

# Essay on a doll house vs the piano lesson

[Life](#)



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Words from the writers' literary artifacts touches rhythm of the complexities of life and make us realize what we are and where we stand in this world and in the Society around us.

From the words of the Writers, immerses the rich flavor of the real meaning of the life and the voice of the repressed and subjugated. Ibsen and Wilson reveal the majestic human spirit in their capacity of striving and suffering.. On one hand, Doll house is in reality a Doll House for women subjugated and repressed in the Patriarchy society of 18th century and on the other hand is the Piano lesson which is a voice of the Blacks who in the eighteenth century were kept as emotionless and subjugated slaves.

In A Doll's House, Ibsen paints the sacrificial role that woman has to play and the way protagonist of the play has to exert her feeling. In Piano lesson, the real conflict lies in the efforts of the Protagonists to maintain their family, heritage and exploration in the back drop of all the hardships their ancestors have to undergo.

The piano is a representative of the culture and heritage and is a center of conflict for the protagonist whether to sell it for buying land previously worked by their slave ancestors or remains in the family's possession as a heritage.

Ibsen presented " A Doll house" in 1879 in the backdrop of the Victorian Society, the society wherein woman has to subjugate her according to the husband's will.

For the nineteenth century audience, the mere idea of woman leaving aside her marriage vows was considered as sacrilegious and, women abandoning

her children were against the basic concepts of womanhood. In the end of the play Society won, as Ibsen was forced to write alternative ending of the play when it was staged in Germany.

Nora as a wife of a banker has to maintain her relationship with her kids and her husband who both tries to control the family.

In the play, Nora is a financially well off as compared to the other female characters in the play, but she leads a very difficult life because society demands dominant partner in Torvald, who issues decrees and condescends to Nora.

On the other hand, in their hard times in order to save her husband's life, she goes to the extent of forging her father's name on the document for money but hides it from him. When the truth unfolds, he reacts with disgust and horror. He is only worried about his reputation but refuses to accept the fact it was her love that prompted her to do so. And due to this reason, Nora is considered as a cheat and her deception, left vulnerable to Krogstad's blackmail.

It was the real incident in Ibsen's life that prompted him to write a play. It was 1871, eight years before Henrik Ibsen wrote A Doll's House, Ibsen met a Norwegian girl named Laura Petersen, whom he called skylark and was infatuated by her.

In 1872, Laura married a Danish schoolmaster, Victor Kieler, and her nightmares started. Victor contracted tuberculosis, and his doctors prescribed warmer climate for him but as they were poor, Victor became hysterical. At this Laura arranged a loan without her husband's knowledge.

With this money they went to Italy and Victor soon recovered. When the time came for Laura to repay the loan, they did not have the money to pay and Laura tried to send forged check but it was discovered and Laura finally had to tell the truth to her husband, who found her unfit as a wife.

She had nervous breakdown, and in return Victor admitted her in a public asylum. Touched by this story, in the notes to *The Dolls house*, he said, “ A woman cannot be herself in modern society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess female conduct from a male standpoint”. (Yurgaitis, *A Doll’s House Synopsis*, Para. 15).

The indifferent attitude of Nora’s husband destroyed her illusions and decides to leave him, her children and house in search of truth. She has realized that he is not the noble man she has supposed him. In the words of Isben “ Depressed and confused by her faith in authority, she loses faith in her moral right and ability to bring up her children. A mother in contemporary society, just as certain insects go away and die when she has done her duty in the propagation of the race.” (Wikipedia, Para 5)

August Wilson, was himself a black man and as a black man he realized what hardships the blacks had to endure in their lives and as slaves. As Pulitzer Prize winner, he confided in his students at Dartmouth University, “ My generation of blacks knew very little about the past of our parents.

They shielded us from the indignities they suffered,” (Dartmouth, *Biography of August Wilson, Sidelights Para1*) and in a quest to impart the knowledge to the unspoken African American people, he gave to the world “ *The Piano Lesson*” and many other plays.

The characters Berniece and Boy Willie in the Piano Lessons struggle among themselves, Willie wants to sell a Piano to buy a land but Berniece refuses because she had an attachment towards the piano. It was her father's piano, who died retrieving it from the Sutter's home. On the piano is engraved the history of Charles family and is only there ancestral property.

The incident happened in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Charles family was slave, their owners Sutters sold two members of the family for a piano. Sutters then called upon master-carpenter in the Charles family and ordered him to carve out the only faces of the sold slaves into the piano, but the carpenter carved whole history of the family into the piano. This instrument was then stolen by Berniece and Boy Willie's father, but was later killed by the Sutters in retribution.

For Berniece, this piano is a " sacred altar", considered by ancient African tribes as a crossroad between the living and the dead. It was her belief that by selling Piano, they will loose all the connection with her ancestors and also their protection, which may give the way to Sutter's ghost to haunt them. Michael Morales too argues that this piano serves as a direct link to the past and is both a " sacred ancestral altar" and a tool to " transmit" oral history.

Through the songs in a Piano, carvings and the words of Willie, August Wilson makes the audience have a deeper look at their forgotten past. At the end of the play Willie reminds Berniece to continue playing the piano and warns her about the worst consequences if she neglects her past again. And along with that Willie left his mark on the piano, by inscribing on it the

history of the family's in readable language with the sole purpose of preservation and continuation of the family's legacy.