

Thea elvsted is a foil
to hedda essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the play, Thea Elvsted is a foil to Hedda. She acts as a contrast to the main character in both personality and looks; Hedda being tall, thin with sharp features whilst Thea is smaller, with soft features and a more womanly body. Thus Thea is often used, during the script, to differentiate from Hedda and therefore achieve completely opposite responses from the audience. During the performance, Ibsen wanted his audiences to react in many different ways to each of the characters.

Whilst the controversial character of Hedda demanded respect, she was more often than not disliked for her malicious and troublesome attributes. On the other hand, Ibsen created Thea in order to contrast and emphasise Hedda's negative qualities. Thea is more likely to draw pity from the audience, but is still often disliked for the pathetic desperation she often displays. Through the first scene, I would like the audience to regard Thea as weak and inferior to the other characters. However, it becomes apparent that she has been underestimated, as she slowly gains strength during the play and finally becomes antagonistic to Hedda during the last scene. I do not want the audience to warm to Thea though, but regard her as a shadow which is used to cast Hedda in a brighter light.

Thea's physical appearance is described by Ibsen as ' a slight woman with soft, attractive features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round and somewhat protruding, with a scared, questioning expression. Her hair is strikingly fair, almost whitish-yellow, and unusually rich and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than Hedda. ' Thea should be smaller than Hedda, Jorgen and Ejlert in order to symbolise her vulnerability to the audience. In comparison to

Hedda's slender body, Thea should be curvier and more womanly to represent her more feminine behaviour.

She should also be attractive but not quite as attractive as Hedda in order to show that Thea will always have to aspire to be like Hedda. If I were to perform the character of Thea, on entrance to the Tesman's house I would be obviously uncomfortable with both my surroundings and company. I would cross my arms around my body in order to protect and reassure myself whilst walking slowly, almost uncertainly towards Hedda and Jorgen. I would widen my eyes slightly to depict fear and to show how nervous I would be, I would bite my lip. Smiling politely at Hedda and Jorgen would be forced and my eyes would remain fixed upon Hedda, showing unease with the encounter.

Although Hedda greets Thea in a pleasant manner; " Good morning my dear Mrs. Elvsted. How nice to see you once again," I would visibly tense rather than relax and step back from Hedda to show that Thea still remembers Hedda's behaviour towards her when they were at school. In contrast, when Jorgen offers Thea his hand, I would smile sincerely when shaking his hand and look up at him trustingly.

I would like the audience to feel protective over Thea at this point, having already witnessed Hedda's cold and manipulative personality. At the same time I want them to become curious of the relationships between both Thea and Hedda, and Thea and Jorgen. Thea responds to Hedda's greeting by stating " Yes, it's a long time now since we met". I would speak quietly and with very little intonation or emotion to demonstrate that, although Thea will

behave courteously, she wishes to speak to Hedda as little as possible. When Thea says “ Oh, Thank you.

.. I would have come here at once, yesterday afternoon. But then I heard you were abroad..

. ” I would look at Jorgen and begin eagerly; raising the volume and pitch my voice and speaking more confidently and then tail off each time I pause (shown by...), remembering Hedda’s presence. I would soon forget my surroundings and company when telling Hedda and Jorgen about her distress.

Firstly I would become more fidgety, playing with my hands and pacing the room when “ Yes there is. And I don’t know another soul here, not anyone I could turn to, apart from you. ” I would speak quickly, almost impatiently, and raise the pitch of my voice to a whine. To have my desired effect on the audience, I would frown and push out my lower lip, as if I were a child.

Although earlier I wanted the audience to feel protective over Thea, now that they have experienced her immaturity and dependence on other people, I would like the audience to be exasperated by her behaviour and therefore sympathise with Hedda’s dislike of Thea. In turn, this makes the audience warm to Hedda’s character. Thea has very much transformed as a character. From the timid and pitiable creature she was originally presented as, her strengths have been revealed throughout the play.

During her final appearance, instead of collapsing with grief at the news of her lover’s death, she offers her inspirational services to Jorgen, much to

Hedda's annoyance. For instance, when Hedda approaches Thea and asks "Isn't this strange for you, Thea? Now you're sitting here together with Tesman... as you used to sit with Ejlert Lovborg," Hedda's directions are to run her fingers through Thea's hair.

Whereas before I would allow Hedda to do this, this final time I would pull my head away and shake my hair free of Hedda. Hedda would then know that she no longer has control over Thea. Although Thea's new found strength should please an audience, I would like my audience to remain frustrated with her, now having warmed to Hedda. In response to Hedda, Thea says "Oh yes, Oh God...

if only I could inspire your husband in the same way." I would exclaim 'Oh yes, Oh God' almost sexually to portray Thea's subconscious wishes. When saying "if only I could inspire your husband in the same way," I would speak in a high pitched voice whilst looking up at Hedda with wide-open eyes in order to exhibit fake innocence. Throughout I would speak loudly which would show that Hedda no longer scares Thea.

I would emphasise the words 'your husband' to openly taunt Hedda and although attempting to look harmless, I would smile smugly as if self-satisfied. To exaggerate Thea's triumph, I would turn away from Hedda, towards Jorgen, and move myself nearer to him. At this point I want the audience to feel anger towards Thea for having succeeded in gaining Jorgen's attentions and revelling in Hedda's misery. Although Hedda is a cold and difficult character, she is preferable to the audience over Thea, due to her strengths as a person which Thea lacks. When Jorgen suggests Thea

should move in Aunt Julle's house where they can work every evening undisturbed and away from Hedda's watchful eye, I would enthusiastically nod and agree rapidly, as if fearful Jorgen will change his mind.

When Hedda opposes Jorgen's idea, I would firstly look worried; tensing my body, staring intently at Jorgen with widened eyes and biting my bite, but then, realising Jorgen does not intend give in to Hedda, victorious. To do this I would relax and look over in the direction of the room Hedda sits in and smile to myself before turning my attentions back to Jorgen. When the shot is fired, I would jump immediately to my feet and follow Jorgen into the inner room. Whilst everyone is confused and shouting, I would stop and look at Hedda, unsurprised.

I would show little expression on my face, as if indifferent to her death. Knowing that Thea am one of the catalysts of Hedda's tragic end, I want the audience to despise her for being a deciding factor in their anti-hero's suicide.