

Doll's house and pygmalion comparative essay sample

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



Several years ago, men had little respect for women because of their gender. Females were not given the rights they deserve. They were controlled by their fathers, then handed straight over to their husbands. Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* have occurrences that show similarities between the two female protagonists, Nora Helmer and Eliza Doolittle. Nora and Eliza are comparable in several different ways because both go through experiences with powerful outcomes ultimately transforming their lives throughout the play. From the start both women are young and naïve. Torvald and Mr. Higgins completely controlled and take over both women's lives by disrespecting them. By the end Nora and Eliza gain courage to stand up for themselves, leave their men and become confident, independent women. Nora Helmer and Eliza Doolittle live very different lives but have similar personalities throughout the entire play. At the beginning of each of the plays both women act young and foolish. Neither of them able to live for themselves and are not intelligent women. Nora is characterized to be childish and under the command of Torvald's orders.

Nora is extremely dependent on him and would not do anything without his permission. If she did, she would be terrified of what will happen. Nora offers Dr. Rank macaroons, only to have him question why they are in the house. "Macaroons? I thought they were forbidden in this house?" "They are. But Kristine gave these to me." (*A Doll's House*, pg 35) Macaroons show her childish tendencies, such as lying about such an unnecessary thing and her desire to sneak unhealthy food when she knows it is not allowed. It also shows Nora's side where she hides from her husband. When Nora wants to

hide the Christmas tree from the children it shows secrecy. She does not want them to see it before it is decorated, which symbolizes between realistic and idealistic. " Hide the tree carefully Helene. The children mustn't catch a glimpse of it until this evening. Not until we've decorated it." (A Doll's House, pg 11)

Nora does not want the children to find the Christmas tree before it is decorated because they might look at it as just an ordinary tree after that with no special meaning behind it. Just as a child would, Nora does not understand the value of money or what could happen in the future. She only thinks about what is happening in that exact moment. Most of the characters in the play depend on money to live. Nora, however, does not realize that. Nora tries to convince Torvald they should waste some money because he is getting a promotion at work. " I know, Torvald. But we can waste just a little bit, can't we? Just a teeny bit? You've got a big salary now . . . You're going to make piles and piles of money." (A Doll's House, pg 12) Torvald does not agree to this because he knows that is not something that can happen all the time. Nora asks over and over again, just as a child would. Eliza has a different life than Nora; she is a sassy, immature, smart-mouthed flower girl with horrible English. She lives on her own, earns money for herself but is very poor.

People who talk to her cannot even take her seriously and some are quite disgusted. The first time Mr. Higgins met Eliza he already did not enjoy being near her. " A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere - no right to live." (Pygmalion, pg 27) Eliza

interrupts conversations, begs people to buy her flowers and makes strange sounds which makes her seem quite immature. During the time period when Mr. Higgins and Pickering take Eliza in, she is not aware they are doing this purely for an experiment. Eliza lets two men she barely knows, change her life completely. She is a naïve girl and thinks these men are helping her speak properly so she can get a job at the flower shop. Eliza does exactly what Nora did when Nora married Torvald. Both women are naïve and let men control their lives. The way a man can transform a woman's life is a common theme in both of the plays. Nora and Eliza are disrespected through the entire play by the men they are dependent on the most.

Mr. Higgins and Torvald complete controls Eliza's and Nora's lives, giving them absolutely no freedom to live the life they deserve. Torvald and Nora do not have the typical husband and wife relationship. Torvald treats Nora how a protective father would treat his daughter, she considers herself a doll living in his doll house. Nora obeys everything Torvald says and he makes all of her decisions. Nora is always stuck in the house with absolutely nothing to do except play with the children. In the end of the play, Nora tells Torvald how she feels about the way he treats her. " I mean that I was simply handed over from Papa to you." (A Doll's House, pg 111) Torvald treats her exactly as her father did, and now that he is not around, Torvald finds it necessary to act as a father figure instead of a husband. Torvald gives Nora nicknames such as " little squirrel." These names represent Nora's false self.

Torvald acts as if she is a small child that wants a pet name. After Torvald found out Nora borrowed the money from Krogstand, he went completely

ballistic. " You've destroyed all my happiness, you've ruined my future . . . and I have to sink to such depths of agony all because of a thoughtless woman." (Doll's House, pg 105) Nora borrowed the money out of love to save her husband's life, but he does not understand or take that into consideration at all. He expresses absolutely no thanks for her saving his life. He cares about nothing other than his reputation potentially being ruined. Torvald is a very selfish man and has very little respect for his wife. Mr. Higgins and Eliza have a terrible student-teacher relationship. At the beginning of the play, Mr. Higgins treats Eliza horribly; he tells her she does not deserve to live and she is disgrace to humanity. Mr. Higgins suggests he teach Eliza to speak properly and prove he can pass her off as a lady in the party. " You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party.

I could even get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English." (Pygmalion, pg) He only wants to prove to himself that he can successfully achieve his goal and absolutely nothing else. Keeping Eliza around for the experiment was all Mr. Higgins intended to do but he tried to act as if wanted much more. He sends Eliza letters which convinces her of his love for her, this gives Eliza hope and is what makes her believe Mr. Higgins and Pickering are doing this to help her. He also uses chocolate to bribe Eliza into doing things the way he wants. This symbolizes him treating her as a child or some sort of pet. Reminding Eliza after this is done she will get to work in a flower shop with the other women gets her excited and

motivated to continue doing anything he asks. He continues to treat Eliza like dirt throughout the entire play. Throughout the play's Nora and Eliza learn a lot about themselves and the lives they are currently living. After being dependent on their men they both gained courage to walk out on their men and never return.

Nora and Eliza realized what they were going through and could not live those lives any longer. Torvald had no idea what kind of person Nora is until she stood up for herself near the end of the play. Nora hid her true self from Torvald and from herself for a very long time. That is when she revealed all of her feelings and realizes she could not be with a man who gave her no freedom in being the woman she truly is. Nora finds it a must that she leaves. She needs to understand herself and her place in the world but she could not do that with him around. Nora could not stand staying at home every day. She felt there was no use in her life. Several times she thought about suicide and thought it was the only way out. She has always been a powerful woman deep down she was just not aware until she showed her true feelings. Nora leaves her old life and wants to begin a new one without obedience, she wants to be free. Eliza also went through a similar situation as Nora did. Before Mr. Higgins took her in, Eliza lived on her own and earned money for herself.

Even though Eliza was not wealthy, she enjoys being able to live for herself. She misses her old life and wants to go back. She did not realize what a huge mistake she made, until the end. After the party she tells Mr. Higgins, she wishes the experiment had never happened. " I sold flower. I didn't sell

myself. Now you've made a lady of me, I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish you left me where you found me." (Pygmalion, pg 103) Eliza is now overthinking everything that happened within the last three months. Eliza decides to leave Mr. Higgins, without marrying him because she wants her old life back and knows she will never obtain that with a husband such as Mr. Higgins. Nora and Eliza are comparable from the empowering experiences they go through.

They go through major transitioning, starting out as immature girls, being disrespected by men. Now both are independent women because of the power they realize they always had all along. If Nora and Eliza knew this from the beginning things could have been much different and their lives could have been the way they truly want them and exactly what they deserve. Women can be intimidated by the men they have in their lives, leading to a life such as the one Nora and Eliza live. Women, who stand up for themselves, get what they deserve, just as what happened with Nora and Eliza towards the end of the plays.