

# Analysis and evaluation of the relationship between nora

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Analysis and Exploration of the relationship between Nora and Torvald as portrayed in A Doll's House As a reader, the relationship between Torvald and Nora seemed really interesting to me. While it appears one way on the surface, it is very different essentially. I chose to study this because I think, there is a great deal to explore in order to try and understand the marital dynamic between Nora and Torvald.

There are so many things that go into why a relationship is the one that it is but I will focus on three very influential aspects in the book- the Victorian gender roles, societal expectations and the idea of image, as well as the individual personalities and beliefs both the spouses held. In assessing the relationship which Torvald and Nora share, it is most significant that we consider the Victorian gender roles at the time. In a time such as that one, both Torvald and Nora would be pressured and bred to mold themselves according to these gender rules.

When you're raised a certain way and it is ingrained in you that you are expected to be a certain way, you will. Additionally, they would also expect their spouse to do the same. In Victorian times, there were two clear roles that a man and woman were supposed to play in a marriage. Essentially, the man was responsible for protecting, guarding and most of all, ensuring financial security for his wife. This can be observed in A Dollhouse several times. A blatant example is how Nora receives all her spending money from Torvald.

Like a child, she receives allowances and sums of money to take care of the household expenses as well as for herself. To exemplify, I extracted an

interaction between the couple that takes place when Torvald presents Nora with a sum of money. “ Nora: Torvald, Thank you! This’ll keep me going for a long time! Torvald: Well, you must see that it does. ” As a husband, Torvald also restricts her from doing things which he thinks aren’t good for her but she likes to do and these can be as trivial as eating macaroons.

To quote Torvald, when he’s questioning Nora about whether or not she’s eaten macaroons and she denies the accusation, Torvald says “ No, I know you wouldn’t, besides you’ve given me your word”. This little instance goes a long way in portraying his role in the relationship as someone who controls her and who is supposed to determine her actions. Another instance when Torvald acts according to his gender role is when he feels he needs to guide Nora to teach her how to dance for the Tarantella.

And not only does he do that, but he revels in this role. When Nora presents a facade of desperately needing Torvald’s help to dance the tarantella, he says “ This evening, I’ll be wholly and entirely at your service- you poor, helpless creature”. This leads me to talk about a womans role in the Victorian society and how it influences Nora in her relationship with her husband. If a husband was expected to provide for his wife, similarly, a woman was supposed to live it in gratitude and forever indebted to him.

She was to abide by his standards and keep the house comfortable for him and essentially, be in his service all the time. This can really be observed in A Dolls House where Nora is constantly trying to be theideal wifeto Torvald. In Act 2 of the play, we can quote Nora saying to Kristina- “ Sh! Here’s Torvald coming back. Look, go in and sit with the children for a bit- Torvald cant bear

to see dressmaking. " She's perpetually trying to appear a certain way, but to her own husband in her own home.

When she's undergoing hardships like when she was working because when they were in debt or when she's distraught, she never lets him realize it. As a reader, one can observe this when Nora is describing to Kristina how she could not tell Torvald of her loan and says " [Torvald] would be terribly hurt and humiliated if he thought he owed anything to me. It'd spoil everything between us, and our lovely happy home would never be the same again". This was also something that was expected of women in the era in that their personal struggles weren't ever really shared with their husbands.

This may seem really odd to us but at the time it may be because marriages in itself seldom took place because two people were in love, but because it was more of an arrangement for both of them to adhere to standards put up by society. So while Nora and Torvald do appear to be in love in its true form, we have to remember as readers, that he does keep in mind her background, her father's past and this is because these things really mattered when choosing a spouse. He would never let it go. Even when they are having a completely irrelevant and pleasant discussion, Torvald finds a way to incorporate the unpleasant past of her family. Just like your father-always on the look out for all the money you can get, but the moment you have it, it seems to slip through your fingers and you never know what becomes of it. Well, I must take you as you are- it's in your blood. " This brings me to the second aspect that I studied which was holding up an image to society and adhering to its standards. This played a huge role in their

relationship many times during the play so we can begin to understand how much it affected their marriage. The concept of “ what will people think” arises so many times.

The most notable occurrence demonstrating this is towards the end of the play when Torvald finds out about Nora’s lie and rather than trying to keep their relationship together out of genuine affection for Nora and him truly not wanting her to leave because he loves her, he wants her to stay and put up a facade as a married couple just so they still appear that way to society. This is really when we can see what their marriage really means to him. More than anything , it was something to show to society and perhaps this is why they always felt the need to be the ideal couple.

It demonstrated his willingness to brush their problems under the rug to maintain an image to society. And doing this isn’t the way any healthy relationship should be, so from this we can conclude that his motive was elsewhere. And he says this too. “ From now on, forget happiness. Now its about saving the remains, the wreckage, the appearance. ” The marriage in itself meant less to him than appearance which really drives a reader to consider again how he interacted with his wife and the genuineness of their marriage as a whole.

The idea of loving a woman like Nora was more important to Torvald than actually giving her the love she deserved and this is indicated when Nora says “ You’ve never loved me, you’ve only found it pleasant to be in love with me. ” Also, the idea of maintaining an image for society comes in when Nora wants to kill herself instead of telling the truth about her debt. She

doesn't want society to look down upon her and her family, she doesn't want Torvald to be looked down upon so she feels that is the only way out.

And this shows how strongly she feels about society as opposed to herself and her husband as individuals. But Torvald seems to have a really determined moral compass. He feels strongly about crimes, lying and debt . He expresses this in act 1 when he says “ Nora, you know what I think about that sort of thing. No debts, no borrowing. There's something constrained, something ugly even, about a home that's founded on borrowing and debt. You and I have managed to keep clear up till now and we shall still do so for the little time that is left. ” Torvald makes sure that his own views are heard in his relationship, which in this case only acted as a catalyst to Nora's breakdown because she was doing and listening to two different things. Lastly, I wanted to study Torvald and Nora's own individual personalities and beliefs which probably play the most important role in their marriage. What else can explain the need for Nora to tell little lies like eating macaroons behind Torvald's back or her strong notion to kill herself when she's in debt and does not want it to affect her current family. Torvald's aversion to debt and views about Nora's family also come out in the same way.

In a way , maybe their respective upbringings played a role in how they acted in their marriage. Nora was brought up being repressed, her father wanted to her to act a certain way and always ensured that his opinions were her opinions. From there she was married and experienced almost the same thing. And this constant repression and control over her life, indicated when Nora says “ I've been your doll wife here, just as at home I was papa's

doll child”, might be what subconsciously drives her to do things like eat macaroons and feel the need to hide such a thing such as a debt from her husband.

Even in her initial conversation with Mrs. Lindt, she almost describes the whole experience of the secret loan as something exciting because for her it is that different because of what her life has always been. When Kristina inquires whether Nora obtained her large sum of money throughthe lottery, Nora responds “ A lottery! Pooh-where would be the glory in that ? ” In the same way, Nora experiences how her father was a victim of society when he was dishonest and committed a crime.. Just remember the wicked things they put in the paper about Papa- how cruelly they slandered him. ” She doesn’t want the same thing to happen to her own family and this drives her to react the way that she does- because like anyone else herchildhoodaffects her even in her adulthood Incidentally, Torvald’s strong opinions also influence their relationship in that she feels the need to hide things because she knows how he feels about them and he doesn’t make it appear as though he’d understand.

His opinions were supposed to be hers and his beliefs were supposed to be Nora’s. ” You arranged everything to suit your own tastes” says Nora in the third act,” and so I came to have the same tastes as yours.. or I pretended to. I’m not quite sure which. ” His strong hatred towards loans and bad deeds are two examples of the same. The most important idea of their individual views is Torvald’s physical attraction and lust for Nora in that it really limits the depth of their relationship.

She loves him for all the right reasons and genuinely accepted him as a husband and would sacrifice anything for him, even her life. The way he interacts with her though, is always a more superficial manner pertaining to her beauty and physical appearance rather than as a person. In their most intense moments of interaction we experience before he finds the letter, he speaks to her through a veil of desire and lust “ When I watched you swaying and beckoning in the tarantella, it set my blood on fire till I couldn’t bear it any longer That’s why I brought you home so early. Rather than treating her on a human level, he objectifies her and treats her as a possession or incidentally, a doll – not his partner or equal. “ How fascinating you are, you lovely little thing... Maynt I look at my dearest treasure? At all the beauty that belongs to no one but me- that’s all my very own” Nora is something Torvald feels like he’s proud to own, rather than as a person on her own. Which is really what she struggles with in the end, herself as a person.

How he talked to her and how he belittled her , how she was treated that way almost her whole life influenced the outcome of the play in that she finally realizes that she’s her own person, not a counterpart to any man. “ You’ve committed a grievous sin against me; its your fault I’ve made nothing of my life. ”. This demonstrates Nora’s final revelation in the climax of the play. To conclude, id like to mention that a great deal goes into their marriage and how it ended in the play. But by studying a few aspects it gave me a better understanding as to why they were a certain way.