How far does priestly present Mrs Birling as an unlikable character?

Mrs Birling is a very high-class women in society. She is an aristocratic capitalist and has a lot of prestige. She is married to Arthur Birling, who has a lower position than her. They are married because Mr Birling owns Birling and Co, so he has a lot of money. She has two children, Eric and Sheila Birling. They live in a suburban mansion to show their riches. Throughout the play, Priestly makes references to Mrs Birlings class and how this can make her an unlikeable character.

In Act 2, it is revealed that Mrs Birling runs a charity to help people that are in need. When Eva Smith came to her asking for help, Mrs Birling sent her away. She said, “I didn’t like her manner”. This shows that Mrs Birling has preconceived ideas about the lower class and sees them as rude and arrogant people. She didn’t like her because of the way she dressed and how she looked. This proves that Mrs Birling is very judgemental towards the lower class. Priestley shows her as a woman who wants to find things to dislike about less fortunate people just because they are less fortunate. By pushing people like Eva Smith down, it makes her look better and higher in society.

In Act 1, Mr Birling is telling the inspector about how he was linked to Eva Smith. He said that he offered money to her and Eva Smith denied it because the people she worked with weren’t getting paid the same. Mrs Birling then says, “a girl of that sort would never refuse money”. This presents Mrs Birling as someone who sees lower class people as bad people and they’re begging for money. “a girl of that sort” also makes Eva Smith seem like a bad member of society compared to Mrs Birling. Mrs Birling also finds it slightly funny that people are begging for money, so the higher-class people have more control over them. This was true in 1912 and was another reason why there was such a big gap between higher and lower class people. Mrs Birling took advantage of this and liked to take control over lower class people. This makes the audience dislike her more.

Priestley also writes Mrs Birling as a very materialistic woman. She is shown as someone that likes expensive things to make themselves feel better about themselves. She says “it’s a lovely ring, be careful with it” when Gerald presents Sheila with an engagement ring. Mrs Birling likes this because she is excited to see expensive things. She also shows off her riches in other ways. They live in a huge suburban house, drink port and smoke cigars and offer them to guests. In 1912, this would show that you are very rich and high-class. They also have a maid, Edna, who only people of a higher status could have a maid. Priestley writes all this on purpose to show off that they are rich, and they know of this. This is a trait of an unlikeable person

In conclusion, Priestly successfully shows Mrs Birling as an unlikable character. He does this in many ways like her being rude to lower-status people and a materialistic person. A lot of the things that Mrs Birling says throughout the play make her seem to show off her riches. This makes the audience dislike her. She is presented as a materialistic woman which makes people think that she only cares about money and not other’s feelings. These are the things that make a person unlikeable and reasons why the audience may be against her.