

A doll's house: nora's character



**ASSIGN
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" The Development of Nora's Character" From the first moments of her entrance, the audience perceives Nora Helmer as a spoiled, childish young woman. She is revealed as a loving woman who wants to spoil her family with more Christmas gifts that she may be able to afford. She also continues to eat macaroons in secret, deliberately against her husband's wishes, which shows a child's stubbornness and determination. Throughout Henrik Ibsen's A Doll House, Nora Helmer grows from what the audience perceives as a flighty, immature child to a level-headed, mature woman. After the entrance of Mrs. Linde, Nora's childhood friend, the audience learns that Nora has borrowed money — something that women of that time were not permitted to do. Not only did she borrow money, but she borrowed it through an unscrupulous banker that Torvald works with, Krogstad. Although her intentions were admirable, Nora's partaking in an illegal practice showed more immaturity on her part. Having to lie to Torvald about what she was doing with the money he gave her only further proves that she was not capable of handling such a serious transaction. During Nora's talks with Torvald over Krogstad, Torvald says, " Almost everyone who goes bad early in life has a mother who's a chronic liar" (Ibsen 1527). This news causes Nora to panic and shut down all contact with her three children. While a statement such as that does warrant some kind of reaction, Nora's extreme actions show a blind confidence in her husband's words. She believes that everything he says must be gospel. If she had more knowledge of being a mother, she would have known that she could challenge his bold words. Although many people are able to see goodness in others no matter how slight it may be, Nora blindly assumes that because she has three small children, Krogstad will not reveal their transaction to Torvald or the

authorities. At the beginning of Act II, she says, “ Nothing terrible could happen. It’s impossible. Why, I have three small children” (Ibsen 1527). A more experienced woman would know that nothing, not even something as sweet and innocent as children, can get in the way of a desperate man. From Act II to the end of the play, Nora continually refers to a miracle. It seems that she wished Torvald would take care of the whole situation with Krogstad once he found out about it and love and praise her for her sacrifice. After he outright condemns her, calling her a criminal and a liar, Torvald accuses Nora of wrecking his happiness, tells her she must never see the children, and blames her father’s parenting for the entire situation. When Nora realizes Torvald is not going to suffer for her sake or take on her guilt, something in her snaps. Even after they get Krogstad’s note back and burn it, she knows things cannot remain how they have been in the past. She says, “ I’ve been your doll-wife here, just as at home I was Papa’s doll-child” (Ibsen 1552). By the final scenes of the play, the audience watches as Nora blossoms into a strong, independent woman. She refuses any money that Torvald offers her, and finally challenges some of his words. She tells him that he may have the strength to “ make himself over” if his “ doll gets taken away” (Ibsen 1555). That small exchange proves that she is not merely running from her problems, but she genuinely wants Torvald and herself to have a chance to change. At last she walks out the door but leaves Torvald with the hope that someday they might have a true marriage. She sighs, “ You and I both would have to transform ourselves to the point that... That our living together could be a true marriage” (Ibsen 1556). Works Cited Ibsen, Henrik. “ A Doll House. ” The Norton Introduction to Literature. Eds.

Alison Booth, Paul Hunter, Kelly J. Mays. Shorter ninth edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006. 1508-1556.