

How is the Inspector used to show how society could be improved?

In 'An Inspector Calls', Priestley uses the character of the Inspector to highlight corruption in a pre-war, hierarchical society and how a change from capitalist to socialist values are urgently needed. Throughout the play, Priestley employs the Inspector as his own mouth piece, delivering his message of social improvement through the Inspector to respective post-war audiences.

The opening stage directions, which function as exposition in the text, allude to the import of the Inspector: "the lighting should be pink and intimate, until the Inspector arrives, when it should become brighter and harder." The shift in the mood on stage, enacted by the Inspector's arrival could be used to suggest that the Inspector will have a profound, positive impact on the Birlings and Gerald Croft; the pre-modifying adjective "pink" might imply the Birlings' 'rosy', optimistic views about society owing to their lack of interest in the lower, working classes. The strengthening of light on the Inspector's arrival could suggest a number of things. Firstly, it could indicate that the Inspector will, like light, expose harsh truths to make the Birlings see how their former actions have been detrimental to others. An alternative interpretation is that light is often symbolic of hope; the Inspector will, through interrogation and teaching hard moral lessons, bring the hope of redemption to the Birlings and society as a whole. Finally, light carries religious and angelic connotations which could imply that the Inspector is a God like figure who will bring about social justice and positive change.

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