

# How far is it possible to feel sympathy for laura and not hedda

Literature



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Throughout both plays of " Hedda Gabler" and " The Father" one may feel that Laura and Hedda are both evil, manipulative characters, however in certain ways one may also sense that one character is seen to be more sinful than the other character. " The Father" is a play about relationships, between a married couple, between men and women and between father and daughter. The play is about a man who is manipulated by his own wife into convincing himself that he is mad and ends up being driven out of his own home by the suspicion that his daughter is not his own.

Hedda Gabler" is also a story about the relationship between married couples and lovers. Hedda is a bright and ambitious middle-aged woman. Hedda opts for a conventional marriage without any love involved. She marries with the idea that she will find complete fulfilment in her husband's career and finds out too late that this is unlikely to happen. " The Father" is regarded by some as a naturalistic play as it shows the audience how life truly is at some stages of life. The play also has allotted naturalistic features such as science and medicine, which are mentioned frequently throughout the play.

This helps the audience to sympathise with the characters, in particular with Laura, as they can see parallels with their own lives and circumstances. Part of this naturalism is Laura plays different roles in the play to different people; she is the physical mother to Bertha, wife and emotional mother to the Captain and head of the house. This also helps us feel sympathy for her as many women find themselves in a situation where they find they are playing two different and conflicting roles to one person as Laura does to the Captain.

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Laura is a very loving wife however, throughout the play there is a lot of tension between Laura and her husband over Laura's daughter, Bertha. The Captain does not believe in their being life after death and therefore wishes a part of him to live on through Bertha. So he wants Bertha to be his child as she will make him live on as a part of her. Through every argument that takes place between Laura and the captain, Laura takes a very clever approach to it and outwits him every time, as she is extremely persuasive. This makes us feel less sympathy for her, as she is obviously very intelligent and so has less claim to the role of a victim.

She also seems to have a very clear plan in her head that has already been in motion for a while when the play opens. For instance, she has already got rid of the doctor that was sympathetic to the Captain. This also reduces our sympathy for her as she comes across as scheming and manipulative. Hedda is a very smart character when it comes to finding out information that interests her. This reduces our sympathy for her, as, like Laura, she appears a manipulative and self-interested person. The role of victim suits her even less than it does Laura.

Hedda is the kind of person who feels uncomfortable in certain situations. For example, the cosy, sentimental relationship between Tesman and his Aunt Juju. Through her exchanges with them and with Mrs Elvstead, the audience is made aware that she is a bit of a social misfit. Brought up by her father, she cannot adjust to the kind of relationships that normal people have. Her manipulation of the people around her is her coping mechanism. With this realisation, we start to feel sympathy for a woman who has found herself

completely out of her depth and whose knee jerk reaction is completely unsuitable.

Yet Hedda is a very domineering character of who tries to take complete control of the people around her and of Tesman in particular. The fact that she knows no other way to cope may seem to some not to be a good enough excuse for her behaviour especially in respect to Mrs Elvstead and Aunt Juju. Jasmine Seippel, IB06, English A1 Standard world literature essay In many ways, one may feel less sympathy for Laura than is expected as while reading the play you feel a great deal of anger at her because she is such an evil character in the way that she treats her fellow characters in the play.

She does this by misleading them; she misleads the doctor and convinces him that the captain is completely insane. The doctor feels more reason to believe Laura as at the end of act two she provokes the captain to become so furious as to throw a lamp at her. This is extremely shocking coming from the captain however; it is seen as an act of a mad man. It is extremely cruel how she uses this act against the captain as his actions were due to her comment on how he will be under restraint the following morning and Laura will then have complete control of the house.

The act of her convincing the doctor that the captain is mad is an extremely cruel plot, which she succeeds in. By seeing Laura treat her husband in this way, someone she loved in the past shows us that should not have that much sympathy for her. Laura shows no heart and love for him. He is still Berthas father though, therefore by Laura sending the father to an insane institute shows how she does not care for the breaking up of her family and

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her daughter being raised without a father. I feel that due to these acts we should have no sympathy for her.

In the play, you can see how Hedda destroys someone's life, Mrs Elvested. Hedda sabotages her life and her relationship with Loveborg and it is very difficult to understand why Hedda does such a thing however; the only conclusion that can be made out of this is that it is caused by her jealousy. Hedda's actions are a disruption to everyone's life. When thinking of what caused her to be so utterly rude, there is no reason that makes me feel as though Hedda should have sympathy felt for her. There are also other reasons why we should consider feeling sympathy for Laura.

It is very difficult to be as evil as Laura seems to be in the space of three days, this could make us believe she does not do it intentionally and may be worried that the captain is actually going insane of his own accord. The captain is very fond of science and when the doctor arrives, he finds it such a change talking to someone who understands what he is talking about.

Laura used to be deeply in love with the captain and would care for him but now time as driven them apart and all of the captain's latest comments are about science and caused her to drive him insane. The loss of the man she loves to science may have been more than she could bear which would explain her betrayal and causes us to feel sympathy for her. Some reasons of why we should feel sympathy for Hedda is when we consider her background. The play tells us her father was a General, possibly being very demanding and we are not told of her mother in any way. These family problems may have caused her to be confused in her love life.

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Hedda is also part of a triangle as Mrs Elvested is; this shows her confusion of what love is. Loveborg and Brack both ask Hedda if she is in love with Tesman, both of them being her previous lovers. Hedda is then seen to have married Tesman for his prospects hoping by being his wife that she can continue in her precious role in society. After the honeymoon, she realises that his lifestyle will have demands on her. We can have sympathy on Hedda for her being so confused in her life, and marrying at such late age would have caused her to rush it showing how she was worried not to carry on her lifestyle the way she wished too.

Jasmine Seippel, IB06, English A1 Standard world literature essay Both of these characters are very similar in certain ways, which allows us to react to them equally. Laura shows us how she drives the captain insane but possibly realises he needs to be sent to an institution anyway. The way Laura reacts to his scientific brain is extreme and offensive to him. When looking at how Laura, being a wife, reacts to the captain I feel as though she has reasons to react this way but there better ways to do it, and not by making him believe he is not the father of his daughter.

I feel very sorry for the captain to have to put up with her. With Hedda on the other hand, I feel as though she deserves more sympathy as, to me it seems as though her reactions to everyone are due to her confusion and jealousy. However, Hedda has no real excuse to react the way she does and deserves very little sympathy in this respect but still some. It is not very easy to feel sympathy for either of the two characters in the plays as they have different

reasons to react the way they do, still they do not respect the surrounding characters as much as they should.