

# An audience's response to hedda gabler in act 1 essay sample



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Hedda Gabler is a dramatic, exciting, confusing and at times unpleasant character, who is frustrated by a lack of freedom where she cannot be the wild and unstable free spirit that she wishes and this shines through throughout the play. From this frustration comes immense boredom which is in her case very deadly. She embodies some of the typical Aristotelian qualities of a tragic protagonist but Ibsen has put a strange twist on it. For example she is a woman of fortune. It has been made clear in the book that she was born into this high class lifestyle and has this fortune by no endeavour of her own. Therefore, by being placed at the top of the hierarchy, she has further to fall and there is more at risk than the average person. However, she is not really someone that people can identify or can have sympathy for, as neither generous nor courageous.

Also, as is common her fatal flaw is her snobbery or pride. However, Aristotle's notion of hamartia states that it is a 'matter of action' not the character themselves. I don't believe this applies to her and agree with the 20th century interpretation. This is not brought about by the unfortunate circumstances more than the character themselves. This applies very much to Hedda as her 'conflicted individual moral psychology which brings about the opposite of what the character intends'.

The Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen was very specific about the time when he set Hedda Gabler. The late 19th century was a time where women were secluded and deluded into an oppressive and subjugate lifestyle. Ibsen puts Hedda in this male dominated world where she challenges the conventional middle class bourgeois housewife by acting in a dictating and manly way

witch were to shock the 19th century audience at this truly outrageous and outspoken character.

The audience can therefore not identify with Hedda because in more ways than one she brings about her own demise. The local newspapers and media were disgraced; such as the daily telegraph which said 'What a horrible story! What a hideous play! ...The play is simply a bad escape of moral sewage-gas' Describing Hedda's feelings as 'the foulest passions in humanity'. This shows that the most tragic thing to me is that there are people here in this world.

The play is started off with the stage layout, which Ibsen perceptibly and carefully layout, giving a very bourgeois atmosphere each object has a lot of meaning to show the tragic nature of the play and Hedda. For example there are a lot of dark and dull colours hinting to things; such as saying 'autumn colours'. Ibsen is using pathetic fallacy to show Hedda's state of mind. Autumn is a time where everything around us is dying, dead leaves on the floor and animals hibernating. A time where there seems to be a deafening silence in the air following the summer which is usually buzzing with life.

This could mean that maybe Hedda has passed the summer time in her life. A time when she was herself bloom perhaps and a time when she was also buzzing with colourful life. It is mentioned that Hedda used to go to parties and be a socialite. Then we see her state of mind at the present which is autumn. This already sets the scene of this play as pessimistic and cold. This is unusual for Ibsen's targeted audience as they were used to cheerful and uplifting entertainment. Something to bewitch them into thinking their

lifestyle was perfect as it was, which Hedda Gabler does not do in the slightest.

Another thing that might have stunned the audience is Hedda's awkwardness towards Miss Tesman and Mrs Elvsted. At a time where women only socialized with women it is interesting to see how she treats her fellow females in such a horrible manner.

This is shown towards the beginning of Act 1 where she calls Miss Tesman's hat to be a servant's hat. As Miss Tesman is Mr Tesman's mother figure she should also traditionally be Hedda's too, so by disrespecting her like that would cause the audience to empathize with Miss Tesman and detest Hedda and her behaviour.

Hedda also has a very unusual characteristic she presented by Ibsen in a very masculine way. By doing this she is emasculating George Tesman. To begin with he does this himself with Mrs Tesman, the keyword for the first is claustrophobic for Hedda; with me, causes some sympathy for Hedda. With a combination of the childish nicknames (like Georgie and aunty juju) and the dreaded flowers make it as much cringe worthy to the audience as it was to Hedda, which is shown when they leave when

The most prominent way that this is done is through the pistols, General Gabler's pistols.