

Henrik Ibsen: A Dolls House by Siddall, Stephen

Literature



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Nora Helmer

She is the wife of Torvald Helmer and the protagonist in the play. Initially, she is naive and almost unknowledgeable on issues concerning the world outside her home (Siddall 14). At the beginning of the play, Nora seems happy and does not mind her husband's teasing. In fact, she does not seem to mind inferiority, occasioned by a doll-like treatment by her husband. As the plot evolves, she cements her assertive character and is no longer the naïve, "silly" girl that her husband took her to be.

She is also ambitious and strong-minded as demonstrated by her determination in repaying the loan. She undertakes a secret job to pay off her debt. Similarly, she is bold as she opted to break the law, by forging her father's signature, to safeguard Torvald's health. In the face of Krogstad's blackmail and the trauma that ensues, she is unrelenting.

During the climax confrontation with Torvald, she declares that all along she had been theatrical, only conforming to the role that her husband and society at large fashioned for her (Siddall 18). Torvald's insults occasioned by his discovery of his wife's forgery, only serves as a catalyst to her awakening. Nora demonstrates that she was not oblivious to the fact that her life contradicted her true personality.

Previously she was defiant to Torvald's overbearing attitude in small but far-reaching ways. Her growing awareness of her life manifests itself in her gross rebellion and eventual walk out on her husband and children. At first, it appears that she was not at home with her true self, but time was ripe to discover her own independence. Nora embodies the overriding philosophy in the play that happiness cannot be realized when a person becomes entangled into the

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mold another. Nora brings perfectly two themes in the play; the sacrificial role that women play and the parental as well as filial obligations that parents possess.

Torvald Helmer

Torvald believes that, in marriage, a man's role is to shield and direct his wife. He entertains the idea that his wife is like a child who needs constant care and guidance. In fact, his position in marriage is more of a father, always giving guidance and directions to his wife. He also considers himself as Nora's liberator. Initially, he enjoyed a lot of command in relationship to the extent of referring Nora as a little girl. However, as the plot develops, it emerges that it is Torvald who needs protection from the realities of the world rather than Nora (Siddall 15).

His character comes out as immature and petty. For instance, his real objection to working with Krogstad emanates from perceived deficiency in Krogstad's moral character. His motivation for effecting Krogstad's dismissal is trivial; he feels insulted by Krogstad's failure to accord him proper respect. He perpetuates injustice based on unfounded fears.

He is also remarkably conscious of others' perception of him as well as his reputation. This is part of the reason that he opts to fire Krogstad as he cannot face people's criticisms. He elevates his reputation at the expense of his wife's desires. When he discovers about Nora's deception, he is extremely disappointed and declares that she is unfit to rear their children. However, he maintains that she stays in the house in order to preserve their household's reputation. This is a clear demonstration that he is ready to sacrifice the rights of others so as to preserve his reputation. His selfish and ruthless reaction to Nora's deception demonstrates his overbearing

character.

Works Cited

Siddall, Stephen. *Henrik Ibsen: A Doll's House*. Leicester: Troubador, 2008.
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