

Ibsen's A Doll's House
and Pollock's Blood
Relations: Similarities
and Differences...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Doll's House written by Henry Ibsen, a play set in the 1870's in Norway and Blood Relations written by Sharon Pollock, a play set in the 1890's in America both have a strong female lead who are faced with situations uncommon today. The conditions which they face, although extremely different, are products of a society where women are not valued as equals. Although written with different intentions the two works each play an important role in the understanding, sympathizing, and critiquing of women in a man-dominated society. The two protagonists, Nora in A Doll's House and Lizzie in Blood Relations, are faced with a test of their aptitude, and resilience of their own beliefs in order to succumb to or defeat the gender roles put in place for them. Nora and Lizzie an unlikely pair share a victim's testimony to barrier-filled life due to patriarchal society. They both, through their dissimilarities and comparisons, reveal some of the different ways one of these victims could reclaim their lives. Nora plays into her role as a domestic woman while Lizzie refuses to surrender to her pressures, yet they both are independent and strong willed; Nora's actions push forth her rights and reputation as a woman, while Lizzie's actions impedes on her privileges and reputation, yet both of their actions are taken to liberate and free themselves.

Nora and Lizzie are both strong independent women who are able to take care and advance themselves despite the civilization into which they are placed. Nora is passed on from one patriarchal-authority figure to another and she has the usual expectations but an unfamiliar obligation for a woman of the household placed upon her. She makes challenging decisions to fulfill her undisclosed duty of finding a way to pay for Torvald's life-saving vacation, although dealing with her means of payment are outrageous for a

woman of her standing. Even though she knows the consequences of such engagements she is brave enough to complete them and follow up paying monthly installments without help or advice from those who view her as helpless. Lizzie also showcases her strong-willed nature and is able to be obnoxiously herself despite what is attempted to be forced upon her. She does not identify with other women who play the role assigned to them such as Abigail and Emma, instead she entertains herself with distasteful stories from Bridget and scandalous fantasies shared with Dr. Patrick. She often finds herself the subject of distress in the family but has the capability to overcome the pressure placed on her by being an unapologetic self-governing woman. She also shows complete determination in her independence by exclaiming to her father, " You can't make me do one thing that I don't want to do. I'm going to keep on doing just what I want when I want- like always" (Pollock 41). Like Nora, Lizzie strives to be outside the control of authority but unlike Nora, Lizzie is unpersuaded by the possibility of acceptance.

Lizzie's attempt to pursue happiness relies on her nonchalant individuality while Nora's relies on her inconsequential ability to embrace and adhere to her expectations as a woman. Nora plays her role as a domestic housewife and appears to find happiness and peace with it. She, to an outsider's perspective, would appear to be a model figure for other women in the society, so Nora cooks and cleans and finds joy in shopping, decorating her home, and other stereotypical matronly interests. She even begs and acts dim-witted for Torvald's entertainment: " Oh, Torvald, surely we can let ourselves go a little this year! Can't we? Just a tiny bit?" (Ibsen 1320). She

seems to be content with spending life under the scrutiny of husband and being viewed as a mother, a wife, and of lesser importance. Lizzie, however, finds that she is too important to behave regardless how her family urges her to act. She refuses to bend to what is expected of her and thus becomes an innocently defiant character to gender roles. She spoke in confidence with outsiders of the town and shows herself as disgusted by marriage and motherhood with the man her parents have chosen for her. She does many unladylike actions such as raising and loving pigeons, throwing tantrums, and being self-absorbed even as her family pleaded her not to do so. The characters', although radically different, possess personalities which guide them to take action against the culture which they exist in.

Nora and Lizzie's final actions tell of the breaking point of their patience and their breaking free from a society which cages them; audacity is needed in both instances to defy the gender roles and to challenge and take on the possible suffering of the unwritten consequences. Nora chooses to leave her husband after he accidentally reveals his true character to her. Leaving her husband seems to brand her with an unwanted reputation and will bring further strain for the rest of her life, yet, without any appearance of regret, Nora leaves her life with Torvald and begins her exit of the manipulative community which housed her. Lizzie also shocks the reader and presumably the world as she decides to fight for what she believes in as she exposes her certainty that "not all life is precious" (Pollock 63). Lizzie breaks stereotypes with her actions of supposed murdering her parents showing an obvious strength in character for a woman and she is thought to have grotesquely demanded her independence and freedom. Lizzie is able to within a few

scenes alter outsider's thoughts of the capabilities and vigor she possesses. While both women are motivated by their possible liberation, Nora's and Lizzie's actions cause two opposing responses.

In retrospect Lizzie does not create an admiral response from the readers with her final action like Nora does nor does Lizzie advance women the way Nora did. Nora breaks away from her stereotypes making her an advocate for gender equality and women's rights. When she leaves her husband, she is composed and makes intelligent comments on why she can no longer be satisfied living the life that is set up for her. She does not break down or throw a tantrum to satisfy misogynists, instead she stays level headed and leaves the safety and security of a man who could not provide her with the decency she believes she deserves as she reveals that "the miracle of miracles would have to happen" (Ibsen 1367) for her trust to be restored to Torvald. Nora is respected because it appears she left for the pursuit of meaning in her life and to take care of herself without any assistance from the patriarchy. Lizzie's action however dismantles her own standing and causes the reader to become uncomfortable. Lizzie has the opportunity to create a difference like Nora, but Lizzie instead enables others to view her as a ravenous animal a lesser being. She makes the reader wary and frightened of the uncontrollable nature of women similar to herself and halts the progression of impartiality towards genders. By calculating and committing a gruesome crime while taunting, tormenting and abusing her unknowing victims, Lizzie provides herself with a shameful disgusting legacy. Lizzie, threatened by the patriarchy, imprisons herself further and disappoints on a

large scale; Nora, also vulnerable to authority, liberates herself and inspires tremendously.

Living in a patriarchal culture, the two characters, Nora and Lizzie, are unhappy with their roles as women, and find a way to succeed by unshackling themselves from society's expectations. This makes one of the women a hero and the other a villain. Nora and Lizzie reveal the significant accomplishments stimulated by and achieved through the relentlessness of women, favorable or not. Pollock and Ibsen both provide an unforgiving political statement about the necessity of equality. A Doll's House provides how one can achieve equality, while Blood Relations offers why one needs equality. These two plays set an ocean and decades apart serve as a fundamental statement about the importance of acknowledging and understanding a victim's crises.

Works Cited

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