A GUIDE TO

A DOLL'S HOUSE

BY HENRIK IBSEN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. About the author……..3

2. Genre……..5

3. Character list……7

4. About the title……11

5. Tone……..12

6. Setting……..13

7. Structure……..15

8. Synopsis……..17

9. Plot summary and analysis……18

10. Character, characterization and role……..…29

11. Themes……62

12. Stylistic/literary devices……85

13. Revision questions…….……110

14. Glosary…….……124

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in Skien, Norway. He was the second son in a wealthy family that included five other siblings. When he was about 8 years old, his family was thrown into poverty due to complications with his father's business. It was after this when Ibsen started to invest his time reading, writing, painting, and doing magic tricks.

Ibsen wrote his first play, *Catiline,* in 1850 which generated little interest. His second play, *The Burial Mound,* however, was performed at the Christiania Theatre on September 26, 1850.

Later, he wrote a series of plays which included *Lady Inger* (1855), *The Feast at Solhoug* (1856), *Olaf Liljekrans* (1857), *The Vikings at Helgeland* (1858), *The Pretenders* (1863), *Peter Gynt* (1867), *The League of Youth (1969), Emperor and Galilean* (1873), *Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1882), *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *The Master Builder* (1892), *Little Eyolf* (1894), *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896)

and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899). He also wrote a dramatic epic poem, “Brand” (1866).

He married Suzannah Thoresen in 1858 and their only child, Sigurd, was born the following year. In 1900, Ibsen suffered his first of several strokes and poor health ended his writing career. He died on May 23, 1906.

GENRE

A Doll's House is **a family drama** for the obvious reason that it concerns a family. It is a "drama" because it is a play—a piece of literature that is never fully realized until it is put on stage in front of an audience.

It is also **a modern tragedy** because it is focuses on the trials and tribulations that face women in a patriarchal society. The play explores not only the status of women, but how they are victims of social forces to the extent that they are left with the role of a "dollwife". In this tragedy, we don't get blood and death at the end; we get the death of a marriage and of the characters' old selves. Ibsen presents these things as the price of self-fulfillment. He shows Nora, and maybe all the other characters, trapped in a society defined by restrictive gender roles. In order to become more than a doll, Nora must shatter the cornerstone that her entire society is based on: marriage.

The play can also be categorized as **a realist drama**. In a realist drama, the characters talk in a close approximation of everyday speech. The speeches are straightforward, conversational and

concerned with normal, everyday things; which makes the play really easy for a modern audience to associate with.

Example

MRS. LINDE: "You must not forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils; your prospects seemed hopeless then."

The vast majority of modern plays, TV shows, and movies are written in a similar style.

CHARACTER LIST

Nora Helmer

Nora is the play's protagonist and the wife of Torvald Helmer. She is the central character, who is a "doll" for her husband to dress up, show off, and give direction to. She is childlike, romping easily with her three children. She has never lived alone, going immediately from the care of her father to that of her husband. Inexperienced in the ways of the world as a result of this sheltering, Nora is impulsive and materialistic. She takes a loan from Krogstad to make her husband's holiday possible. Later, she emerges as a fully independent woman who rejects both the false union of her marriage and the burden of motherhood.

Torvald Helmer

Torvald Helmer is Nora's husband of eight years. At the beginning of the play, he has been promoted to manager of the bank. He was once gravely ill and needed to go to a southern climate to improve his health. He has built his own legacy through his own work and not from family money. He lives his life according to society's norms - both professionally and personally. He spends a great deal of his time at home in his study, avoiding general visitors and interacting very little with his children. In fact, he sees

himself primarily as responsible for the financial welfare of his family and as a guardian for his wife. Torvald is particularly concerned with morality. He also can come across as stiff and unsympathetic. Still, the last act of the play makes very clear that he dearly loves his wife.

Dr. Rank

Dr Rank is a friend of the family of Torvald as well as his physician. He is sick from consumption of the spine (tuberculosis of the spine) as a result of a venereal disease contracted by his father. He confesses his desire for Nora in the second Act and dies in the third Act.

Mrs. Christine Linde

Mrs Linde is an old schoolmate of Nora's. She is a widow. She comes back into Nora's life after losing her husband and mother. She successfully asks Nora to help her secure a job at Torvald's bank. Ultimately, she gets married to Krogstad.

Nils Krogstad

Nils Krogstad is a man from whom Nora borrows money to pay for her family's trip to Italy. He is an acquaintance of Torvald's and an employee at the bank which Torvald has just taken over. He is also a lawyer and moneylender Krogstad was involved in a work

scandal many years previously; as a result, his reputation is tainted because he once committed a forgery. When his job at the bank is threatened by Torvald, he blackmails Nora to ensure that he does not lose it. Dr. Rank calls Krogstad "morally diseased."

Ivar, Bob, and Emmy

These are Nora's young children. They spend little time with their mother or father: they are mostly with their nurse, Anne. In the play, the children speak no individualized lines; they are "Three Children." Ibsen facilitates their dialogue through Nora's mouth.

Anne

Anne is the family nurse. She raised Nora too after she (Nora) lost her mother to death. She stayed on to raise Nora's children. Nora is confident that she can leave her children in Anne's care. She gave up her own daughter to "strangers."

Helen

Helen is a housemaid employed by the Helmers.

Porter

The porter brings in the Christmas tree at the very beginning.

Nora's father

Although he never makes a physical presence during the play, Nora's father's influence is felt throughout its course. Torvald

repeatedly brings up his loose morals and past scandals to compare them to Nora.

ABOUT THE TITLE

Just before Nora leaves her hushand and children at the end of the play, she has the following to say to her husband, Torvald: "Our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife."

It is therefore not too hard to guess where the play's title might have come from. Torvald has never treated Nora as anything more

than a plaything. He admires her beauty. He gets her to dance for him. He even dresses her up in costumes. In effect, she is his doll. The home they live in seems perfect and picturesque, but in reality it is just like the Helmers' marriage: all for show.

Nora adds, "at home I was papa's doll-child." She has never been anything but a man's plaything. Every house she's ever lived in has been just as artificial; first her father's house, and now her husband's house.

No wonder the play is titled **A Doll's House**!

TONE

In the beginning, the play seems to be biased toward Nora. We are definitely inclined to sympathize with her. It is very hard to be on Torvald's side. From his reaction toward Nora for eating macaroons, we know that he is overbearing. His demeaning little pet names for Nora further confirm this.

Torvald, however, redeems himself in the end with the last line, "The most wonderful thing of all?" The line seems to indicate that

he is heading toward the same spiritual awakening as Nora.

This makes us move from seeing Nora as Torvald's prisoner to seeing that *all* the characters, Torvald included, have been prisoners in some way.

In the end, the tone of the play becomes more objective. Sympathy can be found for all its characters. Hence the play can be said to end with a serious, intense and somber tone.

SETTING

Setting can be discussed from three dimensions: Geogaphical, historical and social setting.

Geographical setting

This refers to **the place** or **location** where the events in the play are taking place. In the play *A Doll's House*, the events take place in **The Helmers' Living Room.** The dwelling contains comfortable and stylish furniture and such items as a china cabinet, a bookcase with well-bound books, and a piano on carpeted floor—all of which

demonstrate a stable financial situation. On a broader level, it is assumed that the events take place in Norway in Europe; however there are no references to anything specially Norwegian. This assumption is made because that is where Ibsen was born and raised.

Historical setting

This refers to **the time in history** when the events in the play took place. The events in *A Doll's House* took place in **The Victorian Era,** presumably **around the late 1870s**. During this time, gender roles were very stiff and clearly outlined. Women were expected to be submissive to their husbands; husbands were expected to dominate. Women raised the children; men went out to work. Anyone who challenged these deeply entrenched values faced some serious consequences. This charged atmosphere of gender division was the reason that the play became such a phenomenon.

Social setting

Social setting refers to the kind of a society in which the events in the play are taking place. The play involves **a middle-class society** of family and friends who are reeling under the pressure of strict Victorian values which eventually result to conflicts.

STRUCTURE

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is divided into three acts. Ibsen followed the form of a **well-made play**. Features of a well-made play include increasing suspense by methodical plotting, introducing past events early on and unraveling a secret, which leads to the climax of the play.

The play circumvents through four major stages:

1. **Major conflict** - Nora's struggle with Krogstad, who threatens to tell her husband about her past crime, incites Nora's journey of self-discovery and provides much of the play's dramatic suspense. Nora's primary struggle, however, is against the

selfish, stifling, and oppressive attitudes of her husband, Torvald, and of the society that he represents.

2. **Rising action** - Nora's first conversation with Mrs. Linde; Krogstad's visit and blackmailing of Nora; Krogstad's delivery of the letter that later exposes Nora.
3. **Climax** - Torvald reads Krogstad's letter and erupts angrily.
4. **Falling action** - Nora's realization that Torvald is devoted not to her but to the idea of her as someone who depends on him; her decision to abandon him to find independence.

SYNOPSIS

Nora Helmer once secretly borrowed a large sum of money so that her husband, Torvald Helmer, could recuperate from a serious illness in Italy. She never told him of this loan and has been secretly paying it back in small installments by saving from her household allowance. Her husband thinks her careless and childlike, and often calls her his doll.

When he is appointed bank director, his first act is to relieve a man who was once disgraced for having forged his signature on a document. This man, Nils Krogstad, is the person from whom Nora has borrowed her money! It is then revealed that she forged her father's signature in order to get the money.

Krogstad threatens to reveal Nora's crime and thus disgrace her and her husband unless Nora can convince her husband not to fire him. Nora tries to influence her husband, but he thinks of Nora

as a simple child who cannot understand the value of money or business. Thus, when Torvald discovers that Nora has forged her father's name, he is ready to disclaim his wife even though she had done it for him.

Later when all is solved, Nora sees that her husband is not worth her love and she leaves him.

PLOT SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

ACT I

SUMMARY

The play opens on the day before Christmas. Nora returns home from shopping; although her husband is expecting a promotion and payrise, he still criticizes her excessive spending. In response, Nora plays around with her husband as a child might, and, indeed, Torvald addresses her as he might a child. He hands her more money but only after having criticized her spending. Their relationship compares with that of a daughter and father and, indeed, is exactly like the relationship Nora had with her father. Early in this act the audience is aware that the relationship between the Helmers is based on dishonesty when Nora denies that she has eaten macaroons, knowing that her husband has forbidden her to do so.

Nora is visited by an old friend, Christine Linde. Mrs. Linde tells Nora that she has had some difficult problems and is looking for employment. Nora confesses to Mrs. Linde that she, too, has been desperate and reveals that she had been forced to borrow money several years earlier when her husband was ill. The money was necessary to finance a trip that saved her husband's life, but Nora forged her father's signature to secure the loan and lied to Torvald that her father had given them the money. Thus, she has been deceiving her husband for years as she worked to repay the loan. She tells this story to Mrs. Linde to demonstrate that she is an adult who is capable of both caring for her family and conducting business. Unfortunately, Nora's secret is known by Krogstad, an employee at Torvald's bank. After a confrontation with Krogstad, Torvald decides to fire Krogstad and hire Mrs. Linde in his place.

Krogstad threatens Nora, telling her that if he loses his job he will expose her earlier dishonesty. For her part, Nora cannot believe that forging her father's signature - an act that saved her husband's life - could lead to a serious punishment. Still, she is concerned enough to plead with Torvald on behalf of Krogstad. Torvald refuses to reconsider firing Krogstad and forbids Nora to even mention his name.

ANALYSIS

The Helmers' house is decorated tastefully, showing they are relatively well-off. Nora's happiness as she returns with the Christmas shopping reveals that she enjoys both spending money and doing nice things for her husband and children. At the same time, it will soon become clear that eating the macaroons is an act of deceit and disobedience, as she has been forbidden by Torvald.

Torvald's nicknames for Nora suggest that he thinks of her almost as a child or a pet. This impression is emphasized when Nora hides the macaroons, like a mischievous child afraid of getting caught. Torvald's parent-like attitude is highlighted by the way he talks to Nora about money, implying that he thinks she's not intelligent enough to be financially responsible.

Nora's happiness shows she enjoys performing the role of a wife and mother. At the same time, her request for money to buy something for herself suggests she wants to be allowed to make decisions for herself. But Torvald clearly doesn't trust Nora with the money.

Even though Torvald and Nora appear to be in love, Torvald does not trust her, and Nora on her part doesn't hesitate to lie to him; she was eating macaroons earlier.

Money is central to Torvald and Nora's happiness. Torvald's emphasis on their new prosperity suggests how important money is to him as well.

Mrs. Linde has been visibly changed by her life experiences. Nora's happiness in the last eight years has left her remaining girlishly innocent and naive, whereas Mrs. Linde seems much older. Mrs. Linde's decision to travel alone was unusual for women at the time, and Nora's admiration of her "courage" suggests a desire for independence. Mrs. Linde's status as a widow adds to the impression that she is much older than Nora.

In this part of the play Nora is childishly impolite. Mrs. Linde is obviously in a bad situation following the death of her husband, yet instead of listening to her Nora begins to insensitively boast about her and Torvald's good fortune. Her speech also shows that she believes money leads to freedom and happiness.

Mrs. Linde's story shows how difficult it was for women to survive without the financial support of men. The need for money effectively forced her to marry her husband, and after his death her struggle to support her family highlights the obstacles women faced in earning a reasonable income.

Both Mrs. Linde and Nora have strange and suspicious

reactions to Krogstad's arrival. Thus when Krogstad claims he is here on "routine" business matters, we are tempted to believe there is more to the story.

Here, Krogstad reveals more about Nora's deceitful nature; not only did she lie to Torvald (and everyone else) about where the money for the trip to Italy came from, but she also committed forgery, an illegal act. He threatens to reveal the secret unless she does him a particular favour. Nora is terrified to the point that she even seems to be going mad.

ACT II

SUMMARY

Mrs. Linde stops by to help Nora prepare for a costume ball. Nora explains to Mrs. Linde that Krogstad is blackmailing her about the earlier loan. After Nora again begs Torvald not to fire Krogstad, her husband sends Krogstad an immediate notice of his dismissal. Nora is desperate and decides to ask help from Dr. Rank, a family friend, for a loan to clear Krogstad. Before she can ask him for his help, Dr. Rank makes it obvious that he is in love with her and Nora decides that because of this it would be unwise to ask his help. Krogstad visits Nora once again and this time leaves a letter for

Torvald in which Nora's dishonesty is revealed. To divert Torvald's attention from the Krogstad's letter in the mailbox, Nora engages him to help with her practice of the dance she is to perform, the tarantella. Finally, Nora asks Torvald to promise that he will not read the mail until after the party.

ANALYSIS

In the opening of the second act, the stripped Christmas tree not only shows that time has passed, but also symbolizes a negative shift from the joy of Christmas to a sense of ruin and chaos. Nora's obsession in checking to see if any person or letter has arrived and assurances that no one will come for two days gives a sense of time running out and impending disaster.

Nora cannot think of anything else but her secret and the possibility of someone finding out. She tries to occupy herself with the clothes but is unable to.

As the play progresses, it becomes more and more clear how possessive Torvald is. Nora's pride at saying Dr. Rank is "her" friend suggests she doesn't really have many friends now that she is married. Nora believes that the reason that Torvald is so controlling is because he is so in love with her.

Nora seems increasingly desperate and crazed. Her mutterings

to herself when she is alone show the effect that concealing her secret in front of others is having on her. She lies easily to Dr. Rank, showing how natural lying has become to her.

Nora flirts with Dr. Rank in a very provocative manner. When she teases him with the stockings, this is a very explicit sexual gesture. Her promise to dance for him likewise betrays a disregard for the boundaries of her marriage and a delight in displaying her femininity and sexuality.

Nora is almost asking Dr. Rank to help with keeping the secret of the debt from Torvald, but she is stopped by his confession of love. The confession changes her view of Dr. Rank completely. Where before she perhaps thought flirtation was harmless, the fact that Dr. Rank seems to genuinely love her becomes too much to handle, and she retreats in a rather childlike way.

Krogstad is determined to keep his position at the bank, to the extent of lacking etiquette for Nora, which shows he is desperate. Meanwhile, Nora must cover her tracts in front of everyone—even the maid—hence increasing her isolation.

ACT III

SUMMARY

In this act, it is revealed that Krogstad had years earlier been in

love with Mrs. Linde. At the beginning of this act they agree to marry, and Krogstad offers to retrieve his letter from Torvald. However, Mrs. Linde disagrees and thinks that it is time that Nora is forced to confront the dishonesty in her marriage. After the party, the Helmers return home and Torvald opens the letter from Krogstad. While Torvald reads it in his study, Nora pictures herself as dead, having committed suicide by drowning in the icy river. Torvald interrupts her fantasy by demanding that she explains her deception.

However, he refuses to listen and is only concerned with the damage to his own reputation. Torvald's focus on his own life and his lack of appreciation for the suffering undergone by Nora serve to open her eyes to her husband's selfishness. She had been expecting Torvald to rescue her and protect her, and instead he only condemns her and insists that she is not fit to be a mother to their children.

At that moment another letter arrives from Krogstad telling the Helmers that he will not take legal action against Nora. Torvald is immediately excited and is willing to forget the entire episode. But having seen her husband revealed as self-centered, egoistic and hypocritical, Nora tells him that she can no longer live as a doll and

expresses her intention to leave the house immediately. Torvald begs her to stay, but the play ends with Nora leaving the house, her husband, and her children.

ANALYSIS

Here, Mrs. Linde radically disrupts the course of events in the play. While it would have been easier for her to ask Krogstad to get his letter back, thereby ensuring that life between the Helmers went on as normal, Mrs. Linde's belief in honesty triumphs over her promise to Nora. This finally benefits Nora, as Torvald's behaviour when he reads the letter allows her to see the reality of her situation and that she no longer wants to remain in her marriage.

In this act it is clear that Torvald is thinking of Nora far more as a possession that he can display in order to impress other people than a real person with her own thoughts and feelings. To him, Nora was at the party merely to perform for the enjoyment of him and others, not to have a good time herself.

Nora's bitterness toward Mrs. Linde because she did not get Krogstad to retrieve the letter shows that she has cut herself off even from her close friends in her obsession with the secret of the debt. All the hope and innocence seems to have drained out of her, and she has become a much more serious, grave person.

In his speech we see that Torvald's love and desire for Nora is revealed to be cosmetic, rather than an appreciation for whom she truly is as a person. He talks about his sexual desire for her with no consideration of whether she is feeling the same way at the moment; indeed, when she tells him that she doesn't want to be with him that night, he dismisses her feelings by saying she must be playing a game. In reminding her that he is her husband, Torvald is suggesting that their marriage means Nora does not have the right to refuse sex with him, a commonly held belief at the time.

Nora is preparing to kill herself, perhaps the ultimate symbol of self-sacrifice. Her whispering murmurs on the stage suggest that she is becoming mad.

Throughout this whole section of the play Torvald only thinks of himself and doesn't pause to consider the way Nora has been and will be affected by Krogstad's threats, or that Nora did what she did purely out of love for him.

Nora has evidently undergone a transformation both visually and in the way she speaks to Torvald. For the first time, she is addressing him as an equal and demanding that he treats her with respect by listening and not interrupting.

Finally, Nora conducts what can be considered an unofficial

divorce ceremony. Although Torvald doesn't want her to go, the fact that he agrees to give her his ring and not to write or try to help her shows that he finally respects her wishes and ability to make decisions for herself.

CHARACTERS, CHARACTERIZATION AND ROLE

NORA HELMER

Nora Helmer is the **protagonist** or **the main character** or **the heroine** in the play. Still a young woman, she is married to Torvald Helmer and has three children. Nora is by far the most interesting character in the play. Her whole life is a construct of societal norms and the expectations of others.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. *Impulsive and a spendthrift*

-In her first moments onstage, we see her give the porter an overly generous tip.

-She comes in with tonnes of Christmas presents, and shrugs at the idea of incurring debt.

-Unbeknown to Torvald, Nora borrowed money so that they could afford a year-long trip to Italy.

2. *Loving*

-Nora borrowed money so that they could afford a year-long trip to Italy. Doctors said that Torvald would die without it—but that he shouldn't know how bad his condition was.

-Nora brings home lots of Christmas presents for everybody in her house.

-She plays hide-and-go-seek with her kids.

3. *Independent and farsighted*

-In the past, Nora was always a passive child-like possession who followed Torvald's orders, but towards the end of the play, she is an independent adult and is able to dominate Torvald.

4. *Wise and intelligent*

-Nora uses wisdom and intelligence to confront an emergency. She

forges her father's signature in order to secure a loan from Krogstad so as to save her husband's life.

-Nora realizes that her understanding of herself, her husband, her marriage, and even her society was all wrong. She decides that she can no longer be happy in her life and marriage, and resolves to leave Torvald and her home in order to find a sense of self and learn about the world, a newly empowered woman boldly escaping the oppressive clutches of her old life.

-Nora has been leading a double life. She has not been thoughtlessly spending their money. Rather, she has been saving to pay off a secret debt.

5. *Childlike, immature, ignorant and whimsical*

-She happily accepts the pet names "little lark", "little squirrel", and "Little Miss Extravagant" that her hushand calls her without any opposition. In fact she seems to enjoy and even play into it.

-The maturity level Nora exhibits demonstrates that the relationship between Torvald and Nora is more like father and daughter than husband and wife.

6. *Irresponsible and reckless*

-Her first act on stage is paying the porter. Though his service only costs 50-p, she gives him a hundred. The casual way in which she

gives it to him is indicative of her irresponsibility. She hands him the hundred and before he can thank her, she decides in the middle of the transaction that she is not patient enough to wait for change.

-She forges loan documents to raise money for an expensive trip to Italy. Even if the documents were not forged, Nora did not have any means to repay the loan anyway.

-She has never spent serious time with her husband of nearly a decade, and is always dumping her children on the nurse rather than bonding with them herself.

7. *Dishonest and deceitful*

-She falsely blames Mrs. Linde for smuggling forbidden macaroons into the house.

-She has been eating macaroons, something she has been forbidden by her husband, despite her promises of total obedience to him.

- At the beginning of her marriage, she secretly borrowed money from Nils Krogstad and forged her father's signature in order to finance a trip to Italy that was necessary to save Torvald's life.

8. *Unfeeling*

- She blames Mrs. Linde for smuggling forbidden macaroons into the house. Though she is just trying to hide her indiscretions, she

does not care whom she hurts in the process.

9. *Materialistic*

-She is always trying to make herself happy by buying things: dresses, toys, candy etc., rather than doing anything meaningful with her life.

- She is infatuated with the acquisition of possessions.

10. *Decisive, resolute and independent-minded*

- At the end of the play, it becomes clear to Nora that *“[she] had been living all these years with a strange man, and [she] had born him three children”.* This realization forces her into the real world and she ceases to be a doll. At the end of the above statement, she adds *“Oh, I cannot bear to think of it!”*

-She tells her husband, *"Our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child."*

In the end, Nora has a sort of spiritual awakening. She walks out into the night alone but, for perhaps the first time in her life, she's on the path to becoming a fully realized, fully independent human being.

- She decides to desert her family to go on a quest of personal enlightenment.

-The act of concealing the ill-gotten loan signifies Nora's

independent streak. She is proud of the sacrifice she has made. Although she says nothing to Torvald, she brags about her actions with her old friend, Mrs. Linde.

- Nora is independent enough to negotiate the loan to make her family's holiday possible, and over the course of the play, Nora emerges as a fully independent woman who rejects both the false union of her marriage and the burden of motherhood.

11. *Manipulative*

-At the end of the play, Nora seats Torvald at the table and explains her situation to him. She does not let him speak until she has finished what she wants to say.

- Other examples of manipulation are having a nanny take care of her children, having Mrs. Linde repair her dress, behaving seductively around Dr. Rank, whining at Torvald to get money, and most importantly convincing Krogstad to overlook the similarity between her penmanship and her "father's".

12. *Selfish*

- She does not want to forgive Torvald. She would rather start

another life than try to fix her existing one.

13. *A dreamer*

- Until she comes to the realization that her life is a sham, she spends her whole life in a dream world in which she does not take anything seriously.
- In her dream world, Nora takes a back seat approach to life and becomes like an object, reacting to other's expectations rather than advancing herself.

14. *Trusting and naïve*

-She trusted that Krogstad would not blackmail her and it therefore comes as a rude shock when he does so.

-Until she comes to the realization that her life is a waste, she spends her whole life in a dream world of naivity. In this dream world, Nora does not take life seriously, an attitude that led to many of the plot's complications.

-She believes that Torvald loves her enough to take all blame upon himself, but she is mistaken. When she realizes that he is more concerned with appearances and respectability than with her happiness, she decides to leave him and find her own way in life.

-She naively thought that Torvald would selflessly give up everything for her. When he fails to do this, she accepts the fact that their marriage has been an illusion. Their false devotion has been merely play acting. She has been his "child-wife" and his "doll."

15. *Determined*

-Whenever Nora would pry money away from Torvald, she would reserve half of it to repay the debt, determined to clear it all one fine day.

-She was so determined to save her husband that she committed fraud to do so.

16. *Harworking*

-She has been secretly working odd jobs to pay back the debt.

17. *Corageous, bold, daring and tenacious*

-To save her husband from poor health, she committed fraud. She valued love over the law.

-She courageously confronts Torvald about the demeaning way he treats her at the end of the play.

-She slammed the door on her husband as she left.

-Although she has been forbidden from eating macaroons by her husband, she still does it anyway despite her promises of total obedience to him.

18. *Calculating*

-She is blackmailed by Krogstad, so she begs Torvald to let Krogstad keep his job.

-She flirts with Dr. Rank in the hope of borrowing money from him.

- She gets Christine to go and talk to Krogstad on her behalf regarding the withdrawal of the letter.

-She dances the tarantella to distract Torvald from the mail.

19. *Principled and firm*

-She decides against borrowing from Rank when he reveals that he is dying and is in love with her.

-She rejects Torvald's drunken advances after the party.

20. *Secretive*

-She has never told Torvald where the money for their trip to Italy came from, as his pride would suffer.

-She is also hides her thoughts and actions from her husband even when there is no real benefit in doing so.

21. *Suicidal*

-She contemplates committing suicide in order to eliminate the dishonour she has brought upon her family.

22. *Rebellious*

-She eats macaroons even though she has been forbidden by her

husband.

ROLE

1. *Advancement of the plot* - Nora is the central character in the play around whom the play circulates. As a result of her borrowing money from Krogstad, the conflict in the play is born as Krogstad tries to blackmail her with that secret, in order to make Nora's husband, Torvald, to allow him keep his former job at the bank. When Torvald refuses, Krogstad sends him a letter to inform him about Nora's indebtedness. Torvald's reaction to this letter not only betrays his true nature, but also leads to Nora leaving him and her children to seek independence and freedom.

2. *Development of themes*-Nora helps in developing themes such as love and marriage, women and feminity, lies and deceit, money and materialism, the sacrificial role of women, parental and filial obligations, the unreliability of appearances, gender roles, individual vs. society, growth and development and betrayal

3. *Revealing character traits of other characters*- Nora helps in revealing the character traits of other characters. For example she helps in revealing Torvald as selfish and egoistic, naïve, strict, loving, hypocritical and hardworking. Through her, we learn that Krogstad was on one hand, vicious and ruthless, but on the other

hand, merciful and forgiving. Dr Rank's friendly but immoral nature is revealed through Nora. Mrs Linde traitorous nature is also revealed through Nora.

4. *Enhancing style* – Nora helps in enhancing the style of symbolism (through the symbols like the Christmas tree, tarantella, the dolls, macaroons), dramatic irony, foreshadow, etc.

TORVALD HELMER

Torvald Helmer is a lawyer who at the start of the play has recently been promoted to Bank Manager. He is married to Nora Helmer, with whom he has three children. He does not seem particularly fond of his children, even once saying that their presence makes the house *"unbearable to anyone except mothers."* His best friend is Dr. Rank, who visits him every day.

1. *Loving and affectionate*

-He loves and is very affectionate towards Nora. That is why he showers her with endearments like "My little skylark", "My little squirrel", "My little singing bird," "My pretty little pet," "My little sweet-tooth," and "My poor little Nora." and "Little Miss Extravagant." With every term of endearment, the word "little" is always included to show affection.

- His despair as Nora exits at the very end of the play suggests that,

despite his patronizing and unjust treatment of her, Torvald really does love Nora.

2. *Generous*

-He treats Nora generously, giving her extra money when she asks for it.

3. *Proud*

-Typical of many contemporary heads-of-the-family, he is a proud specimen of a middle-class husband.

4. *Morally upright*

- He sees Krogstad as irredeemably morally tainted, and hence decides to give his job to Mrs Linde.

- He is keenly concerned with his place and status in society and wouldn't allow anybody to threaten his reputation, including his own wife.

5. *Selfish*

-He considers Nora merely as an ornamented sex object instead of an equal partner in their marriage and the mother of his children.

-He maintains amorous fantasies toward his wife: he dresses her as a Capri fisher girl and encourages her to dance in order to arouse

his desires.

-At the end of the play, Nora imagines that Torvald will defend her honour and not allow Krogstad to blackmail the Helmers. Nora imagines that Torvald would sacrifice his own reputation and future to save her, but Torvald tells her that he would not make the sacrifice, shattering Nora's dream world. At this point it becomes clear to her that she had been living all these years with a strange man, and she had born him three children.

-He planned to cope with the scandal resulting from blackmail by stripping Nora of her spousal and motherly duties, but would keep her in the house for appearance sake.

-He is overly concerned with his place and status in society, and he allows his emotions to be swayed heavily by the prospect of society's respect and the fear of society's scorn.

6. *Hardworking and diligent*

-He spends a great deal of his time at home in his study working, avoiding general visitors and interacting very little with his children. In fact, he sees himself primarily as responsible for the financial welfare of his family and as a guardian for his wife.

7. *Dictatorial, authoritarian and patronizing*

-He restrains Nora with rules, much as a father would have to inhibit

a child, forbidding her from eating macaroons and other temporal pleasures.

8. *Manipulative*

-He insists on Nora wearing the fish girl costume for the tarantella. The costume and dance are part of Torvald's fantasy of gazing upon Nora from across the room at a party and pretending that she is something exotic. Torvald made Nora take on a foreign identity; he used her as a doll.

9. *Unforgiving*

-When he finds out about the debt, he fails to forgive her until he is sure that his reputation is safe.

10. *Heartless and unfeeling*

-At the end of the play, Torvald seems untroubled and even a little relieved at the thought of Dr. Rank’s death.

-When he finds out about Nora’s secret debt, he instantly turns on her until he confirms that his reputation is safe.

-His heartless and unfeeling nature makes Nora not to tell him the truth about her loan, and Dr Rank not to tell him about his imminent death.

11. *Conservative and traditional*

-Torvald's focus on status and being treated as superior by people

like Nils Krogstad points at his obsession with reputation and appearances.

-He has straightforward and traditional beliefs about marriage and society.

-When Nora tells him she is leaving him, Torvald at first reacts by calling her mad and saying she is acting like a stupid child.

-He is unable to cope with the disagreeable truths of life.

-However, he can be said to be **flexible** because when he realizes how resolute Nora is in her decision, he offers to change and desperately searches for a way to make her change her mind.

12. *Shallow and vain*

-He is incapable of understanding his wife or of properly returning her love.

13. *Hypocritical and self-righteous*

-Though he regards her as his wife, he never considers her an equal partner in the relationship.

- Many times throughout the play, Torvald criticizes the morality of other characters. He trashes the reputation of Krogstad, one of his lesser employees. He speculates that Krogstad's corruption probably started in the home. Torvald believes that if the mother of a household is dishonest, then surely the children will become

morally infected. He also complains about Nora's late father. When Torvald learns that Nora has committed forgery, he blames her crime on her father's weak morals.

- In the beginning of Act Three, after dancing and having a merry time at a holiday party, Torvald tells Nora how much he cares for her. He claims to be absolutely devoted to her. He even wishes that some calamity would befall them so that he could demonstrate his steadfast, heroic nature.

Of course, a moment later, such an opportunity arises. Torvald finds the letter revealing how Nora has brought scandal and blackmail into his household. Nora is in trouble, but Torvald fails to come to her rescue as he had promised.

14. *Naïve*

- Throughout the play, Torvald is oblivious to his wife's craftiness. When he discovers the truth at the end, he is outraged.

ROLE

1. *Advancement of the plot* – Torvald is also a major character in the play who plays an instrumental role in the development of the plot. It is as aresult of his illness and the subsequent one-year stay in Italy that caused Nora to get into a debt trap with Krogstad. When he refuses to reinstate Krogstad to his former job at the bank, he

intensifies the conflict because this makes Krogstad to send him a letter exposing his wife's secret. The fact that he at first refuses to forgive her leads to Nora's sudden discovery that he was a selfish, egoistic man. She has no alternative but leave him and her children to seek independence and freedom.

2. *Development of themes*-Torvald also helps in developing themes such as love and marriage, pride, honour, respect and reputation, money and materialism, parental and filial obligations, the unreliability of appearances, gender roles, individual vs. society, and betrayal

3. *Revealing character traits of other characters*- Torvald helps in revealing the character traits of other characters. For example he helps in revealing Nora as impulsive and spendthrifty, childlike and immature, irresponsible and reckless, dishonest and deceitful, manipulative, calculating and traitorous. Through him also, we learn that Krogstad was unscrupulous, vicious and ruthless but merciful and forgiving.

4. *Enhancing style* – Torvald helps in enhancing the style of imagery through his pet names for Nora such as "My little skylark", "My little squirrel", "My little singing bird," "My pretty little pet," "My little sweet-tooth," and "My poor little Nora." He also enhances the style

of symbolism like his insistence that Nora should wear the dancing costume, similes like when he says he will protect her “like a hunted dove,” dramatic irony, verbal irony, hyperbole, etc.

MRS CHRISTINE LINDE

Mrs. Linde is an old schoolfriend of Nora's. She is a woman whose marriage was loveless, and based on a need for financial security, and who doesn’t have any children. She and Krogstad had been in love before, but he was too poor to support her family. She arrives in town in search of a job in order to earn money and survive independently.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. *Honest and Truthful*

-She tells Krogstad that Nora must eventually conclude, through her own sufferings, that the only way of life which can survive crises is one based on truthful relationships.

-She believes very deeply in honesty and stops Krogstad from taking the letter he wrote to Torvald back, thereby ensuring that Torvald finds out about Nora’s secret.

-She insists that, *“Helmer must know everything. This unhappy secret must come out!”* Even though she has the power to change Krogstad’s mind, she uses her influence to make certain that Nora’s

secret is discovered.

2. *Harworking*

-Towards the end of the play, she explains to Krogstad that she finds joy and meaning in work.

-She worked hard to support her helpless mother and two younger brothers since the death of her husband.

3. *Independent-minded*

-She arrives in town in search of a job in order to earn money and survive independently. In this way, she is a fairly modern woman.

4. *Traitorous*

-She stops Krogstad from taking the letter he wrote to Torvald back, thereby ensuring that Torvald find out about Nora's secret, which seems like betrayal to her friend Nora.

5. *Coservative and traditional*

-She tells both Krogstad and Nora that she is miserable without other people to take care of, thereby fitting into the traditional role of women as caretakers and nurturers. It is this conviction that causes her to marry Krogstad towards the end of the play.

6. *Selfish and materialistic*

-She ended up marrying another man in order to have enough money to support her dying mother and young brothers. Apparently,

Krogstad was too poor at this time to marry her. This left Krogstad lost and embittered, unhappy in his own marriage, and is presented as the reason behind his moral corruption.

7. *Resilient*

-She has lived an independent life as a single working woman. She has struggled financially and now that she has no one to look after, she feels empty.

ROLE

1. *Plot development*- she lets the audience know the inner thoughts of the protagonist. She has a major effect on events that happen in the play.

2. *Reveals character traits of Nora and Krogstad* - Mrs. Linde functions as a convenient device for exposition. She enters Act One as an almost forgotten friend, a lonely widow seeking a job from Nora's husband. However, Nora does not spend much time listening to Mrs. Linde's troubles. Rather selfishly, Nora discusses how excited she is about Torvald Helmer's recent success. Through Mrs Linde, Nora launches into a dramatic explanation of all her secret activities (obtaining a loan, saving Torvald's life, paying off her debt). Mrs Linde therefore functions as the primary means by which the audience learns of Nora's secret and her character traits.

She is the first character to see that Nora is not a child.

3. *Develops themes*- she introduces the theme of deception.

Through Mrs. Linde, Nora reveals that she has lied to save Helmer's life and therefore deceived him with her cleverness.

3. *Enhances style*- she foreshadows how Nora will confront a bitter future after learning that her marriage is based on deception by recounting how she denied her rights to love and self-determination by marrying for financial security.

DR RANK

Dr. Rank is a medical doctor who is best friends with Torvald and Nora, who he visits every day. He suffers from spinal tuberculosis; a condition he believes was caused by his father's vices, which included having extramarital affairs and consuming too much luxurious food and drink. He is unmarried and lonely, and over the course of the play it is revealed that he is in love with Nora.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. *Friendly and loyal*

-Nora explains how she always feels at ease around Dr. Rank because he does not have any expectations or demands of her.

-He visits the Helmers every day.

2. *Immoral*

- It is revealed that he is in love with Nora, his best friend's wife.

4. *Courageous*

-He is unconcerned with what others think of him.

-He has accepted his fate and his impending death.

5. *Cynical*

-He rejoices when he finds out that his illness is terminal, and insists that neither Torvald nor Nora visits him in his dying days. As he predicted, he is not particularly missed by the other characters.

6. *Trusting*

- He trusts Nora completely. He refrains from telling Torvald of his imminent death because it is too "ugly" an idea for him to tolerate, but he does tell Nora, an indication of the bond between them. He talks with her about his coming death in a code that excludes Torvald and protects him from the harsh reality.

7. *Hypocritical*

-Dr Rank is not as straightforward as he appears. His real motive for visiting the Helmers is that he is in love with Nora.

8. *Realistic*

- On the subject of the costume party, Dr. Rank suggested that Nora should go as herself and that Torvald should be invisible. Under the

surface, Rank is suggesting that Nora should not be a doll. With an invisible chaperon, Nora would not be dominated by a figure placing an identity over her.

ROLE

-To provide amusement for Nora as a change from the tiresome rules of Torvald, just as she used to seek the conversation of the maids as a refreshing change from the strictness of her father.

- Dr. Rank adds to the somber mood of the play; he is not essentially useful to the conflict, climax, or resolution.

NILS KROGSTAD

Nils Krogstad Krogstad is an employee at the bank at which Torvald is made manager. He leant Nora the money to take Torvald to Italy to recuperate. He is, at least at the beginning, the main antagonist: Everything is going well for the Helmers until Krogstad enters the story. Known to the other characters as unscrupulous and dishonest, he blackmails Nora, who borrowed money from him with a forged signature, after learning that he is being fired from his job at the bank. In the past, he too committed the crime of forgery,

an act that he did not go to prison for but that nonetheless ruined his reputation and made it extremely difficult to find a respectable job.

CHARCTER TRAITS

1. *Morally Corrupt*

-In the past, he too committed the crime of forgery, an act that ruined his reputation, though he did not go to prison. But it made it extremely difficult for him to find a respectable job.

-He was once in love with Kristine Linde, who ended up marrying another man in order to have enough money to support her dying mother and young brothers. This left Krogstad lost and embittered, unhappy in his own marriage, and is presented as the reason behind his moral corruption.

-Torvald, who sees Krogstad as irredeemably morally tainted, decides to give his job to Mrs Linde.

2. *Merciless, vicious and callous*

-At first he treats Nora without mercy when demanding his money. He argues that no mercy has been shown to him in life

3. *Unscrupulous and dishonest*

-He blackmails Nora with the threat of exposing her indebtedness unless she talked her husband Torvald into giving him back his job

at the bank.

-Unless Nora persuades Torvald to keep Krogstad in his job (he later extends this to a promotion), he will tell Torvald about her loan and her forgery of her father's signature.

4. *Forgiving and remorseful*

-At first he treats Nora without mercy on the basis that no mercy has been shown to him in life; however, after Mrs. Linde and he decide to marry, he becomes happier and rescinds his threats to Nora, saying he regrets his behaviour.

-He removes his threats to the Helmers and sends Nora's bond back to her, relinquishing his power over her.

-After engaging in a conversation with his lost love, the widow Mrs. Linde, they reconcile, and once again their romance is reignited, Krogstad no longer wants to deal with blackmail and extortion. He is a changed man!

-Although Mrs. Linde suggests that he should leave the first letter in the mailbox so that Nora and Torvald can finally have an honest discussion about things, he later drops off a second letter explaining that their secret is safe and that the IOU is theirs to dispose of.

-He has been trying to remake his life after having made earlier

mistakes.

- Although he has been labeled as corrupt and “morally sick,” Krogstad has been trying to lead a legitimate life. He complains, *“For the last eighteen months I’ve gone straight; all the time it’s been hard going. I was content to work my way up, step by step.”* Then he angrily explains to Nora, *“Don’t forget: it’s him who is forcing me off the straight and narrow again, your own husband! That’s something I’ll never forgive him for.”*
- He is one of several examples in the play of a person being forced into morally questionable action as a result of the rigid and unmerciful forces of society.

5. *Loving and responsible*

-As soon as Mrs Linde tells him that she has always loved him and asks him to resume their relationship, he reveals himself as a more loving, joyful and merciful character.

-In matters concerning his children, we find the true measure of the man. Nils Krogstad is a good father and is not afraid of doing whatever it takes to make sure his family is secure.

- Despite the financial strain that he found himself under as a single parent Nils Krogstad still brought up his two boys as best he could.
- Although at times Krogstad is vicious, his motivation is for his

motherless children, thus casting a slightly sympathetic light on his otherwise cruel character.

6. *Hardworking and resilient*

- Here is a man who is a single parent of two boys who is totally unsupported by the society he exists in. He has been dealt many blows by life, first by Mrs. Linde who rejected him on financial grounds many years ago, and then by the death of his wife. He has to work multiple jobs to support himself and his family; by day he is a lowly bank clerk and by night he is a moneylender and he even finds time to write for a paper.

8. *Frank and sincere*

-When Mrs. Linde proposes they resume their old relationship, Krogstad remains truthful and makes sure she is aware of his past deeds as well as what people think of him. He even makes sure she knows about his current dealings with the Helmer's.

ROLE

1. *He advances the plot*- Krogstad initiates the conflict by attempting to blackmail Nora Helmer. He serves as a catalyst. Basically, he initiates the action of the play. He sparks the flames of conflict, and with each unpleasant visit to the Helmer residence, Nora's troubles increase. In fact, she even contemplates suicide as

a means of escaping his torments.

2. *Develops themes*- Krogstad helps to develop the themes of love and marriage, pride, honour, respect and reputation, money and materialism, parental obligations and individual vs. society.

3. *Reveals character traits of other characters*- Through him we are able to know that Nora is secretive and deceitful, and Mrs Linde is traitorous and materialistic for leaving him when he was poor.

NURSEMAID

She is a nurse to both Nora and Nora's children. Her name is Anne Marie. The nursemaid is an example of a woman in bad circumstances forced to do anything in order to survive.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. *Kind*

-She was forced to give up her own child, who it is suggested was born out of wedlock.

2. *Reliable and responsible*

-When Nora first thinks of leaving, she considers the fact that her children will be raised by the nursemaid and, remembering what a good mother the nursemaid had been to her, decides that she

would also raise Nora's children well.

3. *Immoral*

-She gave birth to a baby out of wedlock,

4. *Irresponsible*

-She had to give up her own child in order to take up her position as the nursemaid at the Helmers.

5. *Self-sacrificial*

-She had to give up her own child in order to take up her position as the nursemaid at the Helmers. Nora finally leaves her children in her care, believing that they will be better off than they would be with her.

ROLE

1. *Developing themes*- She helps to develop the theme of the sacrificial role of women by giving away her child to strangers so that she could concentrate on her job.

IVAR, BOB, AND EMMY

These are Torvald and Nora's young children. Raised primarily by Anne, the Nurse (and Nora's old nurse), the children spend little time with their mother or father. The time they do spend with Nora consists of Nora playing with them as if she were just another playmate. The children speak no individualized lines in the play; they

are "Three Children." Their dialogue is facilitated through Nora's mouth, and they are often cut entirely in performance.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. Playful

-They asked their mother to play child games with them and they played hide-and-seek.

2. *Insistent*

When their mother showed reluctance to participate in the children's game, they insisted until she gave in.

3. *Loving*

-They loved their mother dearly and would have wanted to spend more time with her and to continue playing children's games with them.

ROLE

1. *To bring out the character* of Nora as a loving mother. She showers them with Christmas gifts and even plays children games with them. When Nora later refuses to spend time with them because she fears she may morally corrupt them, she acts on her belief that the quality of parenting strongly influences a child's development.

HELEN

A housemaid employed by the Helmers.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. Humble

-She answers Nora with a lot of humility.

2. Hardworking

-She does her work diligently.

PORTER

This is the porter who brings the Christmas tree to the Helmers house at the very beginning of the play.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. Obedient

-He obediently delivers the Christmas tree to the Helmers house.

2. Grateful

-He thanks Nora for the tip that she gives him.

3. Honest

-He honestly states his charges without exaggerating and was already giving her back the change when she told him to keep it.

NORA'S FATHER

Though Nora's father is dead before the action of the play begins, the characters refer to him throughout the play. Though she

clearly loves and admires her father, Nora also comes to blame him for contributing to her subservient position in life.

CHARACTER TRAITS

1. Manipulative

-He manipulated Nora to do according to his wishes and whims. She complains that her father and her husband both treated her like a doll.

2. Immoral

-Torvald criticizes him as having been a morally crooked man who engaged in corrupt deals.

3. Insensitive

-The way he treated Nora was too insensitive for a father to treat his daughter.

THEMES

MARRIAGE AND LOVE

At the beginning of the play, Nora and Torvald appear to be very happily married, even to themselves. Nora talks joyfully about her love for Torvald, and Torvald refers to Nora using affectionate pet names. At first the Helmers seem happy, but over the course of the play, the imbalance between them becomes more and more apparent.

Their loving marriage stands in contrasts with the lives of the other characters. For example, the marriage of Krogstad and Mrs. Linde was based on necessity rather than love, and were unhappy. Dr. Rank, on the other hand, was never married, and it is later revealed that he has silently loved Nora for years.

Yet although Nora and Torvald's marriage is based on love (as

opposed to necessity, as was the case with Krogstad and Mrs. Linde), it is still governed by the strict rules of society that dictated the roles of husband and wife. It is clear that Nora is expected to obey Torvald and allow him to make decisions for her.

At first it seems that Nora and Torvald both enjoy playing the roles of husband and wife in a way that is considered respectable by society. However, Nora soon reveals to Mrs. Linde that she secretly borrowed the money from Krogstad behind Torvald's back, and therefore has already broken both the law and the rules of marriage at the time. This creates a dilemma: Nora broke the rules of marriage, yet did so in order to save her husband's life—a true act of love.

By the end, the marriage breaks apart due to a complete lack of understanding. Nora Helmer, the "doll" wife, realizes after eight years of marriage that she has never been a partner in her marriage. At the play's conclusion, she leaves her husband in order to establish an identity for herself that is separate from her identity as a wife and mother.

The main message of *A Doll's House* seems to be that a true marriage is a joining of equals. The play centres on the dissolution of a marriage that doesn't meet these standards.

There is a lot of talk about love in *A Doll's House*. Throughout the play we hear of and see many different forms of love: familial, maternal, paternal, and fraternal. Romantic love even blossoms for two of the secondary characters, namely Krostad and Mrs Linde. However, for the main characters, the Helmers, true romantic love is elusive. They finally discovered that true love never existed between them.

WOMEN AND FEMININITY

Nora has often been painted as one of modern feminist heroines. Over the course of the play, she breaks away from the domination of her dictatorial husband, Torvald. Also throughout this play, there is constant talk of women, their traditional roles, and the price they pay when they break with tradition.

When *A Doll's House* was written in 1879, a wife was not legally permitted to borrow money without her husband's permission. On her wedding day, a woman transferred from living under the authority of her father to under that of her husband.

Poverty had already forced women into the workplace early in the nineteenth century, and the Norwegian government passed laws protecting and governing women's employment. By the middle of

the 19th century, Norwegian women were permitted inheritance rights and the right to an education. But many of the rights provided to women favoured the lower economic classes. Employment opportunities for women were limited to low paying domestic jobs, teaching, or clerical work. Middle class women, such as Nora, noticed few of these new advantages. It was the institution of marriage itself that restricted the freedom of middle class women. Universal women rights were eventually achieved in 1913, making Norway the first country in Europe to have equal voting rights for men and women.

PRIDE, HONOUR, RESPECT AND REPUTATION

The men characters in *A Doll's House* are obsessed with their reputations. Some have good names in their communities and will do anything to protect it; others have lost their good name and will do anything to get it back.

Honour

Honour is of extremely important to Torvald; it is what motivates his behaviour. Early in the play, his value for honour is the reason he gives for sacking Krogstad, claiming that because he once displayed a lack of honour, it means that Krogstad is forever

dishonoured. When he learns of his wife's mistake, Torvald's first and foremost concern is for his honour. He cannot appreciate the sacrifice that Nora has made for him; he is only concerned with how society will react to his family's shame. For Torvald, honour is more important than family and far more important than love; he simply cannot imagine anyone placing love before honour. This issue brings out the glaring difference between Nora and Torvald.

Pride

Like honour, pride is another quality that Torvald upholds. He is proud of Nora in the same way one is proud of an expensive or rare item or possession. When her scandal threatens to be exposed, Torvald is very fearful of losing his public pride. Instead of accepting Nora with her misperfections, Torvald instead rejects her when she is most in need of his support. His pride in himself and in his possessions blinds him to Nora's worth and value. Nora is left with no choice but to leave Torvald. Only when she has made the decision to leave Torvald does she begin to develop pride in herself.

LIES AND DECEIT

The tension that runs throughout *A Doll's House* comes from Nora's fear of her secret being discovered. Her great terror being

exposed leads her to tell a lie after a lie. When her web of lies finally reaches a climax, her marriage proves too weak to bear the strain.

At the beginning of the play, Nora appears to be a dutifully obedient and honest wife, however it is quickly revealed that she is hiding a serious secret from her husband—the fact that she borrowed money from Krogstad to finance a trip to Italy that she claims saved Torvald's life. This confirms that all her statements about never disobeying or hiding anything from him were nothing but deceitful. When she reveals her dishonesty to Mrs. Linde, Mrs. Linde insists that she ought to confess to Torvald immediately, insisting that a marriage cannot succeed when husband and wife are not completely honest with each other.

But Nora is not alone in telling lies and being deceitful. Krogstad is also revealed to have committed a forgery. The fruits of their acts of deception are devastating: Krogstad's reputation is ruined, and Nora is forced to leave her husband and family at the end of the play.

It should however be noted that the motivation behind Nora's dishonesty was love—she lied in order to save her husband's life. Furthermore, she wouldn't have been deceitful if it weren't for societal law dictating that women were not allowed to handle

financial matters independently. Therefore Nora's deceit was not the result of a personal flaw, but rather an attempt to commit a noble act of saving her husband's life that went awry.

Dr. Rank also comes out as deceitful and dishonest. He has been deceiving both Nora and Torvald for years about the depth of his feelings for Nora. Only when she attempts to seek his financial help does Nora finally see beneath the surface to the doctor's real feelings. He has been lusting for his best friend's wife all those years. Nora is so shocked to discover this that she automatically decides not to ask Dr. Rank for financial assistance.

Torvald, who has been deceived throughout most of the play, is finally revealed in the final act to be the one most guilty of deception. He has deceived Nora into believing that he loved and cherished her, while all the while he had regarded her as little more than his property.

MONEY AND MATERIALISM

Throughout the entire play everyone is talking about money, as if it was a god. As the entire issue starts over a debt, the play revolves around money and who has it as well as who does not have it. It is a prevailing theme due to that.

From the very beginning of the play, money is a central theme. In the very first scene, Nora gives the porter one krone, telling him to *"keep the change"*, thus indicating a relaxed attitude to money and spending. The next scene with Torvald almost entirely revolves around the subjects of money, spending and borrowing, with Nora portrayed as a spendthrift. Torvald has very strong views on borrowing and debt. He says that, *"Nora! Just like a woman. Seriously though, Nora, you know what I think about these things. No debts! Never borrow! There's always something inhibited, something unpleasant, about a home built on credit and borrowed money."*

A need for money affects all the major characters in *A Doll's House*. In the beginning of the play it is revealed that Torvald was recently promoted and will receive *"a big fat income."* However, he still criticizes Nora for overspending, arguing that they need to be cautious financially. Mrs. Linde is in desperate need of a job following the death of her husband. Krogstad's replacement at the bank leaves him threatening to reveal Nora's secret in order to get his job back because he fears he will lose his source of income. Indeed, the bank works as a symbol for the pervasive presence of money in the characters' lives.

Throughout the play *A Doll's House*, the characters spend a good deal of time talking about their finances. Some are said to be doing quite well financially, and some have the promise of their finances improving in the future. Others are struggling to make ends meet. Either way, each character's financial status seems to be a defining feature.

In the play, money symbolizes the power that the characters have over one another. In the first act, Torvald's ability to dictate how much Nora spends on Christmas presents shows his power over her. On the other hand, the debt that Nora owes Krogstad allows him to have power over her and Torvald. Both Nora and Mrs. Linde cannot earn large incomes because they are women; their inability to access significant amounts of money shows the power that men have over the women in this society.

It is also clear that, while earning money leads to power, it can also be dangerous. For instance, even if money actualized Nora and her family's trip to Italy, the debt she owed Krogstad soon became a source of terror, dread, and shame. The thrill of obtaining money soon became a nightmare for her.

Krogstad is a moneylender, and money (or lack of it) has had a major effect on his life. We learn that Mrs Linde ended her

relationship with him many years ago because of his lack of financial security, choosing to marry a richer man instead. Throughout his life Krogstad has been poor, struggling to support his family, and it is this dependency on financial income that leads him to blackmail Nora in an attempt to keep his job at the bank. Mrs Linde's life has also been directly affected by money, or lack of it. Her late husband's business collapsed, leaving her with nothing to live on, and since then she has had to work hard to survive.

Dr Rank is the only main character who appears to be comfortable financially, having inherited money from his late father. However, although he is financially comfortable he is terminally ill, referring to his body as being "bankrupt".

Torvald in particular focuses on money and material goods rather than people. His sense of manhood depends on his financial independence. He was an unsuccessful lawyer because he refused to take *"unsavory cases."* As a result, he switched jobs to the bank, where he will primarily be dealing with money. For him, money and materialism may be a way to avoid the complications of personal contact.

THE SACRIFICIAL ROLE OF WOMEN

In *A Doll's House,* Ibsen paints a bleak picture of the sacrificial

role held by women of all economic classes in his society.

In order to support her mother and two brothers, Mrs. Linde found it necessary to abandon Krogstad, her true but poor lover, and marry a richer man.

The nanny had to abandon her own child to support herself by working as Nora's and later as Nora's children's caretaker. As she tells Nora, the nanny considers herself lucky to have found the job, since she was *"a poor girl who'd been led astray."*

Though Nora is economically advantaged in comparison to the play's other female characters, she nevertheless leads a difficult life because society dictates that Torvald be the marriage's dominant partner. Torvald issues rules and looks down on Nora, and Nora must hide her debt from him because she knows Torvald would never accept the idea that his wife had helped save his life. Furthermore, she must work in secret to pay off her loan because it is illegal for a woman to obtain a loan without her husband's permission.

Nora's abandonment of her children can also be interpreted as an act of self- sacrifice. Despite Nora's great love for her children, as seen in her interaction with them and her great fear of corrupting them, she chooses to leave them. Nora truly believes that the nanny

will be a better mother and that leaving her children is in their best interest.

All the three women in the play have made some kind of personal sacrifice in their lives in order to fulfill the roles which society expects of them. Nora, besides risking her dignity by borrowing money on behalf of her family, she also has sacrificed all her own opinions, thoughts and ideas and adopted Torvald's views as her own. Besides that, she has been saving every bit of money she had and working odd hours of the night to repay Krogstad. And at the end of the play she sacrifices her home, family and children for the sake of her own self-discovery.

Mrs Linde, after her husband's death, continued to make personal sacrifices for the sake of her family, taking on any work she could to support them financially.

Anne-Marie, on the other hand, sacrificed motherhood for a respectable job, which was all too common for young unmarried mothers in the 19th century.

PARENTAL AND FILIAL OBLIGATIONS

There is a strong emphasis throughout the play on the importance of parental and filial responsibility, and of the effect that the actions of parents have upon their children.

Parental obligations

Nora, Torvald, and Dr. Rank believe that a parent is obligated to be honest and morally-upright, because a parent's immorality is passed on to his or her children like a disease.

For instance, Dr. Rank has a disease that is the result of his father's wickedness. Dr. Rank implies that his father's immorality, which included affairs with many women, led him to contract a venereal disease that he passed on to his son, causing Dr. Rank to suffer for his father's misdeeds. He talks about the unfairness of this, of the sins of the father being passed on to the son.

Torvald, on the other hand, talks about a parent's immorality being passed on to the children like a disease. He voices the idea that one's parents determine one's moral character when he tells Nora, *"Nearly all young criminals had lying mothers."* He speaks about Krogstad poisoning his own children with lies and immorality. He also refuses to allow Nora to interact with their children after he learns of her deceit; for fear that she will corrupt them.

Nora is referred to as being like her father, having inherited a lot of his qualities. It is also of note that she never had a mother, with Anne-Marie fulfilling the maternal role in her life.

Anne-Marie was forced to give away her own child to take on

the role of Nora's nanny; in contrast Nora chooses to leave her own children at the end of the play.

Filial obligations

Filial means the duties, feelings or relationships which exist between a son or daughter and his or her parents.

The play suggests that children too have an obligation to protect their parents. Nora recognized this obligation, but she ignored it, choosing to be with, and sacrifice herself for, her sick husband instead of her sick father.

Mrs. Linde, on the other hand, abandoned her hopes of being with Krogstad and undertook years of labour in order to tend to her sick mother. Mrs Linde has fulfilled her filial responsibility by dedicating her life to care for her mother, at the expense of her own personal happiness. Her mother's illness has directly affected the life she has led and the personal decisions she has made.

Ibsen does not however pass judgment on either woman's decision, but uses the idea of a child's debt to her parent to demonstrate that familial obligation is not one way – it is reciprocal.

THE UNRELIABILITY OF APPEARANCES

Over the course of *A Doll's House,* appearances prove to be quite misleading and hide the true reality of the play's characters

and situations. Our first impressions of Nora, Torvald, and Krogstad are all later proved quite wrong.

Nora, at first, seems a silly, childish woman, but as the play progresses, we see that she is intelligent, motivated, and, by the end of the play, a strong-willed, independent thinker.

Torvald, on the other hand, though he appears as the strong, benevolent husband, reveals himself to be cowardly, petty, and selfish when he fears that Krogstad may expose him to scandal.

Krogstad, who initially appears to be a vicious, ruthless blackmailer, later reveals himself to be a much more sympathetic and merciful character. He also turns out as an earnest lover. Indeed, the play's climax is largely a matter of resolving identity confusion—we see Krogstad as a loving merciful man, Nora as an intelligent, brave woman, and Torvald as a helpless, sad man.

Situations too are misinterpreted both by the audience and by the characters. The seeming hatred between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad turns out to be love. Nora's creditor turns out to be Krogstad and not Dr. Rank, as the audience and Mrs. Linde had thought. Dr. Rank confesses that he is not just a friend to Nora but instead he is in love with her, to Nora's and the audience's surprise. The seemingly ruthless Krogstad repents and returns Nora's

contract to her, while the seemingly kindhearted Mrs. Linde fails to help Nora, leading to Torvald's discovery of Nora's secret.

GENDER ROLES

A Doll's House exposes the restricted roles of women during the time of its writing and the problems that arise from a drastic imbalance of power between men and women.

Throughout the play, Nora is treated like a child by the other characters. Torvald calls her his "pet" and his "property," and suggests that she is not smart or responsible enough to be trusted with money. Neither Krogstad nor Dr. Rank take her seriously, and even Mrs. Linde calls her a "child." Nora seems unperturbed by the views of others about her; even calling herself "little Nora" and promising that she would never dream of disobeying her husband.

However, there are clues that she is not entirely happy with the limited position she has as a woman. For example, when revealing the secret of how she borrowed money to finance the trip to Italy, she refers to it as her *"pride"* and says it was fun to be in control of money, explaining that it was *"almost like being a man."* Nora seems to wish to enjoy the privileges and power enjoyed by males in her society. She seems to understand the confinement she faces

simply by virtue of her sex.

Nora's dissatisfaction with her status as a woman intensifies over the course of the play. In the final scene she tells Torvald that she is not being treated as an independent person with a mind of her own. According to her, the bitter solution to this issue is to leave married life behind, despite Torvald's begging that he will change. Nora's problems arise because as a woman she cannot conduct business without the authority of either her father or her husband. When her father is dying, she must forge his signature to secure a loan to save her husband's life. That she is a responsible person is demonstrated when she repays the loan at great personal sacrifice.

The men in this play have a very conservative view of the roles of women, especially in marriage and motherhood. Torvald, in particular, believes that it is the sacred duty of a woman to be a good wife and mother. Moreover, he tells Nora that women are responsible for the morality of their children. In essence, he sees women as childlike, helpless creatures detached from reality on the one hand, but on the other hand as influential moral forces responsible for the purity of the world through their influence in the home.

The men of *A Doll's House* are in many ways just as trapped by

traditional gender roles as the women. The men must be providers. They must bear the burden of supporting the entire household. They must be the undoubted kings of their respective castles. Besides providing for their families, the men are obssessed by a desire to achieve higher status. Respectability is of great concern to both Torvald and Krogstad. When Nora's borrowing is revealed, Torvald's first thoughts are for his reputation. On the other hand, Krogstad is obsessed with achieving success now that he has changed his character. He intends to one day take over Torvald's job and run the bank.

By the end of the play, these traditional ideas are truly put to the test.

INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIETY

Nora, a dutiful mother and wife, spends most of the play putting others before herself. She thinks little about herself to the extent of engaging in an act of forgery and taking a debt for the sake of her husband's health. She doesn't stop to worry about how these actions might impact the lives of her husband and children. Even when she plans to kill herself near the end of the play, it is not to hide her shame but rather because she thinks that if she is alive then Torvald will ruin himself in trying to protect her.

Similarly, Mrs. Linde admits that, without a husband or any family members to care for, she feels that her life is pointless. Therefore both women find a sense of meaning in their lives through serving others and performing the caring, obedient role that society requires of them.

However, Nora later learns that prioritizing her duty as a wife and mother cannot lead to real happiness. She realizes that while she thought she was sacrificing herself to protect her love, in fact no such love existed. It becomes clear that Torvald would never have sacrificed his reputation to protect her. She therefore decides to leave him in order to develop a sense of her own identity. The play ends with Nora choosing to put herself as an individual before society's expectations of her.

Some characters, however, are more concerned about themselves as individuals rather than the society. A good example is Krogstad. Throughout most of the play, it seems that he cares more about his reputation than anything else. Punished by society for his act of forgery, he is desperate to reclaim respectability in the eyes of others. However, he realizes that he will only achieve happiness through truly reforming himself and regaining the personal integrity that he lost, rather than the outward respectability.

In a similar way to Nora, Krogstad learns that society's view of him is meaningless if he doesn't respect himself as an individual.

BETRAYAL

Betrayal is a theme of this play in several ways. Nora has betrayed her husband's trust in several instances. She has lied about borrowing money, and to repay the money she must lie about how she spends her household accounts and she must lie about taking odd jobs to earn extra money. She also chooses to lie about eating macaroons which her husband has forbidden her.

Torvald betrays Nora when he rejects her pleas for understanding. Torvald's betrayal of her love is clearly shown when he doesn't want to understand that Nora took the loan because of his own welfare. To him, she threatened his otherwise good reputation in the eyes of the society, which was an unforgivable sin to him. This was the reality that Nora requires to finally awaken from; her previous view about her husband and their marriage was just but a sham.

Mrs Linde also betrays Krogstad when she opts to marry a richer man because Krogstad was too poor to help her sustain her sick mother and needy siblings.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

In Act I, Nora is portrayed as nothing more than a “doll,” a child who has exchanged a father for a husband without changing or maturing in any way. But as the play progressed, she realized that she had no identity separate from that of her husband. Torvald owned her just as he owned their home or any other possession. She was finally forced to face the reality of the life she was living. She realized in the final act that if she had to develop an identity as an adult, she must leave her husband’s home. When Nora finally gave up her dream for a miracle and, instead, accepted the reality of her husband’s self-centredness, she finally took her first steps toward maturity. She realized the inequity of her situation; she also recognized her own self worth. Her decision to leave is a daring one that indicates the seriousness of Nora’s desire to find and create her own identity.

THE HOME

The fact that the play is called *A Doll's House* means that home *might* be a prevalent theme. Early on in the text, the home is seen as a thing of joy, a place of comfort and shelter. The idea of home is enmeshed with the idea of the happy family, which the Helmers seem to be.

Toward the play's conclusion, however, the imbalance of power

in the family becomes an issue. Now the seemingly happy home is revealed as having been an illusion—a doll's house—that hid the gulf between the Helmers. The Helmers' home is really more of a prison than a shelter.

The title, *A Doll's House*, implies that everything is a façade, an illusion. Just like a doll that has a plastered smile on its face, the doll's house hides the problems in the marriage.

STYLISTIC/LITERARY DEVICES

Stylistic or literary devices are techniques (ways to do things, styles, or forms) that authors use to get the attention of the reader which include playing with words, creating imagery, comparing and contrasting, or using metaphors, just to name a few. In *A Doll's House*, the author has used a variety of stylistic devices, as discussed below.

SYMBOLISM

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. The following are the symbols used in the play:

1. Christmas and New Year Days

The action of the play is set at Christmas and New Year season. Christmas and New Year holidays are both associated with rebirth and renewal and several of the characters go through a kind of rebirth over the course of the play.

Both Nora and Torvald have a spiritual awakening, which could be seen as a "rebirth." Nora's trials and tribulations wake her up to the sorry state of her marriage. When the "wonderful thing" fails to happen, she realizes she will never be a fully realized person until she breaks away from her husband. And when she slams the door behind her, she is in a way reborn.

Nora is not alone in her spiritual awakening, however. Torvald's last line, *"The most wonderful thing of all?"* seems to indicate that he has also realized the complete inadequacy of his existence. By the end of the play, both Helmers have been reborn.

Krogstad and Christine are reborn as well. When these *"two shipwrecked people…join forces,"* they each get a fresh start in life.

Both of them view their renewed love affair as a chance for salvation. Krogstad hopes that it will help increase his standing with the community, and that Christine's influence will make him a better person. Christine, on the other hand, is overjoyed that she will have someone to care for. She once again has purpose in her life.

Nora and Torvald both look forward to New Year's as the start of a new, happier phase in their lives, a new beginning with no debts. In the New Year, Torvald will start his new job, and he anticipates with excitement the extra money and admiration the job will bring him. Nora also looks forward to Torvald's new job, because she will finally be able to repay her secret debt to Krogstad. By the end of the play, however, the nature of the new start that New Year's represents for Torvald and Nora has changed dramatically. They both must become new people and face radically changed ways of living. Hence, the New Year comes to mark the beginning of a truly new and different period in both their lives and their personalities.

In the end of the play, it resembles new beginnings as almost all the characters are starting new lives, Nora and Torvald separately, while Christine and Krogstad together.

2. Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree symbolizes Nora's role in her household. She

is only a decoration to be looked at. Her function in the household is pretty much the same as the tree. She is merely decorative and ornamental. She dresses up the tree just as Torvald dresses up her for the party. It's interesting that she tells the maid not to let the children see the tree until it's decorated. This is reminiscent of when she tells Torvald that she can't be seen in her costume until the party.

The Christmas tree, therefore, a festive object meant to serve a decorative purpose, symbolizes Nora’s position in her household as a plaything who is pleasing to look at and adds charm to the home.

It also symbolizes family happiness and unity, as well as the joy Nora takes in making her home pleasant and attractive.

At the beginning of Act Two, the Christmas tree has been stripped of its ornaments and is only left with burnt-down candle-ends on its disheveled branches. Nora is alone in the room, walking about uneasily. Basically, Nora is a mess and so is the tree. She's gotten the bad news from Krogstad, and as a result her mind is just as disheveled as the poor tree.

First of all, the tree seems to mimic Nora's psychological state. It can be interpreted as symbolic of Nora's disintegrating web of lies. The pretty decorations that Nora used to cover up her deceit are

falling away. Soon the bare, ugly truth will emerge. This represents the end of Nora's innocence and foreshadows the Helmer family's eventual disintegration.

3. Macaroons

Torvald has banned Nora from eating macaroons. Although Nora claims that she never disobeys Torvald, this is proved false in the very opening of the play when Nora eats macaroons while she was alone in the living room. The macaroons are symbolic of Nora's disobedience and deceit. She lies to Dr. Rank about having been given some by Mrs. Linde, and after giving her performance of the tarantella asks that macaroons be served at dinner, which indicates a close relationship between the macaroons and her inner passions, both of which she must hide within her marriage.

4. The tarantella

Tarantella takes its name from a spider, a Tarantula, that, according to the the Italian legends, bites its victim mortally. The only way to get rid of its poison is to dance so as to let the poison come out of the body with the sweat. Similarly, the wild dance of Nora is a symbolic expression of her tragic inner
condition and, at the same time, a therapeutic instrument that gives her courage to face up the suicide that she plans to carry out. Nora

dances the Tarantella at a time when she had accelerated anxiety, on the border of madness. So through the dance, her body was trying to express what couldnt be said in words

Like the macaroons, the tarantella symbolizes a side of Nora that she cannot normally show. It is a fiery, passionate dance that allows her to drop the mask of the perfect Victorian wife and express her desperate and tragic interior condition and her inner feelings. It is a dance of recovering from the madness of her fate; Tarantella has the power to heal Nora.

After the dance, in fact, she reemerges matured and able to look death in the eyes.

It is important to note that the rehearsal of Tarantella is the first moment in which Nora doesn't obey what Torvald commands. Her repressed feelings are not allowed to come out in her marriage, the only way she can express them is through a performance. And her performance is wild and hysteric. Through the dance Nora liberates herself from her sexual doll's role, which is a transformation from an old existence to a new one.

5. The Doll's House

The title of the play *A Doll's House* is also symbolic. It represents something impermanent or short-lived.

There are a few mentions of dolls early on in the play; for example, when Nora shows Torvald the dolls she bought for her daughter, and says that the fact that they are cheap doesn't matter because she will probably break them soon anyway. This probably suggests that Nora is raising her daughter for a life similar to her own. It also foreshadows Nora breaking up her family life by leaving Torvald.

When Nora plays with her children she also refers to them as her *"little dollies."* However, it is not until the end of the play that the metaphor becomes explicitly clear. Nora tells Torvald that both he and her father treated her like a doll, and cites this as one of the reasons why she has become dissatisfied and disillusioned with her life with him.

6. The dance costume

At the end of the play, Nora decides to leave Torvald. The next thing Nora does is to change out of her fancy dance dress. Torvald bought this dress for Nora to wear at a costume party because he wanted her to appear as a *"Neapolitan fish girl".* As one would put clothes on a doll, Torvald dresses Nora. When she sheds this dress, she is symbolically shedding her past life with Torvald and her doll-like existence.

7. Dr. Rank

Dr. Rank is a symbol of moral corruption within society. He has been lusting for Nora secretly. His illness is is symbolic of the moral illness of the society as represented by himself, Krogstad and, by extension, Torvald.

8. Mrs Linde

Mrs Linde is a symbol of a modern, independent woman. She arrives in town in search of a job in order to earn money and survive independently. She perhaps also symbolizes hollowness in the matriarchal role.

9. Torvald Helmer

Torvald Helmer is a symbol of a male dominated, authoritative, and autocratic society.

10. The slamming of the door

The slamming of the door symbolizes the finality of the relationship between Torvald and Nora Helmer.

USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

IMAGERY

Metaphors

A metaphor is a comparison without using the terms ‘like’ or ‘as.’ Henrik Ibsen uses quite a number of metaphors in *A Doll’s*

House. These include the following:

1. Torvald's pet names for Nora

He calls her "featherhead," "songbird," "squirrel" "hunted dove ...saved from hawk's claws," and "skylark." When she leaves him, he calls her a "heedless child."

All these metaphors are, on one hand, aimed at reflecting Nora's apparently innocent, carefree nature, and on the other hand, they suggest that her husband does not think of her as a proper adult because she is a woman.

Another metaphor is on page 3 where Torvald says, *"how much it costs a man to keep such a little bird as you."* Here, Torvald is comparing Nora to a bird by saying that people would not expect her to spend as much money as she does. The "bird" reference means that birds are typically low maintenance, but Nora is not.

2. The doll

-In Act 3, Nora tells Torvald that both her father and Torvald have treated her like a doll-child, with no opinions of her own, and have only played with her. Both men, she says, have committed *"a great sin"* against her in discouraging her from growing up. Torvald's pet names for her are prefaced by "little," showing that he sees her as a child.

3. Big black hat

-In Act 3. Dr. Rank has a coded conversation with Nora (designed to protect Torvald from unpleasant truths) in which he says he will attend the next fancy dress ball wearing *“a big black hat”* that will make him invisible. This is a way of saying that he will be dead.

2. Other metaphors

-Krogstad is labeled *"morally diseased"* because of the incriminating forged bond and the forged documents that tarnished his reputation.

-Nora and Torvald crumbling marriage and home are referred to as a *"doll's house”* to mean their impermanency.

- Krogstad uses this metaphor, *"I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a bit of wreckage..."* to describe how he felt when Mrs. Linde chose to marry her late husband instead of him. Mrs. Linde replies that she had her mother and younger brothers to take care of and she needed financial stability, which Krogstad could not offer her. In this metaphor, Krogstad might be suggesting that he is still in love with Mrs. Linde.

-Torvald refers to his wife as his *"frightened little songbird"* and promises her that his *"big broad wings"* would protect her.

-The title of the play *A Doll's House* is an extended metaphor. It is comparison of a small toy with that of a perfect house. It compares Nora's relationship with every man in her life to that of a young child playing with her, merely a pretty plaything.

Similes

A simile is a comparison by use of the terms 'like' or 'as.' Similes are used in different places in the story to compare certain necessary ideas.

Examples

-*"It was like being a man."* This simile was used by Nora to compare the role she played in sustaining the family during their one-year stay in Italy. It made her feel like a man supporting them for all that time.

-Torvald brags that he will protect Nora *"like a hunted dove that [he has] saved from the talons of a hawk."* Here, he wants to emphasize his commitment in ensuring Nora of her safety.

IRONY

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also be a situation that ends up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated. There are

three types of irony evident in *A Doll's House*, namely: verbal, situational and dramatic irony.

Dramatic irony

Dramatic irony occurs when the audience is more aware of what is happening than one, some or all the characters on stage. The full significance of a character's words or actions is clear to the audience or reader although unknown to the character. In other words, the audience's or reader's knowledge of events or individuals surpasses that of the characters.

Examples

- This happens in *A Doll's House* near the opening of the play when Nora eats macaroons. When Torvald then asks Nora if she has been eating sweets, she lies and says she has not. Nora and the audience know this is a lie and so know more than Torvald, making this a situation of dramatic irony.

- Torvald tells Nora, *"No debts! Never borrow! There is something inhibited, something unpleasant, about a home built on credit and borrowed money."* But nevertheless, she has borrowed money from Krogstad which she has been paying for a long time without his

knowledge.

-The reader is aware that Nora borrowed money from Krogstad without her husband's permission. Nora also forged her father's name to gain the money. She says, *"You don't know all. I forged a name."* In the following conversation between Nora and Christine it is clearly stated that Torvald does not know of Nora's actions

Mrs. Linde: And since then have you never told your secret to your husband? Nora. Good heavens, no!

- Another example of dramatic irony in *A Doll's House* is when Nora wants to practice a dance called the Tarantella. When Torvald goes to look in the letter box Nora says, "Torvald please don't. There is nothing in there." The reader knows there is a letter in the mailbox that has been dropped by Krogstad. The reader also knows that Nora has not forgotten the dance as she claimed, she was just pretending. The reader knows this when Torvald goes to check the mail and Nora begins to play the Tarantella. Nora then says, *"I can't dance to-morrow if I don't practise with you."* The reader knows that all Nora is trying to do is keep Torvald from reading the mail which contains a letter from Krogstad.

- Dramatic irony is evident throughout the text to indicate Nora's exit from her marriage with Torvald. Some escalating events have

happened in the three acts to give clues to the audience that she has already decided to leave.

Examples:

i) Nora to Nurse regarding the children:

Nora: Well, Anna, I won't be able to be with them as much any more.

Nurse: Oh well, little children get used to everything.

Nora: Do you think so? Do you think they'd forget their mother if she went away for good?

ii) Nora to Torvald:

Nora: "Torvald, you will be sorry for not letting me stay, even for just half an hour."

She knows that the letter is still in the mailbox and doesn't want Torvald to find out about the contract.

iii) Nora to Mrs Linde:

Nora: "You all think I'm incapable of doing anything serious…or of ever having to face the brutality of life."

Situational irony

Situational irony occurs when something entirely different happens from what the audience may be expecting, or the final outcome is opposite to what the audience is expecting.

Examples

-Situational Irony is present when Nora is discussing Krogstad's forgery with her husband in Act 1. Minutes before this conversation, Krogstad approached Nora about her own forgery of her father's signature.

-There is very little hint that Nora is going to leave Torvald until the end of the play. At the beginning of the play she acts as if she loves him very much. Not until she says *"Or if anything else should happen to me-anything, for instance, that might prevent me from being here"* does anyone think about Nora leaving Torvald. At the end of the play she calls Torvald a "stranger" and walks out.

-It is ironic that Torvald states that he awaits the moment when Nora will be in trouble so that he can rescue her. When in fact the truth comes out and Torvald has been given his opportunity to rescue Nora, all he is concerned with is his reputation. He yells at her. He insults her by calling her feather brain. He screams at her, telling her to go to her room. He is not interested in how he can rescue her. He is interested in how he can get out of this mess without ruining his good name.

-When Krogstad returns the IOU document, Torvald exclaims that

he is saved and that he has forgiven Nora. When Nora asks if she is saved, Torvald exclaims that she is, of course. Only moments earlier, he was furious with her. Ironically, he did not even consider that she had borrowed the money to in fact save him.

-Situational irony is also evident earlier on in the play during Nora's chat with Mrs. Linde, where she says *"d'you know what a stroke of luck we've had?"* where she talks, or rather brags about her husband getting promoted as the manager of the bank. She says, *"To have no more worries, all one needs. Isn't it wonderful?"* and also *"Not just all one needs, but lots of money too"*. Here, Nora visualizes a happy and blissful life with Helmer. However, there is irony in what she says because later on in the play, her marital relationship will be shattered and she will leave her husband and all the 'money' that she had visualized, for an uncertain future away from Torvald after realizing that the world she was living in was equivalent to the world of a puppet, or rather, a doll.

Verbal irony

Verbal irony occurs when a speaker’s intention is the opposite of what he or she is saying.

Examples

-Verbal irony is present when Helmer says, *"Is that my little skylark twittering out there?"* He is not really asking if Nora is a bird. He is not even saying that she is twittering like a bird. He is just asking if it is his wife, Nora, and if she is saying something. When Torvald Helmer says, *"Is it my little squirrel bustling about?"* he does not think that Nora is a squirrel either.

-Nora has her share of verbal irony too. When she is sitting down talking to Mrs. Linde she says, *"There now, it is burning up."* The place is not literally burning up. The house is not on fire. Nora is just stating that the temperature inside the house is hot.

- When Nora is chatting with Mrs. Linde, where she says *"d'you know what a stroke of luck we've had?"* where she talks, or rather brags about her husband getting promoted as the manager of the bank. She says, *"To have no more worries, all one needs. Isn't it wonderful?"* and also *"Not just all one needs, but lots of money too."* The reader is tempted to think that her life is that of her family is one smooth ride. But it emerges that she is deep in debt and even has to work extra hours at night in order to keep up with the payments.

FORESHADOW

Foreshadowing refers to clues that point to events that will happen later.

Examples

-Nora’s early rebellion of eating the macaroons against Torvald foreshadows her later rebellion

-The way Torvald always called Nora "My little skylark", "My little squirrel", “My little singing bird,” “My pretty little pet,” “My little sweet-tooth,” and “My poor little Nora.” was a foreshadow. She ends up saying something like "I'm just your little dove” in the later acts when she decides to leave him. She acknowledges the fact there was never actually love between them; she was just his play toy. Hence the name of the play, *"A Doll's House."*

-In the following conversation between Nora and Anne-Marie, there is use of foreshadow.

Nora: Well, Anna, I won’t be able to be with them as much any more.

Nurse: Oh well, little children get used to everything.

Nora: Do you think so? Do you think they’d forget their mother if she went away for good?

Nora eventually leaves her family, which was why she asked Anne-Marie how she possibly could have done it.

-Torvald's stubbornness about denying Krogstad the banking job has complicated Nora's attempt to continue hiding her little secret. We know there is going to be trouble later on. Nora's secret is bound to come out. Ibsen has foreshadowed an ironic inevitability.

-Mrs. Linde plays the role of foreshadowing the future of Nora and a mirror to Nora's character. She delves into the mistakes Nora will make and views her for what she truly is. She is the wise woman who has hindsight of what becomes of women who spend their money and borrow. She provides exposition to the play because she is the only one Nora can discuss her history with without consequences. Talking to Mrs. Linde provides an opportunity for the audience to understand Nora's character.

-Mrs. Linde shares with Nora that her husband had died and that, due to her habits and his unstable business, she was now poor and struggling to make ends meet. She seems to be foreshadowing Nora's impending fate.

CONTRAST/JUXTAPOSITION

Contrast or juxtaposition involves two characters or things being placed together with a contrasting effect.

Examples

-The father-daughter relationship between Nora and her father and

that of Nora and Torvald is contrasted in the final act. Nora makes this connection that life with her father was like life with Torvald. Nora's father would force his beliefs on her and she would comply with them lest she upset him; she would bury her personal belief under Papa's. According to Nora, Torvald was guilty of the same things. A good example was his insistence on her wearing the fish girl costume and his frustration over her inability to grasp the tarantella.

-Krogstad and Nora are also contrasted. The more we learn of Krogstad, the more we understand that he shares a great deal with Nora Helmer. First of all, both have committed the crime of forgery. Moreover, their motives were out of a desperate desire to save their loved ones. Also like Nora, Krogstad has contemplated ending his life to eliminate his troubles but was ultimately too scared to follow through.

- Dr. Rank's treatment of Nora is contrasted sharply with that of Torvald. Rank always treats Nora like an adult. He listens to her and affords her a dignity, which is definitely missing in Torvald's treatment.

- Mrs Linde's relationship with Krogstad also provides a point of comparison with that of Nora and Torvald.

-Nora and Mrs Linde are also contrasted. Whereas Mrs. Linde took responsibility for her sick parent Nora abandoned her father when he was ill. Mrs. Linde's account of her life of poverty underscores the privileged nature of the life that Nora leads. Her sensible worldview contrasts sharply with Nora's somewhat childlike outlook on life.

FOIL

A *foil* is a literary character who contrasts another character in order to highlight certain aspects of the other character.

Examples

-Mrs Linde's life's journey from independence to marriage is a foil to Nora's journey in the opposite direction.

-Dr Rank is a foil to Torvald in that he treats Nora as an intelligent human being and she in return speaks more openly to him than she does to her husband

-Mrs. Linde is the character that really makes Nora look bad in comparison and acts as a foil for Nora. In fact, you could argue that all the characters act as foils for Nora.

MOTIFS

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Examples

Nora's definition of freedom

-Nora's understanding of the meaning of freedom recurs in the course of the play. In the first act, she believes that she will be totally "free" as soon as she has repaid her debt, because she will have the opportunity to devote herself fully to her domestic responsibilities. After Krogstad blackmails her, however, she reconsiders her outlook regarding freedom and questions whether she is happy in Torvald's house, subjected to his orders and commands. By the end of the play, Nora seeks a new kind of freedom. She wishes to be relieved of her familial obligations in order to pursue her own ambitions, beliefs, and identity.

Use of letters

-Many of the plot's twists and turns depend upon the writing and reading of letters. Krogstad writes two letters: the first reveals Nora's crime of forgery to Torvald; the second retracts his blackmail threat and returns Nora's promissory note.

The first letter, which Krogstad places in Torvald's letterbox near the end of Act Two, represents the truth about Nora's past and initiates the inevitable dissolution of her marriage. The second letter releases Nora from her obligation to Krogstad and represents

her release from her obligation to Torvald.

The two letters have exposed the truth about Torvald's selfishness, and Nora can no longer participate in the illusion of a happy marriage.

Dr. Rank's communicates his imminent death through another form of a letter: a calling card marked with a black cross in Torvald's letterbox. By leaving his calling card as a death notice, Dr. Rank politely attempts to keep Torvald from the "ugly" truth, as he had said earlier about his best friend, Torvald.

Other letters include Mrs. Linde's note to Krogstad, which initiates her life-changing meeting with him, and Torvald's letter of dismissal to Krogstad.

HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole refers to extreme exaggeration of statements or claims which makes someone or something sound bigger, better or more than they are.

Examples

i) *Nora: Yes, that's just it.*

Helmer: Now you have destroyed all my happiness. You have ruined all my futures. It is horrible to think of! I am in the power of an unscrupulous man; he can do what he likes with me, ask anything

he likes of me, give me any order he pleases-- I dare not to refuse. And I must sink to such miserable depths because of a thoughtless woman!

It is a hyperbole because although Nora may have caused a major accident of forging a signature and hiding it from Helmer, it is not obvious it will affect his future. Helmer is exaggerating that his happiness is destroyed because he feels betrayal and anger, just to show the seriousness of the shame that Nora has caused.

ii) *Mrs. Linde: But now I am quite alone in the world--my life is so dreadfully empty and I feel so forsaken.*

This is a hyperbole because Mrs. Linde is exaggerating about her situation.

iii) *NORA: I should like to tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.*

It is a hyperbole because Nora cannot possibly be able to tear the letter into a thousand pieces.

REVISION QUESTIONS
CONTEXT QUESTIONS

1. Where is A Doll's House set?

-In a middle-class living-room; nice but not extravagant furniture; piano, fire, winter's day; Norway

2. Why does Nora tell the porter to hide the tree?

-so the kids don't see it before it's decorated

3. What does Nora sneak at the beginning of the play?

-macaroons

4. What does Torvald call Nora?

-squirrel, skylark

5. Why does Torvald scold Nora at the beginning of the play?

-for buying things and being careless with money

6. When is Torvald getting a new job? Why does he want Nora to wait to spend money?

-New Year; what if he gets hit in the head with a brick and therefore never gets the job?

7. How does Nora suggest they buy things before the promotion?

-borrowing from people (Helmer thinks she's just a typical woman

who doesn't understand debt)

8. What does Nora want Torvald to get her for a present? Why doesn't he want to give it to her?

-money; he calls her a spendthrift and says she'll just waste all the money on unimportant things

9. What does Torvald think runs in Nora's family?

-spending too much money (like her father)

10. Does Nora want to be like her dad? Does Torvald want this?

Yes, no

11. What is the first thing Nora lies about?

-she denies that she would ever eat macaroons because she promised not to...but she did

12. What did Nora do the Christmas before this one?

-locked herself away to make paper flowers to decorate the tree (the cat ripped up the flowers, though)

13. Who is Mrs. Linde?

-Christine; Nora's childhood friends; they haven't seen each other in 9 or 10 years

14. What does Nora think of Mrs. Linde's appearance?

-she looks pale

15. What work has Nora had to do?

-sewing, embroidery, etc.

16. What secret does Nora tell Mrs. Linde first?

-when Torvald worked too hard in the first year of their marriage and got sick and had to go to Italy to recover, she borrowed money from her father in order to pay for it (at the time: her father was dying, she was pregnant, and she couldn't go see him)

17. What is Christine's backstory?

-she never loved her husband, she just married Mr. Linde because she had a sick mother and two little brothers to support; when he died, his business fell apart and she was left with nothing; she had been working ever since; recently, her mom died and her brothers are now old enough to take care of themselves

18. What does Christine ask of Nora?

-if Torvald can give her a job at the bank he'll be managing

19. Why does Christine think it's nice of Nora to care so much about her troubles?

-because she says Nora has never had any of her own

20. What does Nora reveal to Mrs. Linde after being insulted because Christine said she didn't really know trouble?

-she didn't actually borrow money from her father; she borrowed it from someone else, but Torvald doesn't know this; he didn't even know how sick he was and that the Italy trip was to make him survive; she pretended that she just wanted to travel abroad and secretly borrowed the money to spare his pride

21. When does Nora plan on telling Torvald the truth?

-when she's old and he's not attracted to her anymore (but then she says never)

22. How has Nora been paying back the loan?

-lots of odd jobs secretly, scrimping on buying new clothes for herself (cheap clothes look good on her so Torvald doesn't notice); last winter she copied letters late every night (perhaps she didn't really spend all that time making tree decorations?)

23. What does Nora dream?

-a rich old man would come and give her all the money she needs

24. How does Mrs. Linde first claim to have known Krogstad?

-he was a lawyer in her area

25. What is Krogstad's backstory?

-had an unhappy marriage, now has several children, got himself into bad business troubles

26. What does Mrs. Linde say when Dr. Rank tells her and Nora what a bad guy Krogstad is?

-people should try to help the diseased (bc Rank says Krogstad is morally deceased)

27. What does Torvald say when Nora asks if Christine can have a job?

-yes; she's come at a good time

28. What does Krogstad first ask Nora? Then what does he ask of her?

-if Mr. Helmer is giving Christine a job; if she will use her influence to get him a job (she says she doesn't have much influence)

29. Why is Nora no longer afraid of Krogstad when he first comes to visit?

-come New Year she'll be out from under his thumb

30. Why does Krogstad want to regain the community's respect?

-for the sake of his sons

31. Why does Nora tell Krogstad not to tell Torvald about the money?

-that would only confirm what a bad person Torvald sees Krogstad as; says it would make everything unpleasant

32. What does Krogstad tell Nora that makes the whole thing worse?

-she forged her father's signature; he can prove it because the signature is in Nora's handwriting and she dated the document after her father died; basically he can prove that not only does she owe money but she broke the law (Nora says she didn't have time to

think about it because her husband was dying)

33. When does Nora start decorating the Christmas tree?

-after Krogstad leaves after blackmailing her

34. Why does Torvald think Krogstad was at the house?

-to get Nora to put in a good word for him (if only he knew the whole story)

35. What does Nora ask Torvald to do for her?

-pick out her costume for the Stenborgs' party because she's helpless without his taste

36. What crime did Krogstad commit? Why does Torvald not like him?

-forgery; he never admitted his guilt, he got off through loopholes, he is corrupt and has lived a life of lies even around his family; it's worst for the children who are corrupted by an atmosphere of deceit

37. How does the Christmas tree look at the start of act 2?

-stripped and bedraggled

38. Who is Anne?

-maid; she got pregnant by a bad guy and had to give up her child

39. What costume is Nora going to wear to the Stenborgs' party?

-Neapolitan fisher girl

40. What dance does Torvald want Nora to do?

-tarantella

41. What does Christine offer Nora?

-to fix up her costume (if she can come by and see Nora in it)

42. What is Dr. Rank sick with? How did he get it?

-"consumption of the spine"; his promiscuous father

43. What can Nora not talk about with Torvald? Why?

-her old school friends; he gets jealous

44. Who does Christine guess lent Nora the money?

-Dr. Rank

45. What does Christine think of Nora and Dr. Rank's relationship?

-they should stop talking to each other so much because he's probably interested in Nora

46. Who does Nora think about borrowing money from to pay Krogstad?

-Dr. Rank

47. What does Nora tell Torvald she'll do anything he asks of her for? What does Torvald say?

-if he'll not fire Krogstad; he's given his job to Mrs. Linde

48. What reasoning does Nora give for why Torvald should not fire Krogstad?

-he writes small newspapers and he might write nasty articles about Torvald if he's fired (like when her father got in legal trouble and was slandered by the papers); he should fire someone else and let Mrs. Linde and Krogstad both have jobs

49. What does Torvald think of Nora's dad's business?

-his dealings were shady

50. Why won't Torvald give in to Nora's request for a job for Krogstad?

-he already said no and told everyone at the bank he's firing Krogstad, and he's worried that if he changes his mind people will think his wife rules him; also, he knew Krogstad when they were kids and Krogstad insists on calling Torvald his first name which is really embarrassing given Krogstad's checkered past

51. What finally makes Torvald send a letter firing Krogstad?

-Nora calls him petty for worrying about his affiliations with Krogstad

52. Why does Torvald forgive Nora's behavior in wanting a job for Krogstad?

-shows how much she loves him; but if trouble comes from the firing, he can handle it

53. What does Dr. Rank ask of Nora?

-to keep Torvald away from Dr. Rank's sick room, because heis sensitive to such unpleasantness and Rank doesn't want to upset him

54. How will Dr. Rank inform Nora of his death?

-business card with black cross in heir mailbox when he starts to die (Nora says it's morbid and depressing)

55. Who does Dr. Rank think will replace him as Nora's friend after he dies?

-Mrs. Linde

56. How does Nora react when Dr. Rank tells her he loves her?

-she says it's inappropriate; it makes her uncomfortable, he should't have said that

57. How does Nora respond when Rank tells her that she seems like she loves him more than Torvald?

-she says the people you have fun with aren't the same as the ones you love; when she was little she loved her father the most, but had fun gossiping with the maids

58. What relationship does Nora liken her relationship with Torvald to?

-her relationship with her father

Why is Krogstad surprised Torvald would fire him at first?

-knowing what power he has over them

59. What does Krogstad offer?

-that the 3 of them can settle the matter, and no one else has to be involved

60. How does Krogstad plan to use the blackmail?

-to blackmail Torvald into giving him a promotion; in a year it'll be him running the bank instead of Torvald

61. What does Nora threaten to do? What does Krogstad say?

-commit suicide; doesn't believe she'll do it, and it wouldn't do any good because he would still be able to ruin her reputation which Torvald would never let happen

62. What does Nora expect Torvald to do when he finds out?

-take all the blame on himself; a wonderful, yet terrible thing

63. How does Mrs. Linde reassure Nora?

-says she'll go and convince Krogstad to ask Torvald for the unopened letter back because they used to be close

64. What does Nora ask Torvald to help her with?

practicing the tarantella (she does it, and he says she has a lot of practicing to do, which she agrees with and says he'll have to help her every moment between then and the party)

65. What does Torvald guess when Nora says he'll have no time to open letters since he's helping her practice? What does he agree to do?

-that there's a letter from Krogstad; wait til after the party to open it

66. Why is Nora kind of glad that Torvald's going to find out?

-the wonderful thing, the miracle will happen--he'll jump to her rescue and take all the blame

67. Where does Mrs. Linde wait for Krogstad? Why?

-at the Helmers' house while they're at the party; there's no private entrance at the place where she's staying

68. What is Krogstad & Mrs. Linde's past?

-she broke up with him abruptly for the man she married because she needed his money to support her family

69. What does Krogstad say he's been like since Christine left him? What does she say?

-a man lost at sea on a wreck; she feels the same, and the shipwrecks should get together

70. Why does Mrs. Linde tell Krogstad she came to town? What does he say?

-for him: she needs someone to work for, to help, or she feels like she has no purpose in life; Krogstad calls her hyserical and says she's just looking for a chance at self-sacrifice

71. What does Mrs. Linde say when Krogstad asks if she only got back together with him for Nora?

-she sold herself in the past and would never do it again

72. Why does Christine tell Krogstad not to get his letter back?

-all the lies in the Helmer house need to come to light

73. Did Nora want to leave the party so early?

-no

74. Why does Mrs. Linde say she's at their house?

-to see Nora's costume

75. What did Torvald think of Nora's performance at the party?

-a bit too realistic, she was a bit too much like a Neapolitan fisher girl for his taste (but the other guests loved it)

76. What does Torvald think Mrs. Linde should do instead of knitting?

-embroidery (more tasteful since knitting needles look Chinese)

77. What does Torvald pretend when the Helmers go to parties?

-Nora's not his wife, but his secret lover

78. What does Dr. Rank say he will be at the party next year?

-invisible

79. Why does Dr. Rank tell Torvald he had a right to drink a lot at the party?

-he did medical research all day and has found something for sure and was very productive (but really, he found out he's definitell going to die)

80. What does Torvald notice about the mailbox? What is Nora's response?

-someone tried to pick the lock; one of Nora's hairpins is jammed into it; she blames it on the kids

81. What does Torvald find in the mailbox from Rank?

-two cards with black crosses on them

81. What does Torvald tell Nora after he says he's glad to have her?

-he sometimes wishes she were in trouble so he could save her

82. What does Torvald do after reading Krogstad's letter?

-screams at Nora, says she's just as disgusting as her father was; says his happiness is now destroyed because he'll have to obey Krogstad

83. What does Torvald say in response to Nora's threatening to commit suicide?

-it won't do any good because Krogstad will still have power and suspect him as an accomplice (doesn't really care that she'd be dead?!)

84. What is Torvald's solution?

-Nora can still live in the house to keep up appearances, but the relationship is over and she's not allowed near the children because she'll corrupt them

85. How does Krogstad fix the problem?

-sends another letter with the forgery and says he's ashamed he tried to blackmail them

86. Why does Torvald say his love for Nora is even deeper now?

-after having forgiven her from the bottom of his heart; his possession of her has grown even greater; she shouldn't worry because he'll continue to guide her through life as if she were a child

87. What does Nora complain about after Torvald forgives her?

-she says they've never had a serious conversation before now

88. Who does Nora accuse of treating her like a doll?

-Torvald and her father; they dressed her up and made her into what they wanted her to be

89. Why does Nora say she's leaving Torvald and the kids?

-she has a duty to herself that she's never fulfilled; she realizes she's never been happy with Torvald; she will spend the night at Mrs. Linde's

90. Why does Torvald admonish Nora for wanting to leave?

-he says she's forsaking her sacred duties to her husband and children; then he says what Jesus would do

91. What does Nora need to learn by leaving?

-whether she's just too ignorant to understand society, as Torvald says, or if society's wrong

92. Why does Nora realize she never loved Torvald?

-she realizes he isn't the man she thought he was when the

"miracle" of him taking the blame from her didn't happen

93. When does Nora say she would come back?

if they had a true marriage instead of just living together

94. What does Helmer end with?

"The most wonderful thing of all"

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *What is important about the title? Who is the "doll" Ibsen refers to?*
2. *Who is the more significant female character in terms of plot development, Nora or Kristine? Explain your answer.*
3. *Do you think Kristine's decision not to prevent Krogstad from revealing the truth to Torvald is a betrayal of Nora? Does this act ultimately hurt or benefit Nora?*
4. *How does Henrik Ibsen reveal character in A Doll's House? Is Nora a sympathetic character? Did your opinion of Nora change from the beginning of the play to its conclusion?*
5. *Does the play end the way you expected? Do you think this was a happy ending?*
6. *A Doll's House is generally considered a feminist work. Do you agree with this characterization? Why or why not?*
7. *What does the Tarantella dance symbolize in A Dollhouse?*

GLOSARY

Dissolution

-coming apart, as a person does during an illness

Extravagant

-luxurious; in excess of what is really necessary (especially in terms of cost or glamor).

Feminism

-the idea or ideal of gender equity in society, with a focus on issues pertaining to women

Flat

-an apartment

Indiscreet

-not discreet; not keeping a sensitive or delicate matter private.

IOU

-a written document acknowledging a debt (as "I owe you...").

Lament

-to feel or express sorrow about a bad choice or bad circumstance

Lark

-a songbird

Macaroon

-a chewy, sweet cookie made with sugar and egg whites

Patronizing

-condescending; expressing the idea that someone is lower than oneself

Spinal consumption

-a disease something like tuberculosis, colloquially thought to be a consequence of the diminishment of semen. Nora says that Dr. Rank has the disease as a consequence of his father's misdeeds

Tarantella

-a fast, whirling southern Italian dance, usually performed by a single couple, once supposed to be a remedy for a tarantula bite. This is the dance which Nora dances for Helmer at the party

Tuberculosis

-a contagious wasting disease which causes chest pain and coughing up of blood. Untreated, it eventually is fatal.