

Symbols in doll's house novel



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In most languages, each object is assigned a gender, typically either masculine or feminine, which determines how sentences are structured. In *A Doll's House*, certain objects serve as symbols that develop the theme of the play and portrays hidden aspects open to interpretation by the reader, similar to most works in literary drama. These symbols have been assigned masculine or feminine attributes and the gender determines how Nora feels towards her role as a woman in society.

In *A Doll's House*, the feminine and masculine attributes of the symbols caused Nora, the protagonist, to either conform to her gender standards or sparked the desire to do the opposite and not accept the one she has been given, developing characteristics of her own instead, during her struggle to find herself as an individual.

The most evident object in *A Doll's House* is a dollhouse itself and the gender typically attributed to the object is predominantly feminine as dolls are seen as being toys for girls. Dollhouses tend to be seen as fragile and a very isolated setting that is full of loneliness and conducive to internal monologues digesting what the perceived superior authority is promoting. Dollhouses have a closed back panel and an open front which symbolizes an access to escape yet the backbone of society is so beautifying that one feels compelled to be a prisoner. Throughout the play, Nora is treated like a doll as if she be put on a shelf to be controlled by all the men in her life, continuously referencing the control exerted over her by her husband and her father which could be seen as playing with her, as one would with a doll:

Nora: It's true Torvald. When I lived at home with Papa, he used to tell me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinion. If I thought

differently, I had to hide it from him, or he wouldn't have liked it. He called me his little doll, and he used to play with me just as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house - (pg).

Nora finally realizes the importance placed on their appearance in society by her husband is not more important than her own happiness and personal identity. In her feminine dollhouse she fulfilled her role that society assigned to women and this negatively impacted her personal identity as she continuously conformed to societal standards pertaining to women. The dollhouse symbol portrays how unreliable appearances are and how women sacrifice their personal identity and self-discovery to conform to gender standards assigned by society. Nora develops her identity throughout the play which can be seen through the dollhouse symbolism. In the beginning of the play Nora gives her children toys, specifically giving her daughter a doll: ...and a doll and a dollyr's bedstead for Emmy,-they are very plain, but anyway she will soon break them in pieces (pg). This is interesting as Nora seems to resent the control exerted over her by the men in her life but giving her daughter a doll suggests that she is raising her daughter to conform to the life that Nora is dissatisfied by and her mentioning Emmy breaking the toys foreshadows future events. In Act 3, the male dominant society in which men seek to benefit themselves while neglecting their wives is seen when Torvald says he will change to which Nora replies that he will only change if his doll was taken away. The feminine attributes of the dollhouse show that Nora desires to leave her husband but cant because she feels compelled to conform to her role in society.

Another significant object assigned masculine attributes instead is the letterbox which causes Nora to want to break out of her role as a woman and instead discover her own identity and the letterbox clearly defines male and female roles. The letterbox is assigned masculine attributes as in *A Doll's House*, the letterbox is a source of secrecy and only Torvald having access to the letterbox, as only he holds the key, showcases his societal role as a controlling husband:

Torvald: Someone has been at the lock. What can it mean? I should never have thought the maid- here is a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours.

Nora: Then it must have been the children (pg 60).

The masculine attributes of the letterbox causes Nora to begin to develop her own identity and not conform to her role in society. Instead of staying in her dollhouse she attempts to find her freedom, her freedom being locked in the letterbox and Torvald is the only one who has access to the locked letterbox, symbolizing his control over the whole house. Specifically discussing the letters in the letterbox, they symbolize the truths that the characters cannot get away from as once someone sends a letter, it cannot be taken back.