

# Doll's house ibsen essay

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



In a Doll's House, Ibsen creates and develops one of the most controversial female protagonists in the bulk of modern literature. Within Nora there exists two vastly different personalities. She is, at times, the loving and happy mother, and doting wife dedicating herself to life of domestic bliss and naivety. Then, in a blink of an eye, she is a radiant fully bloomed woman full of idealism, purpose, and independence. The duality of her Nora's persona is strikingly different because of her internal conflict. She cycles through who she has to be in a society which demands women to be docile and motherly and her desire to be a wild woman, fulfilled and free.

Nora's husband, Torvald, is an oppressive force who symbolizes the way in which the world treated women - like physical property exists only for her husband and children. Binion explains "Ibsen's dramas thereafter left no room for wishful thinking by his audiences about a woman's fulfillment within marriage whatever her husband's character or her relative rights: "

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has ruined the human race" was his simple verdict." (p. 9). Torvald believes that his wife incapable of making her own decisions and has no independent thought. In trying to find who she really is, Nora is faced with the hardest decision of her life. She must choose between staying in an unfulfilled controlling relationship or abandoning her domestic and motherly duties and finding freedom, at last. As the plot moves forward, the play monitors the decline of the relationship.

While Torvald narrow world wide is certainly partially responsible for the failure of the marriage it is Nora's personality which is most at fault at

destroying the “ dollhouse”. Nora’s childlike nature, sudden awakening, and hidden strength of will lead directly to her need for liberation and final destruction of the couple’s marriage. Nora, like all women of her time, is treated like a child by all men. Her husband and father consistently refer to her by pet names - “ lark”, “ squirrel”, and “ songbird.” They believe that she is unable to make her own decisions and needs to be manipulated like puppet or doll. Her job as a wife and mother is considered negligible and unimportant. Larson believes that “ The theme in the doll house is of a woman being manipulated by people and circumstances that put her life and womanhood far beyond her control.

Her hopeless rebellion against the demands her husband places on her, lead to Nora’s showy exit and is the only choice Nora has.” (p. 52).

While Nora is extremely intelligent she is forced to hide these gifts under a submissive and childlike exterior personality. Nora is struggling to meet the expectations of societal norms and finding her own personal fulfillment.

Pharand asserts, that “ Nora Helmer (heroine of A Doll’s House) is about silly ladies and foolish women, preposterously unreal-untrue to nature... and any real woman never would have left her children” (p. 1). When the play begins Nora is seen like a child.

She is eavesdropping around corners, pretending to be a woman, and eating candies when her husband is out of the room. Nora’s has never lived on her own. Like many women of the time, she left her father’s house only after she was married and moved directly to her husband house. While men treat Nora poorly, she is equally as guilty of manipulation.

She is a smart woman and realizes that if she pretends to be naive little girl then she can get what she wants from any man, including her husband. She pretends to have the same opinions as Torvald and agrees with him again and again because she knows that Torvald is not interested in having a wife that is intellectually equal. She knows if she acts like a child, all she has to do is pout and stomp and Torvald will give in. Nora utilizes these skills to gain what she wants out of life and what she wants does not include her husband or children. Nora's true persona can not be hidden forever. As Ibsen saw it, woman may not have been man's rib to begin with, but her domestication had made her into man's appendix. "You are first and foremost a wife and mother," her husband admonishes rebellious Nora in *A Doll House*, and Nora replies: "I don't believe that any longer." (p.

5) Never could Nora have told her husband, for all his uxorious doting, that he was first and foremost a husband and father (Binion, 1995). During the play she has a self-awakening in which she realizes she can no longer be a doll manipulated by the men in her life. When she reaches out to Torvald, because he loves her and is strong, Nora believes that he will "advise and protect her." Nora soon learns that she is not only one pretending to be something they're not. Her husband is not strong, and he chooses to turn away from Nora when she needs him most. He rejects her because she was able to trick him for so long. Torvald screams "you are ill, Nora" and realizes that his valiant husband is nothing more than a scared little boy. She comes to the realization that all her life has been a lie from her own personality to her husband's love, and her father's protection.

She knows they have raised their children in the same way to be empty and hallowed individuals who have learned how to appear in a way which is society will expect. Nora's growth in the play is extreme and aggressive. She begins as a child who is suddenly awakened in a woman's body, and through her own disappointments about her life and love, she finds strength as a true woman. She knows that she must move on from her husband and children to find her true self. Nora believes that her life is most important and should come before any other responsibility. She chooses to give up being a wife, and a mother. By the end of the play it is Nora who has the strength and is viewed as strong. "The late nineteenth century Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen both guides and haunts the struggle for the emancipation of women.

His play According to Schwarz, "A Doll's House" remains after nearly one hundred years a most eloquent statement of the urge to stand free. Nora, the play's heroine, has inspired countless women in their fight for liberation" (p. 3). The decisions within the family are being made by her. Her once strong husband is nothing more than a crying little boy tugging at his mother's apron. He begs for her to stay.

He cries out "I have it in me to become another man." However, Nora's days of appearing to care about anyone else but herself are over. She ignores his pleas and responds that she wants no one to write her or get in contact with her. "Nora walks away from the security of her household and from all traditionally sacred values of marriage and motherhood. She leaves to face an uncertain but compelling future of self becoming.

“(Schwartz, 1975, p. 3). Nora packs up and leaves, finally finding her “ most sacred duty,” to find out who she truly is and exist completely on her own. The play ends, with the slamming of the door — marking her rebirth as a woman redefined. References Binion, R. (1994).

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