

Kaitlyne burke

[History](#), [Middle Ages](#)



Kaitlyne Burke ENG 102. 3 Cunningham March 8th, 2013 " The Differences Within a Doll's House" During the Victorian era things were very different. People had different beliefs, different customs, different ways of living and just all around everything was very incomparable to today's time. Author Henrik Ibsen did a wonderful job at portraying this idea within the play " A Doll's House" written in 1879. " The story takes place in the 19th century. Nora Helmer is a middle-class housewife who has started a family with a lawyer named Torvald. They met when, at the Ministry, Torvald conducted an investigation into Nora's father and helped him to keep his job (Oguer). " Nora keeps a dark secret throughout the writing, she once borrowed a large amount of money so that her husband would be able to recover from a critical sickness. She never revealed to him that she took the loan and has been secretly paying it back in small parts by saving from her household income. Torvald often sees her as someone who is negligent and infantile, he calls her " his doll. " He is appointed the director of a bank and feels the need to give aid to a man that was once disapproved for forging his signature on a document. But the irony in this situation is that the man who forged Torvald's signature (Nils Krogstad) is the same man whom Nora has borrowed the loan from. Later it is also revealed that Nora herself forged her own father's signature in order to get the money. Krogstad tells Nora that he will reveal what she has done and disgrace her and Torvald unless she can ultimately convince her husband to let him keep his job and not fire him. Nora tries very hard to talk her husband into letting Krogstad keep his job but Torvald sees her as someone who is childish and could never be able to comprehend the value of money or how the business world works. Therefore,

once Torvald becomes aware that Nora has committed such a shameful act he wants to disown her even though he doesn't understand that she had done it for him. Later on in the writing when all is said and done, Nora finally realizes that her husband is not worthy of her love and she decides to leave him. Since the beginning of civilization women have been oppressed in many different ways and this writing maintains a good example of that. Even in today's society a woman is still viewed as someone whose only purpose is to produce offspring, frequently thought of as having "smaller brains" and "wider hips" than males. Adequate examples of this would be: women being looked down upon in the work force, often seen as not being able to perform labor tasks as well as a male, being looked at as if they're not equally as intelligent as a man, claims are often made that males should have more dominant income roles such as doctors or lawyers because females aren't smart enough and also being expected to stay home and fulfill household duties such as taking care of the children and cleaning. Nora represents a substantial exploration in detail of the oppression of women throughout this writing, she is greatly oppressed by the men that surround her. Nora fits the typical stereo type of the devoted daughter and obedient wife during the Victorian period. Fitting the role of a dramatic foil, however, is Nora's friend Kristine Linde. A dramatic foil is a character that will by contrast help to accentuate another character's opposite personality. Kristine was forced to fend for herself and find herself as a self-aware and resourceful individual. "Mrs. Linde, Nora's friend, is the victim of an absent father (Rosefeldt, 84)." This may help explain why she had to learn to fend for herself, the lacking of a parent can often be a result of that. Ibsen does a very good job of

comparing Nora and Kristine. He successfully represents how unreasonable oppression can be to any woman, in this situation Nora is below both her husband Torvald and her father, versus how women should have even freedom and what she believes a woman is acquired to be, strong willed, independent, and the most important factor of them all equal, which is portrayed very well in this writing through Kristine Linde. Kristine ensures many good examples of contrast throughout the play with the most dominant one being her contrast to Nora. Nora has been very sheltered and lived a life of ease since her and Kristine were younger while Kristine on the other hand didn't have such an easy route to travel. Kristine went through the passing of her parents which resulted in her having to give care to her younger siblings. The contrast is most clear when Nora decides to confide in Kristine and reveal the secret of her loan to her. Nora coming to the resolution of telling Kristine appeals as more of a brag session rather than a mature adult conversation. Nora throws around many lies involving a suitor and only makes known her secrets when Kristine calls her a child. Kristine, in contrast, is much wiser. A grave hollowness is still present in Kristine's life, however it is very clear that her sustenance comes from helping other people. " My poor mother doesn't need me anymore. She's passed on. And my brothers they've got jobs and are taking care of themselves. Nora: You must feel so free . . . Mrs. Linde: Oh no . . . just unspeakably empty. I have nothing to live for (339). " By portraying emptiness within Christine ensures a very good contrast, or foil, for Nora's view on the significance of motherhood and marriage. Nora and Kristine's attitudes and moral values constantly go against one another, helping the audience understand the full picture better.

Throughout the writing it becomes very evident that Nora is materialistic, immature, and irrational. While Mrs. Linde on the other end is hardworking, rational, and more exalted. Nora and Kristine move in opposite paths over the course of the play. Kristine starts out as a woman who is alone without any obligations to family; Nora has had it relatively easy most of her life as mentioned previously. Kristine has been involved in many situations in which she had to hold many different jobs in order to help support her family. Nora has had to work a few odd jobs and skim from her allowance to make payments on her debt over the years, but none of that can compare at all to the utter hackwork that Kristine's life has been. Furthermore, the play traces Kristine on her voyage from being by herself at one point up until marriage, an evident foil to Nora's journey. Much evidence has built up towards the end to significantly show that the two women have basically switched roles. A Doll's House concludes with the slamming of a door. Nora makes the ultimate decision to leave her children and husband behind and takes off into the snow to make her own way in the world and start a new life of her own. This decision is very bold to say the least. Some may call it foolish but in Nora's eyes that's not the way she sees it. She has no job, not many skills, no home, no idea of what may lie ahead of her. By making this decision, she is basically pulling herself away from the life that she has always known and been used too. Many "decent" people will probably choose not to associated with her now. The life of comfort and luxury that she has always lived will now be destroyed. So, why does she do such a thing? Nora explains her reasoning for leaving very efficiently within her last argument with Torvald. Before making her final exit, he criticizes her by saying deserting your

husband and children means you are forsaking your “ most sacred duties. ” But in Nora’s mind that’s not how she pictures the situation. She explains to him that the duties that are most sacred to her now are the “ duties to herself. ” The real question that lies within is are you really alive, if, like Nora, you are living in a make believe world? This question wondered throughout my mind as I comprehended the writing, it really helped me develop a response to the play. Is the end of the play, for example, the glorious moment that Nora had been waiting for all along, a chance for her to have total individualism, the moment at which she can finally become her own person, or is it an absurd, unrealistic decision which will be the start of the end to Nora’s happiness?