

Henrik Ibsen wrote the play "An Enemy of the People" in 1882. The story is set against the backdrop of a small town in Norway, which is similar to where Ibsen himself grew up.

Ibsen was also known as the "Father of Realism". In all of his plays and writings, he observed the truth that was often hidden behind facades of an idyllic family life, which was held in very high regard during the Victorian times in which Ibsen wrote. Thus, his plays were considered controversial and scandalous, often even immoral-because they went against the customs of society at that time, and portrayed it in an unfavorable light. In truth, Ibsen was merely a staunch Realist..

~~Realism~~ was an artistic movement that began in France in the late 19th century. It opposed the concept of romanticism, and of sugar coating the real facts of life. Realism posed itself against embellished sentimentalism and emotionalism. It soon became every Realists endeavour to deliver the truth, and a completely accurate picture of everyday life to people. Infact, Ibsen's dramas were also known as "Kitchen-Sink Dramas"-as most of them explored the conflicts that people from the middle class face in everyday life.

In his play, "An Enemy of the People, adapted and translated to English by Arthur Miller in 1950, focuses on the conflict that arise when Dr. Stockman, one of the main characters in the play, realizes that the water in the town's springs is contaminated. The construction and development of the springs was lead by Dr. Stockman's own brother, the mayor of the town, Mr. Stockman. In the face of extreme social opposition, even after his own allies turn on him, Dr. Stockman struggles to do what he feels is "the right thing". Yet, not once do we feel as if either side is right or wrong, for Ibsen does not give us the chance, as every one of his characters are so fundamentally human, each having their own flaws and imperfection, that the reader struggles to apply the concepts of "right" and "wrong" while reading the play. Ibsen's main intent is to leave it to the readers to discuss the situations and conflicts in the play.

In dramatic literature, the opening scene is of great significance. It not only introduces us to the characters and setting of the play, but it also creates a certain mood and tension, which sets the tone for the rest of the play, and acts as a useful tool for exposition.

In the first scene of the play itself, Ibsen manages to draw a sharp contrast between the two brothers, Dr. and Mr. Stockman.

The reader can infer a great deal simply from the way that Peter Stockman is described as being dressed, in his overcoat and hat, cane in hand, he comes across at first glance as a very buttoned up and constrained individual. In his adaption of the play, Miller writes, "He has always been one of those men who make it their life work to stand at the center of the ship and keep it from overturning." This description of Mr. Stockman's character indicates his love for discipline, order and authority, and perhaps even his concern for the welfare of the people.

Very soon after his arrival, Mr. Stockman begins to make Catherine, Dr. Stockman's wife, extremely uncomfortable, by continually criticizing the way in which the Stockman household is run, frowning disapprovingly on the apparent extravagance. Peter Stockman's subtle, implied criticism give us a hint about his impression of his brother the Doctor. This is further exemplified when Catherine says to him, "You sound as though Tom and I throw money out the window", and he replies by saying, "Not you Catherine", thus making it clear that he thinks that it is all Dr. Stockman's doing. In this way, the dialogue between Catherine and Mr. Stockman builds up an undercurrent of hostility that only intensifies as the scene progresses.

The selfish and egotistical side of Mr. Stockman's personality also shows up when Hovstad, the editor of the local newspaper, suggests that "Dr. Stockman cleared Kistrten Springs". Mr. Stockman quickly becomes offended by this remark and retorts by saying that he felt that he too had a "certain modest part" to play in its creation".

Another contrast between the two brothers when, on enquiring about the Doctor's whereabouts, Catherine tells Mr. Stockman that he has gone out for a walk with his sons. The reader realizes that while Mr. Stockman is a stiff, formal man who prefers to sit indoors with his coat on, Dr. Stockman seems to be the sort of man who is free and relaxed, at one with nature and his surroundings.

Dr. Stockman's entrance into his home only strengthens the reader's impression of his personality. He enters the house laughing jovially, like a giant bubble of energy, and it seems as if things seem to come alive as soon as he has entered. This too, stands out in stark contrast with Mr. Stockman's entry into the house, which only resulted in awkwardness and embarrassment for Catherine Stockman.

A dialogue between the two brothers follows, during which Peter Stockman continues to voice his disapproval of his brother's lifestyle,

going as far as to say, "Its extraordinary how you people can consume all this food and live".

The reader soon begins to sense a sort of chasm opening up between the brothers, as Dr. Stockman talks about young people, and how they would one day "stir up the whole future". This alarms and startles Mr.

Stockman, who is more than a little distressed at the thought of things being "stirred up", as this goes completely against his principles of authority and discipline. In this manner, Ibsen uses the two Mr. Stockman to symbolize the archtypical traditionalist, while his brother Dr. Stockman is a man who belongs to the New World Order, an out-and-out idealist. The gap between the two brothers only widens, as when Peter Stockman asks the Doctor about his plans for printing an article in the local newspaper, Dr. Stockman replied in a very vague and mysterious manner. This makes Mr. Stockman resentful of the fact that his own brother seems to be keeping secrets from him.

An argument soon breaks out between the two when Mr. Stockman begins to accuse his brother of "going behind his back". This accusation enrages the Doctor, who denies it completely. The next few lines spoken by Mr. Stockman ("You have an ingrained tendency.....general welfare") tells us a great deal about his morals and ideals. He is a man who feels that individual desires and goals should bow down to society's will and well being. This shows us how political he is in his thinking.

Mr. Stockman walks out in a huff, and his exit has a rather ominous and foreboding feeling to it, as he says the line "someday you might pay dearly for it". This is Ibsen foreshadowing the tragedy that befalls Dr. Stockman towards the end of the play.

The reader already knows what Mr. Stockman feels about his brother, and after he has left, the Doctor too voices his opinion by saying , "Peter is a lonely man. Poor fellow, all he knows is official business and duties".

In this way, Ibsen manages to create a sharp contrast between the two brother's personalities and outlook on life in the very first scene of the play. Tension and drama begins to build up as the two brothers quarrel and argue, and this sets the tone for the remainder of the play, which sees Dr. Stockman struggle not only against his own brother, but the entire town community.

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