

How does job priestly
use the characters in
act three of an
inspector calls



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Guilt is not the major issue put forward in the play. The major issue is how class-conscious England has been put forward in the play and how the Capitalists and Socialists are shown. Birling is a ruthless industrialist who worked extremely hard to make his money.

Birling is almost the stereotype/caricature of the capitalistic businessman. As Eric re-enters the dining room the atmosphere is very tense and distressing. It is now clear to the audience why the Inspector chose his interrogation method- encouraging Mrs Birling to tell him how to punish the person who did it. " The young man who got this girl into trouble" And how " He should be made an example of" It is only after Mrs. Birling has finished saying that sentence that she realises that Eric is the ' young man' and she is utterly shocked and appalled that Eric could do such a thing, as well as worried what impression Gerald is getting, Gerald's opinion is very important to Mrs.

Birling as he is from a socially superior background. As Eric retells his story Mr and Mrs Birling are shocked to learn that Eric drinks heavily where as Sheila appears to have known for a few months. This shows just how close the parents are to their children. No, that's not fair, Eric I could have told her months ago but of course I didn't. " The audience would not see anything wrong with Eric's drinking habit as they could afford to drink, and they would have realised at the end of Act One as they watched Eric slowly getting more and more drunk.

Whilst Eric retells the story he asks for another drink which his father denies, but the Inspector overrules and allows him to get another drink, maybe to calm him down. But in my opinion it is to loosen his tongue a little more, (as

he is already on the drunken side) into just blurting the truth out rather than thinking. Mr and Mrs Birling are understandably upset, by his story as they no longer can trust him. He steals money, drinks and sleeps with strangers of a lower class. I think Sheila is closer to her brother and knows that he does drink but is shocked to hear that he thinks he can mistreat a girl and steals money for his own parents who would have probably lent him some money.

The Inspector listens carefully, asking more questions to get a fuller picture, or if he knows that Eric is holding back some information. The socialists in the audience would be shocked that the whole family could do something so unpleasant to a girl for such trivial reasons such as smiling as if mocking Sheila, or wanting an increase in wages from twenty-two and six to twenty-five shillings! Whereas some (probably most) of the audience would see it from Mr. Birling's point of view, and totally agree what they did was completely justified. As the Inspector is drawing his investigation to a close he addresses the family, he is less stern towards Sheila than to Mr Birling because Sheila is showing remorse for what she has done and wishes that she had not.

Whereas Mr Birling goes back to what he was saying in Act One before Inspector Goole entered. "A man has to make his own way, has to look after himself and his family too, of course." He is blaming everyone else for what has happened. He also says things like "You helped - but didn't start it.

(Rather savagely, to Mr Birling) You started it." Birling is still thinking like a businessman this is evident when he says things like "There's every excuse for what both your mother and I did - it turns out unfortunately, that's all"

This is another way that J.B. Priestley gets across his opinions. He is still not accepting that he is partly to blame and stands by his decision to sack the workers demanding a higher wage, and that his wife (who is even more - hearted than he is.) Is fully aware of her social status, and uses this to gain whatever she wants. She shows little consideration for the so-called 'inferior' lower classes, and this is shown by what she does in her position on the charity organisation. She has the seat on the charity council, not because she wants to help the poor, but because she wants to feel superior to the lower classes.

The effect of the repetition of the Inspector saying "you can't" in his speech is to make them think about all the things they will not be able to do for her, say sorry, make it better and indeed harm her any more. It is also there to make the audience think twice about actions and consequences; I think that it is J.B. Priestley's way of driving home the fact that she is dead! J.B. Priestley uses the Inspector to portray his social message. He does this by having the Inspector speak with great moral authority, cutting short, interrupting and challenging people. He controls the situation throughout. He is not afraid to contradict and be rude to his social 'superiors', powerful and influential men like Mr.

Birling. It is J.B. Priestley's view that we are all collectively responsible for each other and our society, and that we are connected to all the individuals in our society. I think a few seconds should have passed before the actors on stage begin to talk, the stage directions read, He walks out, leaving them staring, subdued and wandering. Sheila is still quietly crying. Mrs. Birling has collapsed into a chair.

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Eric is brooding desperately. Birling, the only active one, hears the front door slam, moves hesitatingly towards the door, stops, looks gloomily at the other three, then pours himself out a drink, which he hastily swallows. I think this shows that all the characters should be thinking silently and deeply, there should be complete silence apart from Mr. Birling moving. The way in which Mr.

Birling is drinking suggests a nervous man, which is a completely different man from what we saw in Act One. The play could quite easily end here and still be very good, but J B Priestley decides to have the family argue. The family then splits in two: the children who are realistic and their parents who just want to blame every one else and clear their names. At the end of the play it is the possible loss of Mr. Birling's knighthood that bothers Mr.

Birling the most, not his conscience. Sheila says to her parents " It's you two who are being childish- trying not to face the facts". At that moment she seems to tower over them just like the Inspector did. She goes on to say that " it doesn't make any real difference [if he was a real Inspector or not]" Because in her opinion he fulfilled his purpose. The main reason for her change in attitude is that she has an open mind and is willing to listen to what people have to say.

More importantly, she tries to improve the bad aspects of her personality. She admits any wrong doings. " I behaved badly too. I know I did.

I'm ashamed of it". It is obvious that she wants to change because she keeps saying it. The only other person to share her attitude is Eric. As the Inspector

leaves the family start to query as to whether he was an actual inspector, even Sheila and Eric are suspicious because it was exactly after Mr.

Birling had said " A man has to make his own way, look after himself and mind his own business, and not to take any notice of these cranks. " That the Inspector arrived, Sheila being an intelligent girl says slowly " it's queer - very queer -" and looks at the rest of the family reflectively. This shows that the younger generations do have open minds and care more for other people. She benefits from the Inspector's visit and if another inspector were to come, then she would immediately tell the truth.

She has learnt not to hide things from people. I think that she will try to improve her family's relationship and help people in need, treating everybody with the same respect. We can tell that the parent's attitudes have not changed when they start to talk about covering all of the mess up. " Well, if he wasn't, it matters a devil of a lot.

Makes all the difference" And then Mrs. Birling goes on to say that the Inspector was too rude to be true Well, I must say his manner was quite extraordinary; so - so rude - and assertive-" To Portray some more of his ideas. J B Priestley uses Edna to get across some of his ideas Mr. Birling is in a state of distress and is angered when the doorbell rings and is extremely annoyed that he may have to answer the door. But Mrs Birling had told Edna to wait until the inspector had left, just so that she could make the family a pot of tea.

More proof of class difference in the Birling household. " No don't go I told Edna to wait up to make us some tea" When Edna returned with Gerald she <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-jb-priestley-use-the-characters-in-act-three-of-an-inspector-calls/>

was shown no gratitude. They show no respect for her. They look at each other in alarm; Sheila suggests that it might be Gerald returning.

The family are all obviously relieved that it is not the Inspector returning to ask more questions. Gerald's return stops the family feud for a while, as Mr and Mrs Birling seem to want to look presentable in front of Gerald, (whose parents are part of the aristocracy.) Then it turns out that Gerald suspects the Inspector of being an impostor. He even went as far as to ask a passing police sergeant " I'm almost certain. That's what I came back to tell you.

Birling replies excitedly " Good lad! You asked him eh? " Gerald confirms what the Birlings had been discussing prior to his arrival " Yes. I met a police sergeant I know down the road. I asked him about this Inspector Goole and described the chap carefully to him. But the point is - this sergeant was dead certain he hadn't any inspector at all like the chap who came here. " Mr and Mrs Birling are absolutely delighted that Gerald has confirmed that the inspector was a fake; now all they have to do is cover up Eric stealing fifty pounds from the factory. We are not surprised by this as we have learnt that Mr and Mrs Birling are not ones to make changes about things in their lives, and can be very stubborn, the way they talk to Gerald as if he is part of the family, only closer than their biological children and treat him like an adult, whereas they treat Eric and Sheila as if they are about five years old.

" And I say - either stop shouting or get out. " Priestley shows the audience that Mr and Mrs Birling want to cover the whole thing up from his firing the girl to Eric stealing money from the factory by having Mr Birling say " Yes - well. We'll have to do something- and get to work quickly too. " And Mrs.

Birling saying " Now just be quiet so that you father can decide what we ought to do It does not matter to Eric and Sheila if the two pictures are of the same girl, the fact is that they had all mistreated these girls and they must cope with what they did, where as Mr, Mrs Birling and Gerald it makes a big difference, it means that they can just sweep the whole thing away, cover up the money that Eric foolishly stole and no one would be any wiser, and Mr. Birling would still be in line for his precious knighthood! Which is all that matters to him at the moment. The effect of Gerald gradually unfolding the idea that there might not have actually been any suicides is to ' un-pick' the story that the Inspector tricked them into believing, and that the inspector must have been a hoax. Mr and Mrs Birling and Gerald are all eager to make sure they are clear, and are triumphant and smug, whereas Eric and Sheila are both utterly disgusted and angry that their parents and Gerald, who have not learnt their lesson and are not trying to adapt their life styles so nothing like this, could ever happen again.

Sheila says. " The worse part is. But you're forgetting one thing I still can't forget. Everything we said had happened really had happened.

If it didn't end tragically, then that's lucky for us. But it might have done. "

Mr. Birling gives a drink to Gerald to show his gratitude to his detective work and is obviously very relieved; J B Priestley suggests that Mr. Birling give a sigh of relief Mr.

Birling says. "(triumphantly) There you are! Proof positive. The whole story's just a lot of moonshine. Nothing but an elaborate sell (he produces a huge sigh of relief) Nobody like to be sold as badly as that - but - for all that -

Gerald have a drink. " This shows the extent of just how divided the family actually are, and they are so wrapped up in their own business they are oblivious to everyone else's opinions, in this case Eric and Sheila. I think J.B. Priestley wanted to portray the family this way because it shows how the older members of the Birling household want to cling to their way of life, and it would almost seem that they are scared of change to a more socialist approach to life.

Whereas the children seem to be much more mature and have seen the error of their ways and are trying to make amends for what they did. I think Sheila benefits from the Inspector's visit and if another inspector were to come, then she would immediately tell the truth. She has learnt not to hide things from people. I think that she will try to improve her family's relationship and help people in need, treating everybody with the same respect, and maybe participate in the organisation her mother is in, but to actually help people, not to make her feel powerful as her mother does. Sheila is frightened by the way her parents talk; they think if no one knows about what they all did, that they can all just continue as if it had ever happened.

Sheila also contrasts sharply with her parents by the honest and realistic way she regards things. She says " we've no excuse now for putting on airs" Behaving as if they are ' better' than everyone else, including Inspector Goole. Mrs and Mr Birling are shocked by some of Sheila's honest remarks, because they prefer to live in a world where unpleasant realities are suppressed or ignored, but Sheila does not try to deceive herself. I totally agree with Sheila, if something bad happens, then learn from it, don't try to <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-jb-priestley-use-the-characters-in-act-three-of-an-inspector-calls/>

ignore it! Mr. Birling has returned to being nervous after he thought he had disproved Inspector Goole's hoax, because this might be the actual Inspector and he might not get his Knighthood, and that he is not out of the clear and his two children will just admit to every thing.

The effect of the second phone call to the Birling's home is to re-open the story and leave talking points like: Who is the Inspector? , Will the Birlings try to persuade their children to conceal the truth from the real Inspector who is coming? Will Sheila and Eric insist on openness? , Will this be Inspector Goole be playing another hoax? , Is Inspector Goole some sort of supernatural being? And how will the family act towards the new Inspector? It is also to make the audience think about the moral of J B Priestley's play, and to treat people of all classes with respect, as they have feelings to. J B Priestley also plays with the idea that the Inspector is supernatural, it has been commented that Goole may have been a pun on Geist; spirit in death or ghoul, as they both said in the same way. This is Priestley's way of saying that it is up to the younger generation of society to change because older people are a lot more resistant and attached to their lifestyle. During the course of the play Arthur Birling, the rich industrialist, representative of all such figures in society, becomes Priestley's mouthpiece for ideas as suggests that social classes be forgotten.

This would have caused a huge stir in the audiences watching his play in 1946, and would have persuaded some of the audience to see the error of their ways.