

# [Animal imagery in henrick ibsens essay](https://assignbuster.com/animal-imagery-in-henrick-ibsens-essay/)

Animal imagery in Henrick Ibsen’s play, The Doll House is a critical part of the character development of Nora, the wife of Torvald Helmer. The aforementioned play is a three-act play that takes place in the Helmer residence, in “ a comfortable room, tastefully but not expensively decorated.” It’s the holiday season at the residence, “ Christmastime” as it’s told early in the play. Torvald asks Nora what she would like for Christmas. Nora wishes for money, because, unbeknownst to Torvald, she owes a large sum to Nils Krogstad for a promissory note loan he had given to her. The story goes on, and Torvald finds out about the note. The anger he directs at Nora extinguishes when he opens another letter from Krogstad with the note in it, saying that the note did not have to be paid back. Even so, Nora decides to leave Torvald, saying that he “ never understood her” and that he “ never loved her.” That, in my opinion was the truth. Nora Helmer was a delicate character. She had been pampered all of her life, by her father, and by Torvald. She really didn’t have a care in the world. She didn’t even have to care for the children; the maid would usually take care of that. In every sense of the word, she was your typical housewife. She never left the house, mostly because her husband was afraid of the way people “ would talk.” I do not know if but a few people knew about their marriage, and that was they way Torvald wanted it to be. It really wasn’t her fault she was the way she was. It was mostly Torvald’s for spoiling her. Ibsen uses creative, but effective, animal imagery to develop Nora’s character throughout the play. He has Torvald call his wife “ his little lark” or “ sulky squirrel” or other animal names throughout the play. He uses a lot of ‘ bird’ imagery-calling her many different bird names. It seems to me that the name he uses directly relates to how Torvald feels about her at the time. The animals Ibsen chooses to use are related to how Nora is acting, or how she needs to be portrayed. For instance: Not even a dozen lines into Act I, Torvald asks (referring to Nora), “ Is that my little lark twittering out there” and “ Is that my squirrel rummaging around?” A lark is a songbird; a happy, carefree bird. It is can also be used as a verb that means to engage in spirited fun or merry pranks. A squirrel is quite the opposite: it is a small, furry rodent. If you are to squirrel away something, you were hiding or storing it, kind of like what Nora was doing with her bag of macaroons. Torvald calls her these names to fit the situation. Nora was definitely a care free woman, just like a lark, and Torvald refers to her as such: “ my little lark.” When he says that, Nora is moving around the room and humming with a carefree spirit that would characterize a lark. Whenever she has this spirit, Torvald refers to her as his “ little lark.” On the other hand, Nora must be some sort of scrounge, because Torvald also refers to her as his “ little squirrel.” He asks if “ that is my squirrel rummaging around.” It seems that maybe Ibsen was using this imagery to show that Nora was burying something deep down inside-maybe the macaroons or the knowledge of the promissory note-and that Torvald might have known about it (but I doubt it). Throughout the play Torvald refers to Nora as his lark, or songbird; two birds that are stereotypically peaceful, carefree, happy birds. At least on the outside. On the inside the birds may have many struggles, but they don’t show it, much like Nora avoids doing it. Torvald does not know the difference. He thinks Nora is always happy, never sad, and energetic-characteristics of the song bird (at least on the out side). Later, in Act II, Nora tells Torvald that she would “ be a wood nymph and dance for you in the moonlight.” A wood nymph is a beautiful hummingbird that is graceful in flight, much like Nora wants to be for Torvald when she dances. She wants Torvald to be happy with her, because she knows he is going to find out about the note. In Act II, Nora is begging Torvald to let Krogstad keep his job at the bank-which Torvald is the manger for-so Krogstad won’t ask for the money back the she owes him. Nora gets quite worked up about all of this. Torvald finally calms her down, and notices her “ frightened dove’s eyes.” A dove has always been a symbol of peace-keeping, and Ibsen uses it effectively to show her efforts to maintain peace and order. Torvald notices that she is just trying keep things right, and refers to her as a dove. The animal imagery is consistent throughout the play, usually with references to happy, cheerful animals. In Act III the note is discovered, but also dismissed because of another letter from Krogstad. Nora is trying to calm down after Torvald gets angry at her for the his betrayal. He comforts her, saying he was “ wide wings to shelter her with” and that he will keep her, despite the incident, “ like a hunted dove he has rescued out of a hawk’s claws.” Torvald is saying that he will protect her like something that was a gift from God, and he will use everything in his power to watch over her. I personally think he is a selfish man who wouldn’t give a rip if anything happened to her, as long as nothing happened to him-but that’s another paper, another time. He treats her like she is a baby. Even though in some senses of the word she is, but not to the point where she can’t take care of herself. Torvald thinks that he needs to be there to watch out for her, and that she would be nothing without him. That’s why Nora decides to leave him. She doesn’t need his “ wide wings” to shelter her. She doesn’t need to be rescued. She needs to leave this man, and even when she does he is still worried about what people will say. I hate people like that, and that’s why I am not very fond of Torvald. Animal Imagery in this play is used to show the kind of person Torvald is, and the kind of person he would like Nora to be (or at least how he sees her). In this play, it is critical in the character development for both characters, showing really how both sides perceive the other.

Bibliography: