role of an Inspector and how he associates with the middle class Birling family, a higher level respectively of society, as a metaphor of how the social classes related in the early 20th century. The middle classes show no sign of a conscience with regards to the lower classes, there is also a great sense of superiority. A conscience is an inner voice that tells us whether we have done right or wrong, so social conscience is the way we treat and react with one another among the population. The author, J. B.

Priestley first produced the play in 1944, but the actual play is set in 1912. In 1928 women first got the vote, but before that they were just ornaments,

they couldn't work, couldn't vote and had to rely on a man to look after them financially, the only thing that women could have going for them was good looks. If a woman wasn't pretty before this time, they would have a poor quality of life. This drama portrays how the middle classes related around that time, how they used the power that wealth brought them and how they reacted to social issues.

The play concerns an Inspector calling round to a middle-class house and interrupting a celebration with news of a suicide. One by one, he interviews each family member and makes them realise that how they behave can have great effects on other people and tries to give them a lesson on moral values, on how they have acted. Deep secrets arise, causing conflicts between them and changes relationships and how they think of one another. Once the Inspector has gone, the family discusses their suspicions of him being a phoney and, after making a few phone calls to confirm this, they come to a conclusion that he is a hoax. The poor girl Eva Smith/Daisy Renton lived a poor life.

Nothing ever went right for her, through no fault of her own, each episode was more devastating than the last. The victim must have had dreams and ambitions of living a high-class life, but everything she tried eventually failed. Eva represents the powerless figures in society. The influence that one rich family had was amazing! Power is gained where there is money and the Birling family oppressed the girl in question economically, sexually, stripped her until there was nothing left.

As she has no money, she has no power in the community; therefore she is a no one. But, she knows her place in society and was very noble. You can have all the money in the world, but you can't buy the self-respect that Eva has. Inspector - " So she'd come to you for assistance because she didn't want to take stolen money. " This shows the girl had knowledge of right and wrong. She took what life threw at her and tried to make the best of things, but after a while, they started to build up and she had to break.

Her way out was suicide, a bottle of bleach to end her misery. Her first downfall was when Mr. Birling sacked her from working in his factory. All she wanted was higher wages, for her and her co-workers, but her proposal was immediately refused. A wealthy man like Birling wouldn't have missed a few shillings, but he was more determined to look after his own interests.

All the workers had gone on strike for nearly a week but soon returned for the same wage, but Mr. Birling got-rid of the ringleaders, as he couldn't afford it to happen again and he doesn't like the influence she had over his staff. Arthur used his power and authority to sack the girl just because she didn't have enough wage and wanted a raise. The saying goes, " If you don't ask.

.. " but just because Eva asked, she got laid off. The way Birling sees it, if you ask for more, you are a traitor to your country, you opposing progress, stir up trouble and create unwanted publicity. The character Birling is a shows no sympathy.

Arthur is very confident and I believe that is a good thing but as long as it does not verge on arrogance. He sees himself as a " hard-headed business

man” (Page 6). Their family are what some people would call “Nouveau Riche” (New money). His main ambition in life was to drag the Birlings up in the aristocracy, wants them to be socially accepted. Mr.

Birling is hoping for a knighthood and sees everything in business terms. Birling even sees his daughter’s engagement as a wise investment for the future, “You’ve brought us together, and perhaps we may look forward to the time when Crofts and Birlings are no longer competing but are working together – for lower costs and higher prices. (Page 4).” You’re just the son-in-law I’ve always wanted” (Page 4).

Of course he is, a profit can be made from it. Part way through this speech Sheila is inattentive and has to be reminded to concentrate on what her father is saying, as she is more interested in her ring and sits there marvelling at it, “Oh! It’s wonderful!” Sheila is probably used to her father putting the world to right and doesn’t agree with what he is saying. Birling’s ideas and philosophies are total ludicrous and most of the time he is totally wrong! He is a snob and wants everything to evolve around him. He evolves around money and believes that money should evolve around him, but, in reality, he is a pompous prat and doesn’t have a clue.

He talks to Eric and Gerald with airs and graces about how this is “a very good time/A time of steadily increasing prosperity,” He believes that they are living in the heart of technological advances and uses the Titanic as an example of this. How wrong could he be? Birling describes the great ship as being “Unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable,” (Page 6). This shows how the middle classes had all the power and authority in society, but didn’t have the

knowledge or understanding to use it wisely, as the Titanic sank, losing 1500 lives, on its maiden voyage! He also claims “ The Germans don’t want war,” the audience will be able to see the irony of this, as it was first produced in 1945, not long after WW2 ending, so the audience can see that he gets everything totally and utterly wrong. The Birling family are important in society, but not quite ‘ in’ with the elites, and in a quiet chat with his daughter’s fianci?? Birling confesses that he feels, Gerald’s Mother, isn’t particularly pleased with the engagement, “ Lady Croft believes you could have done better for yourself socially-” (Page 8). Birling behaves like this as he has a desire to be better and his creeping to him.

“ There’s a fair chance I might make it into the next honours list,” (Page 8). The Birlings have wealth, power and are recognised in society, but it is only recently acquired. The Birling’s are not part of the long-standing aristocracy. Therefore, they do not have the sense of responsibility that goes with this wealth; they only have a sense of importance.

Birling sees life as money, the more he can make, the better life is. His political philosophy is “ A man must make his own way – has to look after himself, and his family, if he has one. ” (Page 9). In other words, Birling is a firm believer in looking after number one and as long as you and your family are all right – nothing else matters. It is also very important to note that Birling is very supportive to his wife throughout the play and the two always back each other up when stating an opinion. In the initial stage direction, Mrs.

Birling is described as “ a rather cold woman,” and that she is “ her husband's social superior. ” Therefore, she has a view of life where she looks down on others. There are lots of examples of snobbery throughout the play, “ A girl of that class,” “ You know of course that my husband was a Lord Mayor only two years ago and he’s still a magistrate. ” Eva then went on to be employed at Milwards, a designer fashion department store, working with new trends and high-class people, but all this came to an end when Sheila Birling entered the store.

Sheila had the defenceless girl thrown out just for smiling about how horribly awful she looked in her desired dress whilst trying it on. “ I caught sight of this girl smiling/she was pretty/looked as if she could take care of herself. I couldn’t be sorry for her. ” Sheila was angry, upset and jealous, so she used her power and influence as a regular and high-valued customer at the store to get her dismissed.

She is the character that probably changes the most throughout the duration of the play. Sick of living life as Eva Smith she decided to conceal her true identity whilst ‘ working’ on the street and to change her name to Daisy Renton. With being unemployed, she inevitably ends up in the Palace Bar, a regular pick-up point for prostitutes, as a last resort for money. This is where she met Gerald, they became intimate and, for a while, he kept her as his mistress, using her for sexual pleasure.

Although she did have some feelings for him as the Inspector claims “ At least he had some affection for her and made her happy for a time. (Page 56). Gerald also returned the feelings and genuinely cared for Daisy. The

affair lasted for a few months; he gave her somewhere to stay and showed her affection, but it all had to come to an end as he had to leave on business. As soon as the relationship became an inconvenience for him, he discarded her and crushed the last little bit of delight and happiness that was left in her life.

Just as she thought life couldn't get any worse, she met Eric Birling. He was an alcoholic and they also met in the Palace Bar. There was no feeling there, it wasn't 'making love', and he just used her for sex. Feeling life couldn't get any worse, she was actually grateful to him! She soon fell pregnant, and, although he didn't love her, he felt inclined to offer to stay with her and support the baby.

He gave her stolen money from his Father's firm to maintain her daily life, of which she refused after finding out the source. Daisy also believed that he was too naive and inadequate to bring up a child. Eva/Daisy was vulnerable at the time she met Eric, but she still realised that their 'love' was a major sham. Although he was a kind-hearted gentleman, she believed he still had a lot more lessons to learn in life, before he would be able to nurture a child and he would definitely not find them at the bottom of an empty bottle.

Their relationship came to an end. Having no one else to rely on, she turned to a local organisation set up to help 'women in need'. This was when she came into contact with Mrs. Birling. Sybil, an arrogant and social superior woman, was a member of the board and simply refused and abandoned her case, like the times before.

She admits that she had felt “ prejudiced against her”, and used her power and influence over the women, just because she addressed herself as Mrs. Birling. Sybil claimed “ She impertinently made use of our name/no claim to the name,” when in fact she did! Not only had the girl been seeing her son, she was also carrying her Grandchild!! This is just another example of the elder Birling’s selfishness, ignorance and self-concerned arrogance. When questioned by the Inspector, Sybil passes the blame over completely to the baby’s Father, not knowing that it is her own son.

Look for the Father of the child, it’s his responsibility/If the girl’s death is due to any, then its down to him/he ought to be dealt with very severely/confess in public. ” (Page 48). The Inspector believes he also is the “ Chief culprit. ” Although, on page 22, the Inspector does claim “ If you’re easy with me, I’m easy with you. ” Before the Inspector leaves, he gives one last speech, which could possibly be the most important piece of dialogue in the play and sums up all Priestley’s ideas into one speech “ I don’t need to know anymore. Neither do you.

This girl killed herself and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. ” (Page 55).

The final words that he leaves with the Birling’s “ One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions of Eva Smiths ad John Smiths still left with us... ” Adam and Eve were the first people according to the Bible and the names John and Smith are some of the most common names today.

So what the Inspector is saying is that you have done wrong in the past, but you still have a chance to change your ways. In the course of your life you

<https://assignbuster.com/would-you-agree-that-the-play-is-one-big-metaphor/>

will touch hundred's of other peoples lives, so think about how you treat people, because small things can have a large snowball effect. Gerald claims that " there were probably four or five different girls. " He sees that all these actions could have resulted in suicide, but he still believes that many different women could play Eva. This is probably another point of Priestley's, that Eva probably was different women, because this was how many lower class women were treated at that time and there was a lot of people in this situation at the time of the Inspector calling. He warns the Birling family that " The time will come when, if men will not learn that lesson, they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish.

Good night. " In hindsight we can see that the " fire and blood and anguiosh" that the Inspector was describing happened in the case of the First World War. This had started because the countries of Europe, instead of existing together had formed themselves into two camps, with the countries within them allied together. Serbia was Russia's ally, who was also on the side of Britain and France, who had both promised to protect Belguim.

Austria and Germany (and later Italy) were also allies. When Austria attacked Serbia, the Russians declared war on Austria and the Germans invaded Belgium, send Britain and France into battle. The result was a hellish war in which millions died. Had the countries been able to live together then there would not have been a war. The fact that the play was written in the midst of the Second World War suggests that Priestley was saying that the lessons of what happened in World War One had not been learnt, for which World War Two inevitably occurred.