

Argumentative essay on a dolls house henrik ibsen

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Was Nora right to leave at the end of the play?

Firstly, she was right to leave because Torvald treats her in a completely stereotypical way – like a doll, as the title of the page suggests. All the names he calls her as endearments have the effect of stressing her weakness and dependence on him. They make her sound like a child, a doll, Torvald's personal plaything: " little songbird", " squirrel", " lark", " little featherhead", " little skylark", " little person", little woman." It could be argued that these are harmless and loving endearments, but they clearly show the balance of power in the Helmers' marriage. If Nora acts at times in a flirtatious and childish way, it is because that is what Torvald expects from her. As Yuehua writes of Torvald:

He sees women as both child-like, helpless creatures detached from reality and totally dependent on men for support. His attitude towards his wife is a mixture of a sense of possession and sexual passion. (p. 81)

The problems occur at the end of the play when Torvald realizes that his wife has shown independence and autonomy beyond the stereotype he has of her. His reaction to her actions allows Nora to see his real feelings for her. She is right to leave Torvald because he does not really love her; he loves the doll that he treats her as.

Secondly, she is right to leave Torvald because he cannot cope with an autonomous Nora. In arranging the loan to save Torvald's life and by forging her father's signature, Nora has shown a capacity of action and forethought which Torvald did not realize she had. This is partly what angers him in the final act and, in particular, his attitude in the closing scene to the good news

that Krogstad has agreed not to press report Nora for fraud, allows Nora an epiphany that makes her departure at the end of the play inevitable.

Because Torvald's response to the news is so self-centered, so obsessively selfish that Nora realizes suddenly her marriage has been an awful mistake: " You and Papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault I've made nothing of my life." (Ibsen, p. 64) And their sin is to restrict her within a society that is patriarchal and old-fashioned, so that she has no useful way of acting independently. In addition, on a personal level, not once does Torvald thank her for her ingenuity in obtaining the loan and her hard work in paying it back: for her part, Nora cannot understand why her actions have caused such cold anger, such passion on Torvald's part, but, in fact, he shows that his only interest has been to avoid social embarrassment. The way he tells Nora she is forgiven after the arrival of Krogstad's note is terribly condescending. Nora says to him: " I believe that before anything else, I am a human being, just as much a one as you are... or at least I'm going to turn myself into one... I want to think everything out for myself and make my own decisions." (97) She has to leave Torvald in order to become a human being and to be able to act in an autonomous way - as she has shown she can.

Thirdly, Torvald is so solipsistic that Nora is right to leave him. The moment that the note arrives shows us the nature of their marriage in a microcosm. Although Krogstad's letter is addressed to Nora, Torvald opens it and reads it. As he does so, he thinks only of himself and his strongest emotion at this point in the play is his relief at not having his social reputation or his reputation as a banker sullied in any way. He has no thought whatsoever for

Nora and how she might be feeling: after all, she is merely a doll. This is the moment where Nora becomes an individual: she abandons her fancy dress costume and commands Torvald to sit down before beginning the conversation that will lead inevitably to her departure at the end of the play. For the very first time, we sense that she is openly in control:

We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation? (100)

The Helmers cannot have a serious conversation because Torvald cannot see his wife as a human being who has equality with him. They have not had a serious relationship because Torvald treats her like his 'doll.' In order to break this cycle of behavior and break free, Nora has to leave at the end of the play, because Torvald is too self-centered to give her the love she craves..

In conclusion, it has to be said that mothers who leave their children are still thought of as odd and unnatural, but Nora has compelling reasons to leave her home, her marriage and her children. Her decision to do so is a very courageous one. She knows that the children will not suffer materially because Torvald is well-off and can hire someone to look after the children. Nora has to leave in order to be a complete human being and for her daughters she will act as a good example of an independent, free-thinking human being, not Torvald's doll. Furthermore, if there is any doubt about her justification of her decision to leave Torvald, we should bear in mind Dr. Rank's devotion to her; in marked contrast to her husband, Dr. Rank agrees to do Nora a favor even before he knows what it is and says he is prepared

to die for Nora's sake. At the end of the play, we realize that Torvald would not make the same sacrifice - and this is another good reason for Nora to leave him.

References

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