

How does JB Priestley present the different generations in *An Inspector Calls*?

Paragraph Plan

~ 1. Introduction

~ 2. Sheila - Impressionable, learns etc

~ 3. Daisy - Exploited, little opportunity etc

~ 4. Mr Birling - Arrogant, stubborn.

~ 5. Inspector

~ 6. Conclusion

Priestley explores the idea of a generation gap and the problems that may come with it in *An Inspector Calls*. There seems to be misunderstanding and conflict between the two generations presented in the play, as well as how the younger characters are easily 'moulded' - through either exploitation or 'education', being both more easily controlled and influenced.

conceptualised approach to task

writer's method: characterisation

Sheila is a clear example of how the younger generation is presented by Priestley as more open minded and willing to learn. She fully acknowledges that she did something wrong, and that her actions have consequences ("I behaved badly too. I know I did. I'm ashamed of it.") She is also more open to listening to other opinions than the ones she's been fed by her elders, as even though her parents both seem to almost completely dismiss the Inspector's opinions, by the end of the play, Sheila has gone from being completely ignorant to learning a lesson, forming her own opinions on things like class and responsibility. She even goes as far as to confront her parents on these things

apt ref

(PTO)

("You began to learn something. And now you've stopped... It frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it.") which she would not have thought of doing at the beginning of the play - this further shows how impressionable the younger generation are presented by Priestley. As well as Sheila being taught the idea of questioning authority of older figures, not believing everything her parents tell her.

Sheila also refers to Eva as a person, unlike her father - "but these girls aren't cheap labour - they're people." This shows how she's more compassionate.

Daisy is also shown as part of Priestley's views on the younger generation and how they act and are treated in society, but in an entirely different way. In the time period the play is set in, Daisy is essentially a strawman of one of the most unfortunate situations you could be in: A poor, unemployed young woman, turned to the sex worker industry as a last resort. And the entire reason why she's in this position is because of the actions taken by a mostly older, wealthy upper class family. Daisy is meant to be an illustration of the mass amounts of poor young people who are stripped of any opportunity before they have a chance to get ahead - contrary to Mr. Birling's capitalist views, which usually argue that anyone has the chance to get to the top of the ladder - but how can that happen if their chances are taken away from them so young?

Daisy is portrayed as extremely vulnerable, and she's an eye opener to Sheila, who has grown up very comfortably. She is ~~is~~ a way of

apt reference  
integrated into  
interpretation

examination  
of method

showing the other characters the consequences of their actions, ~~about~~ what life is like for the hundreds of others they could affect ("We don't live alone... we are responsible for each other").

examination  
of method

Mr Birling is a directly contrasting character compared with Daisy and Sheila. His beliefs

are set in stone, unwilling to listen to anyone else, and even when he does learn a lesson, that he has done something wrong, he likes

to put the blame on someone else ("You're the one I blame for this... There'll be a public scandal... I was almost certain for a knighthood..."). He also

does not ~~not~~ seem affected by the consequences of his actions on others, but only on himself - focusing on the knighthood and the bad publicity. This shows a contrast between how the older and younger characters are portrayed as even when Mr Birling is faced with absolute proof that he must be held responsible for something, he is still so set in his selfish personal views that he will not accept any form of blame, and quickly hangs onto any flimsy theory that'll get him off the hook in his own mind. Mr. Birling also shows how he uses his

social power to alienate himself and his family from outside opinions and matters, totally dismissing and ignoring critics, just because they are not there to witness it - the way he refers to Daisy as derogatively as possible. He also doesn't like when others question his behaviour - "She'd had a lot to say - far too much - she had to go." He tries to ignore and push out <sup>other</sup> opinions.

character as  
method:  
examination

apt reference

exploratory  
response to  
task / text

considering  
ideas

The Inspector is an example of how easily older figures can shape the minds of the younger generation. He educates Eric and Sheila throughout the play and seems to make a lasting impression on both of them. This may be Priestley showing how much potential the younger generation would have, if only they were educated about the inequality in the ~~the~~ world, they would really have a chance of making some sort of difference and helping those in need, therefore reducing the numbers of 'Eva Smiths' living out there.

examination  
of method

exploratory  
response

The Inspector is very keen on ideas of social responsibility and community, and tries to teach this to the Birlings. His efforts are unfortunately wasted on ~~them~~ <sup>the older members of the family</sup>, as they take any opportunity to deflect the blame that ~~the~~ he places on them.

This may show how we need to educate more younger people about the injustices in the world before they become too isolated from them, apathetic towards others and only looking out for themselves, as seen in the stubborn nature of Mr Birling.

exploring  
ideas and  
contextual  
factors linked to  
task

In conclusion, this play explores the age gap in a way that shows the importance of responsibility in two different ways: the responsibility to educate, and the responsibility to look out for others. The

consequences of not being warned of those less fortunate than you, and being shielded from all other political ideas is shown in Mr Birling.

He has grown up to be apathetic, selfish, and narrow minded, which he has unfortunately inflicted

exploratory  
response

on his children. However, as they are young and easily influenced, their minds are much more open to other ideas and ways of

apt reference

thinking - the Inspector calls it his 'duty' to not only report on the consequences of their actions, but make sure they learn something from it. The idea of being responsible for someone else's welfare also comes up - Eva, who is a representation of how damtradden certain classes of society ~~can~~ shows how quickly and easily a young person's opportunities and entire future can be taken away by the mostly older, wealthier members of society. This is a lesson that the Inspector tries to teach Mr Birling - that sometimes, you can't just 'get a job' or work harder - the ones telling you this are the people that often take away any of your chances.

analysis of methods

All Level 5 + Level 6 for AO1 (task) and AO2 (analysis of methods) = 27 AO4 = 4 Total = 31 / 34

This candidate takes a conceptualised approach to the task, and focuses on the text as a conscious construct. AO2 is analysed through the presentation of character, and there is some thoughtful consideration of ideas and contexts shown through the response to the text overall. There is clear evidence for all Level 5 therefore, and on balance a mark of 27 also acknowledges the candidate's approach to the task as well as analysis of how character is used by the writer to exemplify ideas.