

A dolls house by  
henrik ibsen , 1879  
and trifles by susan  
glaspell, 1916

[Literature](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

English 102: Drama 18 July 2007: Questions on 'A Doll's House' by Henrik Ibsen , 1879 and 'Trifles' by Susan Glaspell, 1916 Theme: The main theme stands out as the role of women in male dominated society and Ibsen created in Nora, a heroine who reflected the 20th century feminist movement. She dared to question her status, struck out on her own to achieve self-realization, showed that she had initiative, intelligence and integrity. She wanted to stop just being her husband's plaything or her father's " little doll" (Act 3, p. 225). Her character showed how women were expected to be dutiful to men and that men had power that could destroy both them and the women they dominated.

2. Dialogues: In Act 1, Nora appeared playful, manipulative and materialistic with regard to money. This was later explained by her secret, but in exchanges with Torvald, she was treated like a naughty, frivolous child. He even called her 'it' as in

" It's a sweet little bird but it gets through a terrible amount of money"  
(Act 1, p. 150-151)

Though lying about eating sweets, she showed complete obedience when she told him: " I wouldn't do anything that you don't like" (Act 1, p. 151). But when he told her that women were to blame if children went wrong, she questioned that. In Act 2, Nora worked out a way to keep her secret after Krogstad's blackmail, and again questioned Torvald's reasons for refusing to give the lawyer his job, calling them petty. His response, to sack the man at once, showed how petty and domineering he was. He was so full of his own importance that he considered her anxiety to be " very touching proof of your love for me, so I forgive you." (Act 2, p. 189-190). Her feelings just pass

him by. From being a happy, loving young wife, totally obedient to her husband, meeting his demands, Nora became a person who started to question her husband's true character and her own situation.

3. Turning Point: Nora realized the truth about Torvald's character and how false her marriage was when she witnessed his reaction to the letter. He called her wretched, " a liar, a hypocrite - even worse - a criminal" (Act 3, p. 221). Just before he said these words, Nora "[looking fixedly at him, her expression hardening as she speaks]: " Yes, now I'm beginning to realize everything."

1. Trifles: Mrs. Peters, as the sheriff's wife, felt she had to uphold the law, echoing his opinions and beliefs, being obedient and submissive to them. Mrs. Hales knew John and Minnie Wright, so had a deeper insight into the real situation and was also more able to think for herself and to voice her opinions. She recognized the difference between just following the rules of law, and applying human rights to the circumstances they were involved in.

2. Changes: Mrs. Peters changed most, coming to recognize what Minnie had suffered. The men's dismissive attitudes and the isolation Minnie experienced were things she related to. At the beginning, she said: " the law is the law" (p. 8), then later " Somehow we just don't see how it is with other folks" (p. 10), and finally, she colluded with Mrs. Hales in hiding the evidence of a motive. She had begun to think for herself, as shown by her response to the Attorney's question on her thoughts on being " married to the law" " Not - just that way." (p. 15). She found she had a mind of her own.

Symbol: A Doll's House: The damaged fancy dress costume symbolized how Nora's mind was becoming unraveled. If it could be mended, Torvald

distracted and pleased with her, then she could hold off disaster. The "trimming's come undone in places" (Act 2, p. 183) signified what was happening in Nora's life and marriage.

Symbol: Trifles: The bad stitching on the quilt symbolized Minnie's distraught state of mind. It was also a metaphor for female solidarity, as Mrs. Hales fixed it, and both women used it as a cover-up. To the men, it was just another 'trifle' women's stuff, but it finally represented an ironic truth about the murder, as Mrs. Hales told the Attorney: " We call it - knot it, Mr. Henderson." (p. 15)

Moral or Legal Response: Because they had evidence that Minnie Wright had been punished enough already, the women were morally justified in hiding the evidence. They knew the law of men would not take her circumstances into account and risked themselves to help another person, which is morally right.

Nora's Decision: Leaving the marriage was brave, as in that society, Nora knew she would be shunned and disgraced for failing in her duty. She did not want her children to live in a house of lies, which it would have been, if she had stayed. She also knew that nanny would care for them and love them. Nora wanted to protect them from the effects of a false relationship and so denied herself their love, in order to become a real person and not a doll.