

Marital lessons from Ibsen's A Doll's House argumentative essay

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A marriage is a life time commitment between two people to share their lives and experiences as companions. In the least sense, this is what most people hope would happen when they commit to spend the rest of their lives together. It is a commitment and efforts between two people to be true to each other and support and love each other without any conditions whether in good times or bad times. Though, there are many characteristics associated to marriage, I feel, three are most important and define what a good marriage is, and are, trust, respect, and communication. These characteristics lay the foundation for a successful marriage. With regard to these qualities, it is of my opinion that the marriage between Torvald and Nora in Ibsen's A Doll's House does not meet the threshold of a good marriage.

A Doll's House which is a play by Henrik Ibsen is a good example of a marriage that didn't work. The major factors that contribute to a good marriage are clearly lacking from the play. Ibsen paints a gloomy picture of the sacrifices women undergo in marriages. Women of all economic classes continuously sacrifice their integrity but rarely do men do the same. The dehumanizing oppression and social struggle of women, especially those from middle class families can be clearly seen from the play. The play revolves around Torvald and Nora Helmer, who live as husband and wife and the two are unable to enjoy marital bliss because their marriage is fraught with many problems.

The marriage between the two did not have the requisite balance for it to be successful. Qualities that make marriages work can only be cultivated if the

relationship is based on love. Even though that of the two was at first based on love, the case did to remain the same as the marriage progressed. Nora was not truly loved by Torvald. To Torvald, Nora was just another child to mind. This can be clearly seen from his statement when he says, “ And I wouldn't want you to be any different from what you are-just my sweet little song bird. But now I come to think of it, you look rather-rather-how shall I put it? -rather as if you've been up to mischief today” (152). It is clear that Torvald does not love his wife as seen from the disrespectful names like ‘ squirrel’ and ‘ spendthrift’ he uses to describe her. Respect is a key factor in good marriages and by using these terms, it just shows how insensitive and disrespectful he was towards his wife. The way he managed his house is also a sign of his lack of love and respect. To him, he owned a doll house which was perfect according to his belief. Even though the doll house initially belonged to his father in law, he got possession of its title deed after marrying Nora. He ensured that he maintained a firm control over the doll house by manipulating Nora and the children. His marriage was eventually ruined as a result of his overbearing attitude and lack of love.

For a union between two people to be deemed successful, communication is a very essential component. One partner should not expect the other one to read their mind. Breakdown in communication can have grave implications on a marriage and it may end up breaking. It is therefore necessary that couples share their thoughts, likes and dislikes as much as possible. For example, before the wife goes out to pay the water bill, the husband should be aware of the amount of money needed. In the same sense, it is good for a

husband to inform his wife when he is going out to have beer or just entertainment in a club. In a good marriage, if one is informed by the partner of his or her intentions to borrow money to solve an issue at hand, the decision is fully supported and conflicts are reduced, but the possibility of this happening in Nora and Torvald's marriage is unlikely since due to the stubbornness of Torvald when it comes to money. To Torvald, he is a powerful doll master and cannot allow himself to accept help from his dolls whom he viewed as unintelligent. It is clear that there is a lot of mistrust among the two as seen when Nora keeps secrets of debts from Torvald even though she came into debt after borrowing money which they used to go for a trip in Italy. Torvald does also not respect his wife and treats her like a child when it comes to issues related to money. The existence of mistrust works against them when the wife decides to leave him.

If there had been proper communication between the two, conflicts would have been avoided but it can be seen that there was poor communication among the two, leading the wife to complain and say, " We have stayed together for eight years. Don't you realize the it is high time the two of us sit together as man and wife and have a serious conversation regarding our lives" (224). Lack of communication builds mistrust in marriages and it is impossible for two people to stay together if they don't trust each other. If one partner feels like or she needs to constantly be checking on the other, the marriage is bound to fail, just it happened to Nora and Torvald.

In conclusion, Ibsen's play is a thoughtful analysis of the intricacies surrounding marriages and how marriages collapse as a result of factors that

can be avoided. A good marriage is one where two people love, respect each other and maintain a constant and genuine communication at all times. It is these ingredients that make couples enjoy their marriages to the fullest. These were missing from Nora and Torvald's marriage and therefore it can be concluded that theirs was an example of a bad marriage.

Work Cited:

Ibsen, Henrik. *The Doll House*. Centennial Edition: Signet Classics, 1879.