How does Priestley present Sheila as a character who learns important lessons about herself and society?

Throughout An Inspector Calls, Priestley shows Sheila to change as a person. This is because she learns important lessons about herself and society she lives in. By the end of the play, she has clearly changed her way of thinking and the inspector makes her rethink the way she treats people. The way Priestley does this is very smart.

Priestley uses Sheila and the Inspector in conjunction with each other to portray society in Edwardian England and how it needed change. Sheila is shown to slowly have her views changed though the play. Priestley wanted her to be seen as a more likable character as the play continues. He wanted to use Sheila as an ideal person of that society in that she could learn what she has done and understand it. That is quite the opposite of how Priestley presents some other characters in the play, who are still oblivious to their problems, and are disliked by the audience.

She loved to use her power and status to her advantage. Sheila did this when she got Eva Smith fired from Milwards. She also had no remorse in doing this. “- but she looked very pretty and looked as though she could take care of herself, I couldn’t feel sorry for her”. This describes Sheila as cold hearted. She thinks that if someone looks “very pretty and looked as though she could take care of herself”, then they are living a perfectly fine life like her. This portrays her as oblivious to others’ lives.

Sheila was also very materialistic and ostentatious at the start of the play. When Gerald proposed to her and gave her a ring, she said, “isn’t it a beauty”. This clearly shows that she cares a lot about showing off her money and class. Sheila is shown to become humbler as the play continues as she becomes insecure and she loses some self-confidence. She has learnt that she is in the wrong and is portrayed to be sorry for that.

Priestly shows that Sheila has dramatically changed throughout the play because when the Inspector leaves, she is very sorry for what she has done. Whilst most of the characters make excuses for their actions, Sheila and Eric show remorse towards Eva Smith and understand what they have done whereas the other characters only care about their reputation.

In conclusion, Priestley used Sheila as a character to show that the Edwardian society can change. The fact that she changed shows that the people can change too. This is what Priestley was hoping to show in this play, because it is a morality play. Sheila is a very significant character in this way. She doesn’t seem to be very important, but she has a very significant role to play.