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Kevin Tejada Professor Day Intro to Literary Studies 2 April 2013 A Doll House Essay A large deal of controversy has arisen about the play A Doll House, written by Henrik Ibsen. The controversy argues whether Ibsen's play is feminist or not. In the play, we are introduced to a woman named Nora, who shows nothing but selfless love to her husband, Torvald Helmer, a highly respected banker. Many people argue that the play does not reflect notions of feminism, but on the contrary, many people, such as Joan Templeton, argue that this play does in fact, does contain indications of feminism. This argument can go back and forth, but with the evidence provided by Templeton and many situations in the play itself, it is easily understood that this play represents cases of feminism. Joan Templeton composed an essay titled The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen. Easily understood by the title, the essay focuses on the biggest controversy, feminism. Nora, who is constantly performing acts of selflessness to her husband, Torvald, is mistreated throughout the play because she is not seen as equal. Nora is also mistreated by her father in the early stages of her life. She is looked upon as a pet for his own pleasure and doesn't see her as a normal human being. " When you've sold yourself once for the sake of others, you don't do it a second time, " (Ibsen Act 3, 210) says Nora. She is looked down upon by Torvald and her father. This is where the metaphor of her being looked at as a toy or " doll, " throughout her life. The arguments trying to nullify Templeton's argument was that the play was written to be a comedy. Apparently the " door slamming at the end is meant to bring laughs at her childish behavior, " says Templeton. An issue of this importance cannot be played off as a joke. Feminism was a controversial topic to begin with and joking around about it would not make sense at all. The metaphor

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dollhouse can be pieced together by seeing Nora as the doll being dictated and controlled within Torvalds's house. From the beginning of the story, Nora is treated unequally. She is treated as a pet, but more so as a child. Torvald reprimands Nora when she spends money. She is scolded by Torvald, saying "you can't spend money recklessly," (Ibsen 1350). We are led to perceive that Nora is not allowed to make her own decisions. Although she spends this money consciously knowing that they have more liberty with spending money. She is completely aware of their financial situation, but yet, Torvald would much rather scold her for spending money that doesn't have to be saved. If we took out the "women problem" from the play, we aren't left with much. In fact, we don't really have a play. We have no plot, no drama, no climax, and no rising action. The play is mainly Nora performing acts of selflessness for Torvald such as forging her father's signature in order to get money to save Torvalds' life. She gets the money to get Torvald to Italy where there the weather is warmer so that Torvald could recover from his bronchitis and which also will prolong his life span. What fuels this play is the back and forth controversy between Torvald and Nora, and that is what leads the reader to believe that this play reflects feminism. "Now let us remove the "woman problem" from A Doll House...What is left of the play? The only honest response is nothing," (Templeton 32). Templeton believes that girls are not given the opportunity to be themselves, which is absolutely true. In the play, Nora serves as the perfect example of the ideal Victorian mother, daughter, and wife. Although Torvald refers to his wife as his "joy and pride," he doesn't treat her like it. She did exactly what was expected from her by the male society, and in return she is treated unfairly; the perfect illustration of feminism. "Ibsen uses Torvald's famous pet names for

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Nora-lark, squirrel-to give her a " strong 'animal' identity" and to underscore her inability to understand the ethical issues faced by human beings" (Templeton 30). Some people may have seen this play as a non-feminist work, but many of those points can be easily annulled. For example, at the end of the play, she finally realizes how she has been mistreated by Torvald and her father. " I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life. Our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child; and here the children have been my dolls. I thought it great fun when you played with me, just as they thought it great fun when I played with them. That is what our marriage has been, Torvald, " (Ibsen). It is only at the end of the play that she realizes that she has been pushed too far, and won't be pushed anymore. The question is what made her come to this realization? Could it be that she was finally pushed to her limit and was had finally realized that she was being treated like a doll and not being seen as an equal human being by her father and Torvald. That is the only sensible argument. Nora was pushed to the edge, and finally demanded the respect she deserves. " That I don't believe any more. I believe that first and foremost I am an individual, just as you are," (Ibsen) demands Nora. Nora makes her point and decides to move on with her life and fulfill the things she's wanted to do. Unfortunately, the way she can get her point across is by leaving the house. Templeton's essay makes a lot of great points that lead us to believe that Ibsen's " A Doll House" is a work that reflects feminism. Regrettably, it's only until the end of the story that Nora realizes that she has been treated foully and taken advantage of that she decides to stand up

for her rights. Although people can believe that this is play does not reflect feminism, it can easily be counter-argued that this play is evidently about feminism, and in fact, was not meant to be a comedy. Works Cited Charters, Ann, and Samuel Barclay. Charters. " Plays and Playwrights." Literature and Its Writers: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, n. d. 1347-1406. Print. Templeton, Joan. " The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen." Vol. 104. N. p.: Modern Language Association, n. d. 28-40. Print.