

An Inspector Calls- Inspector Goole Analysis

An Inspector Calls' is a didactic play written by J.B Priestley in 1945 that is set in 1912, arguably using the first world war as a catalyst in order to drive the audience to think about the consequences of their actions, something that is crucial in the play. The audience gets to witness Inspector Goole, a seemingly ordinary man, use what can only be described as 'god-like' power in order to drive each of the Birlings into confession. His character is a magnificent blend of power, omniscience, and wit, which makes him a fundamental character in the play that acts as an embodiment for Priestley's ideas in order to convey the moral of the play - for the audience to be more willing to accept socialist ideologies and social responsibility.

Priestley presents The Inspector as supernatural in order to highlight the extent of Inspector Goole's power. In the beginning stages of the play, The Inspector is presented as ordinary as he is said to be wearing a 'plain darkish suit', but his supernatural nature shines through further on in the play, as alluded to by the homophone of Ghoul and Goole. Furthermore, The Inspector being a 'Ghoul' links directly to the novel 'A Christmas Carol'. Priestley knows that a high fraction of his audience would have read the book, therefore he's using a literary allusion that his readers will understand in order to make the moral purpose of his play clear. Additionally, The Inspector's supernatural nature is further emphasised by his omniscience. It could be argued that this omniscience makes The Inspector appear 'superior' to the other characters in the play. This can be seen when Sheila states "He knows", as Sheila now understands the extent of The Inspector's power due to his omniscience, and feels obliged to confess as The Inspector already knows the truth. She urges Gerald to do the same.

J.B Priestley also uses The Inspector as an embodiment for socialism. This can be seen all throughout the play, as The Inspector says 'If you're easy with me, I'm easy with you'. Here, parallel structure is used which is symbolic for The Inspector and Priestley's message, suggesting that equality is inherently a socialist concept, leading the audience to believe that socialism is natural. Additionally, Inspector Goole mentions that 'Their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness all intertwined with our lives'- this emphasis of intertwined lives further pushes the concept of social responsibility. There is also a warning of religious punishment, that 'If men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught in fire and blood and anguish'- This is especially effective for Priestley's religious audience as it ties christianity and socialism together, portraying capitalism as anti-christian. Notably, The Inspector's ideas are progressive for the pre-suffrage 1912 society of the time, which paints socialism as progressive and authentic. This authenticity is also seen when The Inspector doesn't refer to Eva as 'girl' due to her social status as he isn't as superficial as the Birling's, instead he refers to her as having a 'promising little life'.

It can be argued that the power The Inspector has is Godly. He is able to change the atmosphere as his presence has the power to immediately change the light and cheerful atmosphere of the Birlings' dinner party. The lighting changes from "pink and intimate" to "brighter and harder" once The Inspector arrives. Alternatively, the comparative adjectives in the stage directions- brighter and harder - have numerous interpretations, one being that he will 'shine a light' on the terrible actions of the Birlings. This implies that The Inspector is otherworldly and bestows judgement. This further emphasises the Godly power of The Inspector- he is a representation of god and is sent to 'shine a light' on the actions of the birlings. Inspector Goole forces confessions or 'sins' out of the Birlings, similar to a priest in a Church. This link is further strengthened by Priestley's allusion to the Book of Genesis- the statement 'we are members of one body' is also present in the Holy Communion, therefore Priestley highlights that The Inspector is speaking on behalf of god. Additionally, the use of short sentences and terse triplets in 'Yes, but you can't. It's too late. She's dead' could imply that The Inspector doesn't sugar-coat his message- he doesn't care for social norms as his only purpose is being an 'Agent of God'. Furthermore, shocking imagery is used along with techniques such as rhetorical devices and triplets in 'advice, sympathy, friendliness' to evoke empathy and spread God's message.

Priestley presents The Inspector as the foil to Mr. Birling in order to present capitalism as morally unacceptable. In the stage directions it is highlighted that Inspector 'need not be a big man' as he speaks 'weightedly'. Here, Priestley uses the lexical field of size to describe The Inspector's words, emphasising the value of his words. Priestley, on the other hand, is 'portentous' and more concerned with his physical appearance. Interestingly,, The Inspector is also said to speak 'carefully'- contrasting Mr. Birling whose speech is full of dashes and hesitation. Furthermore, Priestley makes subtle references to historical events happening at the time of the play while using dramatic irony to portray Mr. Birling's ideas as inherently wrong. For example, Birling mentions 'we're in a time of steadily increasing prosperity' which the audience know is false due to the great depression.. However, here Birling is referring to 'We employers', the businessmen who did very well out of the depression. Priestley uses this to highlight how biased capitalism is, as the businessmen did benefit and Mr. Birling doesn't care about other parts of society. J.B Priestley concludes the play by highlighting the contrast of power between The Inspector and Mr. Birling. When the second phone call rings, Birling is speaking on the phone when the person has 'rung off' indicating that his social authority is over; creating the sense that he lost the epicentre of his being, his social class. Priestley utilises a cyclical structure in order to emphasise how resistant The Inspector is to Mr. Birling's corruption. This is evident as the play starts with The Inspector refusing a drink of port "no thank you", rejecting Mr. Birling's small attempt at corrupting him. Then the play also ends with The Inspector rejecting Mr. Birling's bribery "you're offering the money at the wrong time", this further demonstrates how consistent Inspector Goole's morals are, unlike Mr. Birling.

Overall, Priestley presents The Inspector as a God-like, omniscient character that has been sent in order to expose The Birling's horrendous crimes against Eva Smith. We don't see much change in the way that Inspector Goole is presented in order to demonstrate the power and consistency of socialism, causing the audience to link socialism to morality and equality, fulfilling the purpose of Priestley's play.