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It is important to note that the whole play takes place in one room and that, until the last act, Nora is in every scene; she never seems to leave the room everything comes to her. She is literally trapped in domestic comfort. Also, the first Act takes place on Christmas Eve. However, though there is a great deal of talk about morality throughout the play, Christmas is never presented as a religious holiday and religion as a concept is later questioned by Nora in the third Act. In fact, it is discussed primarily as a material experience.

This emphasis is similar to the general theme of the centrality of material goods over personal connection. This play focuses on the way that women are seen, especially in the context of marriage and motherhood. Torvald, in particular, has a very clear and narrow definition of a woman's role. He believes that it is the sacred duty of a woman to be a good wife and mother. Moreover, he tells Nora that women are responsible for the morality of their children. In essence, he sees women as both child-like, helpless creatures detached from reality and influential moral forces responsible for the purity of the world through their influence in the home. The perception of manliness is also discussed, though in a much more subtle way. Nora's description of Torvald suggests that she is partially aware of the lies inherent in the male role as much as that of the female.

Torvald's conception of manliness is based on the value of total independence. He abhors the idea of financial or moral dependence on anyone. His desire for independence leads to the question of whether he is out of touch with reality. Tied to the discussion of men and women are the

frequent references to Nora's father. Throughout the play, there are references to Nora's father.

Furthermore, Nora is frequently equated with him, from her actions (though people think he gave Nora and Torvald the money for their trip to Italy, it was actually Nora) to her disposition. Quotations like the one below suggest that Nora does wish that she were like her father and, taking that further, male. Her desire suggests a deeper understanding of the confinement she faces than might otherwise be apparent. Another central theme of this play is the importance placed on materialism rather than people.

This is particularly important for Torvald, whose sense of manhood depends on his independence. In fact, he was an unsuccessful barrister because he refused to take "unsavory cases". As a result, he switched to the bank, where he primarily deals with money. In other words, money and materialism can be seen as a way to avoid the complications of personal contact. Torvald calls Nora, as a symbol of woman, a number of names throughout the play. These include "little songbird", "squirrel", "lark", "little featherhead", "little skylark", "little person", and "little woman". Torvald is extremely consistent about using the modifier "little" before the names he calls Nora. These are all usually followed by the possessive "my", signaling Torvald's belief that Nora is his.

Torvald's chosen names for Nora reveal that he does not see her as an equal by any means; rather, Nora is at times predictable and silly doll and at times a captivating and exotic pet or animal, all created for Torvald. Nora's ball dress symbolizes the character she plays in her marriage to Torvald. Take

note of when Nora is supposed to be wearing it and for whom. A tarantella is a folk dance from southern Italy that accelerates from its already quick tempo and alternates between major and minor keys. In its constant fluctuation, it is like Nora's character. In this Act, it serves as Nora's last chance to be Torvald's doll, to dance and amuse him.

Also, the tarantella is commonly (and falsely) known as a dance that is supposed to rid the dancer of the bite of the tarantula. Applied to the play, its use suggests that Nora is trying to rid herself of the deadly poison of an outside force, however fruitlessly. Rather than alleviating the bite, though, the music and her life only continue to accelerate and spin out of control. By the end of the play, Torvald seems confused as to what to think of Nora: is she a woman, a creature, or a small child? It is this uncertainty that is the basis of the discussion aspect of the act; the reader or playgoer is left to decide for him/herself.

Names include: " little skylark", " fascinating, charming little darling", " my darling wife", " my little singing bird", " miserable creature", " a thoughtless woman", " my frightened little singing bird", " little, scared darling", " blind, foolish woman", and " a heedless child". Bibliography: