Discuss Some Of The Issues Raised In ‘An Inspector Cals’ Essay, Research Paper

Discuss some of the issues raised in “An Inspector Calls” and show how Priestly expresses his own viewpoint in the play.

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The play is set in the1912 on an English street scene in the evening.

The plot of “An Inspector Calls” is about a police inspector who interrupts an elegant engagement dinner party to question the family and their guests about an unsuspected suicide of a young working-class girl called Eva Smith. There are many plot twists and changes which work well with the characters portrayed in Priestley?s play. The play is set in an upper-class household where class distinctions are breaking down, where privilege and responsibility are being challenged by a devious so-called inspector Goole.

The Inspector does a good job of making the family and friends of Mr Birling, (a wealthy factory owner) feel very guilty for contributing towards the death of Eva-Smith who also becomes known as Daisy Renton during the play. But Moral guilt is not the major issue put forward in the play. The major issue is that of how class-conscious England has been put forward in the play and how the Capitalist?s and Socialist?s are shown. Birling is a ruthless industrialist who worked extremely hard to make his money, and when he finally reaches the top his wealth and popularity is threatened by a suicide scandal.

The characters are a mixture of Capitalist?s and Socialist?s, Mr Birling being a self made upper-class Capitalist, his wife also has great belief in the family name, and works hard to keep a good reputation for herself and her family. The secretive but most sympathetic of the Birling?s is Eric their son, who has a great deal to do with the Suicide of Eva Smith. Eric?s sister is Sheila who gets on well with Eric but seems rather spoilt. Another key member in the play is Sheila?s fianc?e Gerald Croft who is another wealthy industrialist, although Gerald has inherited his wealth unlike Birling.

Each of these people in turn is implicated in Eva Smith’s death. Priestley puts his hope and his beliefs in Sheila and Eric, whose consciences have not yet been destroyed by their rich mother and father.

Priestly?s modern equal class-consciousness is in evidence too, and a good example to show how the class difference really matters in Birling?s household is how the Birling?s treat the maid. She is always there for the family, for example during the late evening the family make reference to her when Gerald returns from his stroll. Mr Birling in a state of distress is angered when the doorbell rings and is extremely annoyed that he may have to answer the door. But the cold hearted Mrs Birling had told Edna to wait until the inspector had left just so that she could make the family a pot of tea.

“Mrs Birling- No don?t go I told Edna to wait up to make us some tea”

When Edna returned with Gerald she was shown no gratitude. They show no respect for her.

But just when you think the drama will end, it delivers further surprises. The play becomes more interesting and clear as it goes on, As the characters become drawn into manipulative control of the inspector and are forced out of their upper-class shells.

As the story continues Priestly shows how Capitalists can use their wealth over the Poor working-class people like Eva Smith, all of these incidents lead to Eva?s suicide,

the first issue being when Birling sacks Eva because she asked for a pay rise. Birling sacks her to be made an example of and to show that he is not willing to share a few pence of his wealth with the lower-class. During the whole play Priestly writes so that you feel sympathetic towards Eva, he does this to make you feel sorry, not just for Eva but for all of the working-class people of England during that period in time.

Priestly is a strong Socialist and shows this by portraying the Birling?s as a ruthless family. Priestly cleverly uses Eric and Gerald in the play, as they both sleep with Eva Smith, thus causing a family discrase because they had been with someone from a lower-class. Which although now would not even be thought of, but in 1912 scandal and discrase would have been brought on to any family in the Birling?s situation.

I think that because maybe Priestly despises the capitalist?s a little he makes fun of the Birling family, a good of example of this is how Mrs Birling decides to blame somebody other than her family for the whole suicide, she blames it on the father of Eva?s child. This made her feel good about herself until she found out that Eric her son was the father of the child therefore making her the grandmother of the child. So after all Mrs Birling only brought more shame onto the family.

“Mrs Birling- I blame the young man who was the father of the child she was going to have, if as she said, he didn?t belong to her class, and was some drunken young idler, then that?s all the more reason why he shouldn?t escape.”

Notice how Mrs Birling makes reference to classes herself, she totally blames the young man until she finds out that he is her son, then she sees things in a different way.

I think the most important speech in the whole play is as follows:

“Inspector- Just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, with what we think, say, and do. We don?t live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good Night.”

I think that the speech sums up all of Priestly?s views he uses the Inspector to try and get the message across to all of mankind about how we should learn how to live equally and if we do not then the world will be a painful place for millions of lower-class people like Eva Smith. He uses the abrupt ending to make the reader think about the situation.

I think that J.B. Priestly had very strong views about equal rights and he uses the characters very well to get across his viewpoint all over the world.