
The Crucial Points And Characters Portraits In A Doll's House

This essay will develop a brief critic and analysis of the play 'A Doll's House', written by the playwright Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen wrote this play when he was in Rome and Amalfi in 1879 and he published it the same year. The play can be seen as a modern tragedy, as it has an unhappy ending and revolves around complex, problematic and sorrowful issues.

Now, let us have an expeditious look at the plot's background to try and understand better Ibsen's choice when it comes to the characters. 'A Doll's House' is set up in Norway's late-nineteenth-century capitalist society, a place where reputation and social status were more important than anything else. In the play, the portrayal of family life is strongly influenced by the power distribution in the drama. Nora's marriage is a game in which Helmer holds all the control, a master-slave relationship approved by society. She compares the situation to her relationship with her children at the end of the drama: 'I have been your doll wife.' She states that her children became nothing more than toys for her, and in effect, she became Helmer's toy, which existed mainly for power and "performing tricks". The unequal division of power in marriage shows the disparity of family life in the play's culture.

If we have a close look at the opening stage directions, we can see that those are crucial to explain the characters' context, time period and background. The directions begin with 'A pleasant room, tastefully but not expensively furnished.' Such directions reveal that the play takes place in a house that has a middle-class family, that is well taken care of, but the people living in the house are not very affluent. In the first scene, the playwright is extremely precise. Every little detail about the room is explained, 'Near the window a round table with armchairs and a small sofa.' Much of the play takes place in a single room, and any little information regarding that space is described right from the beginning. There are also stage directions which are aimed right at the characters. Comments like 'smiling' and 'quickly' often show the way the characters are supposed to behave. These stage directions also illustrate how to interpret the main characters. Nora is depicted as anxious and follower, and because of his stage directions, her husband plays a more dominant part in the story.

The writer presents us with a good amount of characters. Even though in many version of the play Torvald is written as the first character, the true protagonist of the play is, instead, his wife Nora. As inserted at the beginning of Act I, she seems to rejoice in the comforts her middle-class life enables her. She is pleased to have a lot of money and she has nothing to worry about. However, Nora does have a more resourceful part. Before the beginning of the events told in the play, Torvald had been sick and he had to fly to Italy to recover. The family didn't have enough money, so Nora took out a loan by copying the signature of her deceased father, successfully committing fraud to save the life of her husband. This side of Nora surfaces completely as the play develops, as she eventually discovers that her marriage was founded on social norms and that she is more than a mere doll for people to enjoy at their leisure time.

As we have already said, Torvald Helmer is Nora's husband and the recently promoted manager at the local joint-stock bank. He constantly spoils Nora, pretending to be in love with her, but he tends to put her down and sees her just like a pretty doll. He calls her names,

indicating that he finds Nora to be endearing but not equivalent to him. Nora has never really told him how she has received the funds for her medical travel to Italy. If he realised, he should have lost his pride. Moreover, Torvald respects appearances and professional formality. When Nora eventually leaves him, he makes her notice how shameful it is for a wife to desert her husband and children. Overall, he has a simplistic understanding of the universe and is incapable of coping with life's unpleasantness.

The other characters are Dr. Rank, who is a rich family friend who considers Nora like an educated human being, unlike Torvald; Kristine Linde, one of Nora's friend, who is in town searching for a job after her husband's death; Nils Krogstad, who is an employee at Torvald's Bank; Anne Marie, namely Nora's former nanny (and the only mother- person Nora ever knew); and the Helmer's three children: Ivar, Bobby and Emmy.

The play presents various interesting themes. One of the main themes is, of course, marriage. Indeed, the play focuses on the cessation of a marriage that does not reach the expectations of a happy marriage (namely, a union of equal people). The Helmers seem happy at first, yet the gap between them is growing more and more evident throughout the course of the play. Their union ends up falling down because of a total lack of comprehension. Nora and Torvald, together in wedlock, are unwilling to understand who they are as individuals.

Another very important theme is reputation. In fact, the men in A Doll's House are obsessed with their reputations. Some have a strong reputation in their communities and will do anything it takes to maintain that; some others have damaged their good image and will do whatever it takes to have it back. While the play is set in a private residence's living space, the public eye continuously peeks through the curtains.

Lies and deceit are also a crucial point. The basic suspense that flows across A Doll's House derives from Nora's apprehension of revealing her lie. Her utter horror of this revelation drives her to lie after lie. When she eventually tightens her network of lies around her, her marriage becomes too fragile to withstand the pressure.

Strictly connected to it is the theme of the importance of money, as every lie is told because of the loan Nora took out. But money is not only important because of that. Early in the play, in fact, the characters spend a lot of time worrying about their money, and the financial state of each character appears to be a defining characteristic.