

Parallels between nora in a doll's house and blanche in streetcar named desire

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Within the classic works of literature, there often exist parallels between characters, settings, themes, and the like. An especially interesting example of parallels among characters exists between Nora in Ibsen's "A Doll's House" and Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire".

In this paper, the parallels between these characters will be presented, not only in the outward appearance and circumstances of both, but also in terms of common themes, symbolism, and more in order to provide a well rounded piece of research and evaluation of these complex protagonists.

Nora and Blanche Superficially Compared

To begin, Nora and Blanche will be compared in terms of their outward characteristics and environments so that a basis of comparison can be established on the most basic level, before more in-depth comparison can take place.

Nora, in "A Doll's House", is presented by Ibsen on the surface as a vulnerable woman, dependent upon the assistance and approval of others, especially men. Having led a sheltered life, Nora grows up in the care of her father, and immediately moves to the care of her husband upon her marriage, giving the reader the distinct impression that she is totally reliant upon the help of others, or more precisely, the help of male figures of authority (Drake).

As a result of this fragility on her part, Nora becomes impulsive and materialistic as the work unfolds in the initial portions of it; however, the tantalizing suggestion exists that Nora uses a practiced vulnerability in order to ultimately manipulate the men in her life. As the story reaches its climax,

Nora emerges from her circumstances as a fully independent woman who rejects the idea that marriage and motherhood is necessary to validate her as a person (Ibsen).

Blanche, as portrayed in Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" is also presented as somewhat vulnerable and reliant on others, but in different ways. Early in her life, Blanche leans on a man whom she believes will be her husband and take care of her, but ultimately, through a series of complicated situations including his confrontation of his own homosexuality, he takes his own life, leaving Blanche to her own devices (Bloom).

In an effort to validate herself, Blanche becomes the caretaker for the elderly members of her family, watching each of them pass away one by one, and along with them, a piece of her dies as well. Ultimately, Blanche finds herself seeking shelter and support from others when, as she loses her home and financial resources, she is forced to move into an apartment with another woman and man.

Like Nora, Blanche initially seeks validation and protection from men, but in her case, the men are a series of strangers with whom she indulges in intimacy in a fruitless search for attention, protection and a sense of herself (Combs). Ultimately, Blanche is forced to face the reality of her inner self, and like Nora, come to some hard decisions about who she has been, who she will become, and how all of this will interrelate.

In comparing Nora and Blanche simply on the surface, we see two women who are seeking to find their way in the world so to speak, but more

importantly, each is also trying to find out who they really are and also trying to find a sense of independence and validity despite trying circumstances.

This being understood, there are several key themes that these women have in common; themes that are more abstract but important nonetheless. They are identified and discussed as follows:

Fantasy Versus Reality

Both Nora and Blanche find themselves in a struggle between fantasy and reality; initially, both women are lulled into the false fantasy world where men make them complete, validate their existence, and will help them to live happily ever after, as the classic fairy tale goes.

However, as reality sets in, both women find that they ultimately need to define themselves on their own, and the actual reality is that we all find ourselves alone and should not rely on someone else to complete or validate our existence. For Nora, reality comes in the form of her independence from marriage and motherhood, which allows her the luxury of full expression of her inner self. For Blanche, reality comes in the form of the gravity of her promiscuity and the effect that it has had on others, as well as herself.

Loneliness

For the entire action taking place around them, it is fair and accurate to assert that both Nora and Blanche are lonely in one sense or another. While it is not the type of loneliness that comes from being totally alone, it is the type of loneliness that comes from not truly knowing anyone, including themselves.

Nora realizes eventually that she is a stranger even to herself, and this leaves her feeling quite alone. For Blanche, faced with the seemingly constant loss of loved ones through illness and death, she is eventually alone in the literal sense, being the sole survivor of her family. Loneliness permeates both of these characters, and shapes them forever, for better or worse.

Desire

The presence of romantic, emotional, and material desire is a common element to be found in both Nora and Blanche. Desire is something that can be a positive motivator or a destructive force, and it manifests itself in both ways in the case of these characters, respectively. In Nora's case, desire first exists in terms of her desire to feel safe and protected by the men in her life, first her father and then her husband.

At the conclusion of "A Doll's House", Nora has a desire to be independent and define herself, which she pursues. Blanche, in "A Streetcar Named Desire", has desire of the amorous nature, which burns so hotly that it almost consumes her in its intensity. At the conclusion of Blanche's saga, her desire for the love of a man is what brings her full circle in her life experiences.

Constant Change

There is an old irony that says that the only constant in the world is change; in the case of these characters and works, this is definitely the case. Change, for better or for worse, charts the course of Nora and Blanche throughout their respective stories.

Nora goes through a wide variety of changes, as her domestic situation changes through marriage, and changes once again as she comes to the realization that she is actually her own woman and does not need approval from others to thrive.

Blanche goes through the end of the "Old South" as her role models all fade into eternity and she must change all that she has known as her everyday life. Both women change constantly and move forward with the action of their stories.

The Male and Female Dynamic

The dynamic between women and men is as old as time itself, and is a unifying theme in both "A Doll's House" and "Streetcar Named Desire". Nora struggles with the issue of being subservient to a man and allowing him to shape her world, while Blanche seems to want to submit to a man in order to shape her world.

These differences are along the same line of thinking- that men and women, for better or worse, do define each other to a certain extent, but total submission is a different situation altogether. Both women interact with men, and it influences their lives for better or worse.

Closing Thoughts

On a higher level than the literal, Nora and Blanche represent some of the most intricate nuances of womanhood. In their comparison, an understanding of the human soul as well, has been achieved.

Works Cited

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