
An Inspector Calls By J.B. Priestley: The Representation Of Eric As A Typical Edwardian Boy

Priestley introduces Eric as a wealthy sexist misinformed typical Edwardian boy, with capitalist views doctorined into his upbringing, and an immature character who also blindly advocates to the corresponding selfish materialistic perspectives and capitalist ideologies as his nouveau riche hubris father.

Eric is presented as an outcast through Priestley's manipulation in the dialogue 'Half shy ,Half assertive' in the well-made 'whodunnit' play of an Inspector Calls, through the unities of time, action and place. Predominently, one may argue that Eric is uncomfortable by the notion of capitalism that has been administrated into his brain, that he has to pursue mindlessly as it is a family expectation; without assigning any afterthought of the harsh consequences that wil later be divulged upon the Inspector's arrival. This directly influences the audience, into percieving Eric as an outcast from the Birling family as he's feelings and beliefs contrast the rest of his family members, leaving him trailing behind to portray an unlikable outcast image. This idea of being an outcast is carried out through act one when Eric questions his father about war and he dismisses the idea. However Eric is still persistent and claims 'Yes i know-but still-', before being interrupted by his father again. The hyphens renders vividly and accentuates how unsure he is about his suggestion due to his indecisive approach in his speech; his prolongation in questioning his father, demonstrates to the audience that Eric is indeed more 'assertive' than he impersonates to be and foreshadows his acceptance of responsibility later in the play. The fact that Eric gets interrupted, corroborates how segregated Eric is from his family and how he is invisible to them, to the point where he interjects his father's speeches to prove himself to them. Here Priestley, renders vividly the dichotomy between the generation gap, because Eric represents the looming moral and societal revoloution that will take place over the course of the two world wars and women's rights.

Priestley presents Eric as a sexist young man who sexually abuses Eva through the discerning refence of 'I wasn't in love with her {...} she was pretty and a good sport', to affect the readers in the following ways. Predominently, one may argue that 'pretty' implies that he percieves Eva's exterior feautures first and not the hardship that she encounters,which explicitly exhibits his shallow values for women. This corrobates and shadows Gerald's views as he say's 'I didn't install her there so i can make love to her', manifesting that both Eric and Gerald objectify women and see them as a product of sexual pleasure. These patriarchal views present Eric as sexist, because it undelines the problems with a mysogynistic society, which portray women as sexual objects for men to use and throw away. The fact that Eric describes Eva as 'a good sport', further presents Eric's sexist outlook on women, as it gives the explicit implication that Eva was just a game for him to play. Eva is significant to the play, as she is an hyperbolic caricature of a working class woman of 1912's Edwardian era; she corresponds to the downtrodden working class to deliver the morality play form. The historical period has been intenionally drawn upon because Eric mistreats Eva, which depicts him as sexist. This illustrates that Eric is both sexist and misinformed about the mysogynistic society of 1912, which highlight the theme of gender inequality as he doesn't acknowledge the helpless state of Eva and the less fortunate girls.

Eric is presented in a negative light, through the discerning reference of 'I don't even remember-that's the hellish thing'. This utterance and revelation instantly provokes a sensation of displeasure within the post-war audience because he doesn't take accountability for his mistreatment and past inequalities that he physically dictated towards Eva. The fact that he dismisses that he raped Eva as though it is trivial, highlights his immaturity and youth. The use of religious imagery and hyperbole through the word 'hellish' connotes horrific words such as fire and hell; the religious idea of sin, suggesting that he should be punished and he should atone for his action. This quote associates to the inspector's powerful statement at the end of the play where he claims 'if men will not learn their lesson, they will be taught in fire, blood and anguish'. Additionally, Eric admits he 'was in a state where a chap turns easily turns nasty', blaming alcohol for the devious act he devoted to Eva, illustrating his absence of courage to accept responsibility for his own actions and emphasising the gender inequality that existed in 1912.