

# Herik ibsen: father of modern drama assignment

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Shivany Condor Mrs. Besnard 1B English HL2 21 November 2013 Henrik Ibsen as "The Father of Modern Drama" Henrik Ibsen has long been referred to as the "Father of Modern Drama," and such title has rightly been given so. Mr. Ibsen was one of the pioneer theatre dramaturges that began the Modernism Movement, primarily known as the Realism Movement.

Modernism/Realism was a revolutionary idea back in Ibsen's time. Many concepts of theater - including plots, dialogue, and characters - were renovated in order to make theater more useful to society's goals back then.

During 1859 to 1900's, before the rise of Realism, theatre was mainly composed of melodramas, spectacle plays, comic operas, and vaudevilles. The stories displayed did have moral value for the most part, but they were performed with a stronger sense of Romanticism. The main characters usually had elevated positions in society, meaning they were kings or aristocrats. The conflicts in these plays usually involved a hero's mission, and therefore, they were harder to connect to on a personal level (Saleh).

Yet all was bound to change when a large wave of rebellions hit Europe. Due to the Revolutions of 1848 in Europe, the public began to demand their governments political, economic, and social reforms. The people were looking for a more representative government that would not condemn people based on their communal standing. Thus, social reforms were very strongly demanded. Thinking in society shifted as theatre's function followed its current of influence.

Theatre revolutionaries, with Ibsen as a leader, decided to have theatre transform from a mere form of entertainment to a major system of

propaganda for the revolting side's point of view. These drama pioneers brought real-life problems into their plays, having them replace fairy-tale like conflicts. The main purpose of this change was so the viewers could connect to the main characters' conflicts. Ibsen, as a Realist playwright, focused on his characters' inner/psychological conflicts rather than just creating a witty story with a clever plot twist (Trumbull).

In his play, *A Doll's House*, Ibsen puts much emphasis on the protagonist's, Nora, inner debate. The plot primarily revolves around Nora's struggle to decide on whether to confess to Torvald, her husband, about their debt to Krogstad, or to let the letter inform him about it. Nora probably hoped that if she confessed to Torvald, he would indeed react with disappointment, but would eventually forgive her. After all, he had been declaring throughout the play that he was "not so heartless that [he'd] condemn a man categorically for just one mistake" (Ibsen 70).

Yet again, Torvald expresses extreme disgust for deceit as he says that an "atmosphere of lies infests the whole life of a home" (Ibsen 70). There is no clever plot twist in *A Doll's House* either because of Ibsen's use of dramatic irony. As the audience follows the story along, it is conscious of how Torvald will react to the confession due to his lack of empathy, exaggerated focus on himself, and extreme self-interest. These factors are shown when Torvald refuses to let Krogstad keep his subordinate job that he needs to support his children.

Also when he quickly dismisses the idea that his best friend, Dr. Rank, is agonizing with a fatal disease. The audience knows that he will most

probably react with great anger and disgust towards his wife, and that is essentially what happens. All the character's relationships are also clarified with antecedent action, so no one unexpected enters the story at any point. When the play starts off, the audience knows that Mrs. Linde once knew Krogstad as a person, for example.

Due to the fact that the external conflicts and plots were so credible, the audience could also connect to the convincing characters' inner reactions to the struggle. Henrik Ibsen had his most of his works contain polemical complications within the plot that had the potential to trigger a discussion over love, religion, and morality (Hemmer). By doing so, Ibsen hoped that an in-depth argument would stimulate people to question their own surroundings and prejudices.

He called these initial Realist theatre works his "problem plays." For example, in *A Doll's House*, Ibsen primarily mocks the 17th century society's version of a "good" marriage. *A Doll's House* was one of the problem plays that demanded a reform in the average marriage, the treatment/rights of women, and their inability to control money independently. To attract the public's support, Ibsen used an easily relatable struggle in *A Doll's House*: Nora's oppression as a woman both in her marriage and society.

Many women of the 17th century - and maybe even nowadays - had the ability to connect to Nora's struggle because the degrading of women was a very modern dilemma back in Ibsen's times. Due to society in that era, women were expected to be very submissive to their husband's desires. Ibsen wanted to show the world how primitive the expectation of a woman having

to serve her husband was. They were seen as being below men and this is evidently shown with Torvald's treatment of Nora. Torvald's thinks of Nora as a doll who needs him for protection.

Torvald just loved her dependence on him, and to remind her of her place and duty as a wife, he would call her derogatory names that seem to have a loving purpose but are just downright disrespectful. Ibsen also wanted to show how such a controlling relationship from one end was bound to contain lies and deception. Torvald's marriage with Nora could seem like a joke in a modern Western society, because love is a factor their relationship lacks. Nora tries to do anything to please him, yet also hides secrets from him. If Torvald had been less controlling, she would have revealed the secret to him and maybe even stayed with him.

Ibsen used this realistic relationship in order for couples in his audience to realize their marriage was similar to Nora's and Torvald's and therefore it was extremely faulty and bound to end. The women in his primal audiences might have connected to Nora and her marriage because their life might have been somewhat similar to the protagonist's. Ibsen's play might have been a factor of their "waking up," as they realize they were deprived from so many rights. It was Ibsen's wish that they would join his protest against the oppression of women.

Probably one of Ibsen's bigger statements might have been his belief that women should be able to have some financial control. If women were to have the right to manage their own expenses and make their own transactions without the permission of a man, maybe more women would be independent

and economically stable. Consequently, women would not be forced to quit what they want or leave who they love. Ibsen placed a lot of emphasis on the fact that Nora could not take out a loan without her husband's, Torvald, or father's consent.

As the audience saw the play, they would realize how unfair the accusation of forgery was. There was no malice in her actions, because she borrowed that money in order to save her husband's life. Torvald was in need of warm weather and that is why Nora took him to Italy with a loan she obtained from Krogstad. Her forgery of her father's signature was the only factor that condemned her. Up to the point that Krogstad demanded to retain his position, Nora had been paying him in due time with her own allowances.

Had society been different, she would have been able to borrow money with no obstacles. Ibsen created these "problem plays" with credible characters and conflicts in order to support the public's demand for social reform. His plays were made to help people reexamine the world around them, and fix the problems that menace society. His application of the realist technique on his play *A Doll's House* helped the people feel more personally connected to the characters and their conflicts, which were examined at a psychological level.

Ibsen succeeded at expressing which social facts he wanted to be reformed: the degradation of women and an average 17th century marriage. Works Cited Hemmer, Bjorn . " The Dramatist: HENRIK IBSEN. " Henrik Ibsen Biography. University of Oslo, n. d. Web. 4 Dec. 2013. Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 2008. Print. Powers, Sean. " Henrik <https://assignbuster.com/herik-ibsen-father-of-modern-drama-assignment/>

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