

Compare and contrast a doll house and a streetcar named desire

[Entertainment](#), [Theatre](#)



Compare and contrast A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen and A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams. Write a brief essay (of approximately 1000 words) to comment on the two female protagonists' (Nora Helmer and Blanche Dubois's) relationship with men. A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen and A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams are two well-known plays that give rise to discussions over male-female relationships in old society. The female protagonists in the plays are women who are dependent on males.

However, the female protagonist in A Doll House is able to transcend her status by try to be dependent on herself at the end of the play, whereas the one in A Streetcar Named Desire still continues to depend on men. In this essay, I am going to discuss the relationships with men of the two female protagonists, Nora Helmer and Blanche Dubois. In A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen, Nora Helmer is the female protagonist of the play. She is a housewife in the Helmer's family. She has undergone a transformation throughout the play that she reacts differently to her husband.

Nora's relationship with her husband, Torvald, is important in the development of the plot. In the first scene, Nora appears to be happy and have an affectionate family. Although she tries to defy her husband in some unimportant ways, for example, she lies to her husband about eating macaroons, she still maintains a good relationship with her husband. However, minor incident actually foreshadows the confrontation between her husband and her later when the play continues. As the plot develops, Nora is

actually not as simple as other wives that she does not totally obey her husband.

The contradiction between Nora's independent nature and the tyrannical authority of Torvald arouses a climax in the play when Torvald discovered a lie of Nora. The lie shows a big contrast of their relationship before and after the disclosure. Before Torvald discovers the truth behind the deception, the relationship between his wife and him seems to be perfect and loving. At the beginning of the play, Nora does not seem to notice her life being manipulated by her husband; she does everything according to her husband's taste and preference.

Meanwhile, she manages to save her husband from poor health condition by breaking the law to borrow debt from Krogstad and repaying it with pocket money from her husband. It is apparent that Nora is very smart and clever to handle difficulties not only for herself but also her husband. But instead of being a capable woman, she chooses to live up to the expectation of her husband, seeming to be isolated from the outside world but to live in the world that her husband and father has set up for her. When it comes to other relationships with men, Nora respects her husband.

She refuses to accept Dr Rank's admiration of her, and she also defends and supports her husband in front of Krogstad. Besides, She practices the dance for him so as to defend her husband's pride in front of people and not to embarrass him. These are the evidence proving that Nora is like a doll being controlled. She follows what men in her life, her father and Torvald, expect her to do, and this is the way she does to maintain good relationship with

them. However, the relationship goes upside down after Torvald's unveiling of the secret that Nora has been hiding from Torvald whom she borrows money from.

At the end of the play, the climatic confrontation between Nora and Torvald shows that Nora realizes the need to live for herself rather than men. She wants to put the marriage to a halt just because she does not want to rely on men anymore by pretending to be someone she is not in order to please her husband. As she determines to be independent, she left her husband and family at the end of the play to show that she will never be related to anyone but herself. This action represents the idea of feminism and arouses the awareness of woman's rights. Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, on the other hand, is contrasted with Nora Helmer.

When the play begins, she is portrayed to be educated and well-mannered woman. Blanche does not agree with the beastly lifestyle of her sister's husband, Stanley. She thinks that he is so common and ape-like. This shows that they cannot get along well with each other during Blanche's staying at their home. When the play develops, Stanley quickly seeks out that Blanche is actually a fallen woman. She lost her husband and her family fortune. She has sexual affairs with some men and addition to alcohol. Therefore, she needs much male admiration to maintain her remaining self-esteem.

Besides, she wants to marry a man as a shelter so that she can escape poverty as well as her bad reputation in society. Mitch, therefore, is a chance for Blanche because he likes her very much. However, before they decide to be together, Stanley tells Mitch about Blanche's indiscrete sexual

behavior in the past. This destroys Blanche's pursuit of Mitch. After this incident, Blanche even makes up a story about going on vacation with a billionaire. It is obvious to see that Blanche always rely on men in her life, looking for admiration and a shelter for her from the tough reality.

So, she always pretends to be someone men like in order to please them rather than being a true self. She even acts in front of men in the way that she does not really feel like that. Unlike Nora, Blanche is pathetic when it comes to relationship with men. While Nora undergoes a transformation from a controlled doll to a strong woman who determines to restart her life again for the better, Blanche continues to rely on men heavily. In the last scene, Blanche is still so willing to be led away by a kind male doctor to an asylum just because the doctor is a gentleman.

This tells us Blanche's desperate and total dependence on men. When we compare Nora Helmer and Blanche Dubois, we can see that they are two females of the opposites. Although both of them shows a confrontation between men and themselves, and both of them seem to be manipulated by men, Nora demonstrates a more positive way to challenge with men's dominance while Blanche shows a pathetic way which can be said a lack of feminism. The comparison of these two female characters stirs up a debate of women's rights. It also brings us to a higher level of discussion on the tension of the gender roles in society.