

How Priestley's
portrayal of Sheila
Birling contributes to
the dramatic impact
of...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the entire play by Priestley, it is clear Sheila Birling is one of the main characters due to the impact and role she plays. Priestley first portrays her as a young beautiful lady with a rather selfish and arrogant nature. Using her compelling personality she is able to obtain anything in which she desires through her father. After the inspector explains what's happened and how Eva Smith dies she shows an empathetic side of her personality, which might have surprised the audience watching the play.

Over the play we as an audience get to see her change and develop as a character, with assistance from the Inspector, at the beginning having much respect for the other but soon calling them "... you fool". She shows her remorse by describing her feelings towards the injustice of the case. She says it's " a rotten shame" and says how girls like this are " people" and not just " cheap labour. "

She is also a realist, as she understands the inspector far better than the others, this causing drama and conflict between herself and others, for example, in acts two and three, we see that Sheila is trying to protect her mother from making the same mistake as she and her father had done. She tries to stop her from setting her up for a fall, "(with sudden alarm) Mother - stop - stop! ", even the stage direction hints that to what Mrs Birling is saying is of no good.

Showing the generation gap in the play between parents and children, with in this and many other scenarios presented the children i. . Sheila holding the moral high ground creating drama and conflict between both generations. Priestley also creating drama and suspense on the audiences

curiosity on what is to happen as a result of what Mrs Birling has said, and Sheila screamed about. This realist attitude is also shown by her through her relationship with Gerald, and how through the one night her suspicions are proven and her opinion changed ending with the stage direction of her "hand[ing] him [Gerald] the ring" and "... rather respect[ing] " him more than she "... ever done before.

It is clear Sheila is the voice of the audience, she is Priestley's way to make the play more realistic and relatable to the reader, " why he knows" showing her understanding the Inspector knows most of the facts already no point; " Go on mother. You might as well admit it. " contributing to her dramatic impact as she is pushing her mother to be honest; a switch of roles. Sheila almost acts like the voice of reason; she is always very present, acting like a guide to audience, guiding their response, as she is not at all as hubris as her parents are.

Due to this she is constantly reminding her parents and the audience of Eva's death, due to the fact of her good natured attitude, she feels obliged to not all forget that someone died, especially near the end of the play, Priestley really creates conflict and drama between generations. As Sheila and Eric are sickened by the night but due to Gerald's findings their parents are almost rejoicing to know the inspector was most defiantly a fake, so it is best to forget their doings, and the fact a girl died, Sheila rightly says " Everything we said had happened really had happened. , with her replying "(jovially) but the whole things different now. "

Demonstrating lack of responsibility of the night's events by Mr. and Mrs. Birling who as the elders should have learnt from their mistakes but being so selfish have ignored the entire situation, forgetting "... whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke." Demonstrating Sheila's growing anger and distress of the situation, causing more drama and tension, as she tries to highlight that "... between us [them] we [they] drove that girl to suicide."

By the end of the play it is clear that both Sheila and Eric are reformed and enlightened characters, who in turn will lead a better and conversely have learnt from their mistake, unlike their parents. In conclusion Sheila's dramatic impact throughout the play is shown in many ways by Priestley, from his use of stage directions and language to the form and her good nature and guilt which is an opposition to her parents.