

Write a concise essay  
on the following topic



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Contemporary criticism considers *A Doll's House* a realistic social/domestic drama the main theme of which centers around the impossibility of distinguishing between appearance and reality. Discuss this statement on the basis of characterization and plot. Is it a recurring theme in the play? In what scenes does it become more obvious? Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* play is a realistic drama set in Norway during the 19th century. The play raises the question about some of the most fundamental affairs the humanity ever faced. Those contentions include sexism that is depicted between the superiority of the man and the position of the woman in the society, materialism and in general money issues, moral issues and morality's actual definition, gender performativity and the reliability of appearances. One of the greatest matters of contention in Ibsen's play and even in human's history is the one of appearance versus reality. Trying to distinguish those two aspects of human's character can sometimes be impossible. In *A Doll's House* Henrik Ibsen manages to present his character in a way that the reader in the end can find out the difference between the characters' appearance and their actual personality. Ibsen seems to have understood the relationship between those two features especially in the Victorian society he lives in and in some way he tries to show the others that societal image is not the lone thing they should care about. The proof that he has comprehended their relationship is his own characters that serve the author's want to have a contrast between their first appearance and their view at the end of the play. That is what Ibsen focuses on and what he actually accomplishes in the end. The impossibility of distinguishing between appearance and reality becomes obvious in the ways characters are portrayed ; this theme is also illustrated in the plot. The impossibility of

distinguishing between appearance and reality is obvious in the way characters are portrayed. The reality is revealed gradually from the first act till the third one where we have the climax of the plot. The features of the characters of the play keep alternating through the play, our first impressions will dramatically change after the end of the play. For instance, the main character's image, Nora's, is presented to us by Ibsen in the very beginning of the play where she has a conversation with her husband. Ibsen uses dialogue, which offers a rounder view on Nora's image and what she looks like on the others' eyes. She is portrayed as a naïve person with childish behavior she seems to lack of any contact with the outer world. She is only aware of what happens in her household like any housewife in the 19th century's Norwegian society. Through the stage direction her reaction leads us to think of her as a doll in a room that she is doing what others want her to do. This is the stereotypical image of woman Ibsen deprecates in his play. In contrast, the appearance of Nora dissolves by the end of the first act where in her dialogue with Mrs. Linde her real face is revealed. In that conversation, she is having her own revolution against the ultra-conservative society of Norway and she states that she is a determined individual woman. Furthermore, Torvald's presentation appears to be really misleading for the reader. He is portrayed as the 'authority' in the house where he always has the last word and he also seems to be controlling every single detail in excellence. He is treating Nora in a sympathetic way here she underestimates her by calling her all that pet-names and he believes that he is superior to her. Of course like the previous character the husband's image is devastated in the end of the play when he actually panics and he loses the control of the whole situation. He is getting crazy in the idea of losing the prestige of his

current social position and he blames Nora for that. He cannot believe in his eyes when he is reading Krogstad's letters and he leaves the audience to wonder what his reaction will actually be. By the end he may even disappoints the majority of the audience which probably expected a heroic full of courage action that will protect his wife. Moreover the last main character of that play is Krogstad. A man who is depicted as villain and whose only want is to harm Nora and her marriage. In fact though after makes up with Mrs. Linde we can see that all he initially wanted was to regain he lost social reputation after the crime he has committed. All he wants is to take back his social position so that he can continue with his life. He does not intend to cause any harm he is just willing to use any mean that he has in order to recover his dignity. In addition, the theme of appearance versus reality also finds expression in the plot and the way events take place. Ibsen has written down the play in a way that suits him so he can promote the messages he wants to the audience. He uses specific actions so he can indirectly depict the character's real image. First of all he uses Krogstad as a common blackmailer that insists on the quickest and most profitable for him repayment of the loan. During the whole play he is threatening Nora with unveiling the truth to her husband. Whereas in the end he is writing even another letter promising he is dropping any right he may have over Nora. Another thing that is produced by Ibsen's intelligence is the symbolism of the Tarantella Dance he is putting Nora through. He smarty uses that particular dance based on his obvious knowledge about its origins and its actual meaning. He acknowledges the initial meaning of the dance which is to throw away the poison of the tarantula and he uses it not as a single stage device but as a dramatic climax of Nora's doll life.

Metaphorically, while dancing Nora is using her own body to present a crisis, a crisis that will lead to catastrophe in the end. She is appearing some symptoms of hysteria as she is in a huge dilemma in her life whether she should destroy her husband's image or commit suicide. In another way, that action shows to the audience the repressed morals of the 19th century. The author uses the dance to make Nora pretend that she wants to learn the dance better for the New Year's Eve and she presenting her as anxious about it. When in the end the only thing that she tries to achieve is to prevent Torvald from looking in the mailbox. Also, the most significant events that Ibsen uses to show the contradiction between appearance and reality are the reactions of the two main characters in the end. Torvald's reacting destroys audience's opinion about a superior, self-important man who controls everything and gives them the impression of a hypocrite who only cares about his social image. A similar conversion is spotted in Nora's reaction. She expects Torvald to take all the responsibility and tell her he is going to protect when he is actually shouting at her about the catastrophe she has caused in his life. When the second letter of Krogstad arrives Torvald through irony tells Nora that she is forgiving her only because he now knows that his social image will not change. Nora's dreams and expects break into pieces in front of her eyes and that causes her revolutionary reaction later on. In conclusion, the central theme of appearance versus reality is illustrated in A Doll's House both through characterization and plot. All the characters in Ibsen's play serve a specific reason of existence. Ibsen is using as many characters as he needs in order to create a play that will pass his messages. Every each one of his characters Nora, Torvald, Krogstad, Mrs. Linde they all have a role in the play which help in the consistency of the plot. He wisely

chooses to show through the theme of appearances versus reality how people look like in his era and the Victorian society and how they should look after all. Ibsen's masterpiece is something much more than just a play for entertainment in contrast the hidden messages in it are enough to urge human's thinking.