WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE
PROFESSOR: Martin Zurla

STUDY GUIDE: A DOLL'S HOUSE

By
Henrik Ibsen
(1828-1906)

A Brief Biography of Henrik Ibsen

Ibsen, born Henrik Johan Ibsen in 1828 in Skein, Norway, was the eldest of five children after the early death of an older brother. His father, Knud Ibsen, a product of a long line of sea captains, had been born in 1797 in Skein and married Marichen Cornelia Martie Altenburg, a German daughter of a merchant, in 1825. Though Ibsen later reported that Skein was a pleasant place during his youth, his own childhood was not particularly happy. Described as an unsociable child, his sense of isolation was increased at the age of sixteen when his father¹s business was found to be in such disrepair that everything had to be sold to meet his creditors. On top of this, a rumor, to which young Ibsen was privy, began to be circulated that Henrik was the illegitimate son of another man. This fear (never proved) manifested itself in a theme of illegitimate offspring in Ibsen¹s later work. After Knud¹s business was possessed, all that remained of the family¹s former wealth was a dilapidated farmhouse at the outskirts of Skein.

At the farmhouse, Ibsen began to attend a small middle-class school where he cultivated a talent for painting, if nothing else. In 1843, at the age of fifteen, Ibsen was confirmed and taken from school. Though he had declared his interest in becoming a painter, Ibsen was apprenticed to an apothecary shortly before his sixteenth birthday.

Leaving his family, Ibsen traveled to Grimstad, a small, isolated town, to begin his apprenticeship where he studied with the hopes of gaining admissions to the University to study medicine. (He also fathered an illegitimate son by the servant of the apothecary.) Despite his unhappy lot, Grimstad is where Ibsen began to write in earnest. Inspired by the revolution of 1848 that was being felt throughout Europe, Ibsen wrote satire and elegant poetry. At the age of twenty-one, Ibsen left Grimstad for the capitol. While in Christiania (now Oslo), Ibsen passed his exams but opted not to pursue his education, instead turning to playwriting and journalism. It was here that he penned his first play, Cataline. Ibsen also spent time analyzing and criticizing modern Norwegian literature.

Still poor, Ibsen gladly accepted a contract to write for and help manage the newly constituted National Theater in Bergen in 1851. Untrained and largely uneducated, Ibsen learned much from his time at the theater, producing such works as St. John¹s Night. The majority of his writings of this period were based

on folksongs, folklore, and history. In 1858, Ibsen moved back to Christiania to become the creative director of the city¹s Norwegian Theater.

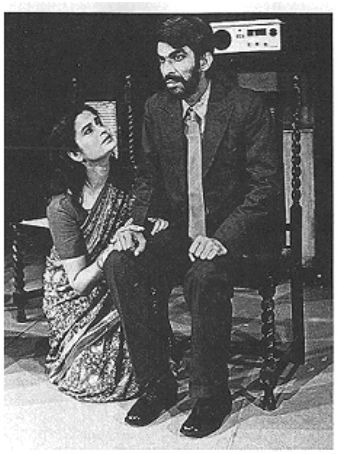
That same year, Ibsen married Suzannah Thoresen, with whom he fathered a child named Sigurd Ibsen. Though his plays suggest otherwise, Ibsen revered the state of marriage, believing that it was possible for two people to travel through life as perfect, happy equals. During this period, Ibsen also developed a daily routine from which he would not deviate until his first stroke in 1901: he would rise, consume a small breakfast, take a long walk, write for five hours, eat dinner, and finish the night off with entertainment or in bed. Despite this routine, Ibsen found his life in Bergen difficult. Luckily, in 1864, his friends generously offered him money that they had collected, allowing him to move to Italy. He was to spend the next twenty-seven years living in Italy and Germany. During this time abroad, he authored a number of successful works, including Brand (1866) and Peer Gynt (1867).

Ibsen moved to Dresden in 1868 and then Munich in 1875. It was in Munich, in 1879 that Ibsen wrote his groundbreaking play, A Doll¹s House. He pursued his interest in realistic drama for the next decade, earning international acclaim; many of his works were published in translation and performed throughout Europe. Ibsen eventually turned to a new style of writing, abandoning his interest in realism for a series of so-called symbolic dramas. He completed his last work in exile, Hedda Gabbler, in 1890.

After being away from Norway for twenty-seven years, Ibsen and Suzannah returned in 1891. Shortly afterwards, he finished writing The Master Builder and then took a short break. In late 1893, in need of moist air to help cure her recurring gout, Suzannah left for southern Italy. While his wife was away, Ibsen found a companion in a young female pianist, Hildur Andersen, with whom he spent a great deal of time and corresponded with even after Suzannah¹s return. Ibsen¹s relationship with Andersen was characteristic of his larger interest in the younger generation; he was famous for seeking out their ideas and encouraging their writing.

After suffering a series of strokes, Ibsen died in 1906 at the age of seventy-eight after having been unable to write for the last few years of his life.

About A Doll's House:



Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879), written while Ibsen was in Rome and Amalfi, was born in a time of revolution in Europe. Charged with the fever of the 1848 revolution, a new modern perspective was beginning to emerge in the literary and dramatic world, challenging the romantic tradition; it is Ibsen who

can be credited for mastering and popularizing the realist drama derived from this new perspective. His plays were both read and performed throughout Europe (in numerous translations) like no other dramatist before. A Doll's House was published and premiered in Copenhagen.

His success was particularly important for Norway and the Norwiegian language. Freed from four centuries of Danish rule in 1814, Norway was just beginning to shake off the legacy of Danish domination. A Doll's House was written in a form of Norweigan that still bore heavy traces of Danish. Ibsen deliberately chose a colloquial language style to emphasize the theme of realism. Ibsen quickly became Norway's most popular dramatic figure. But, it is the universality of Ibsen's writings‹and particularly A Doll's House‹that have made this play a classic.

A Doll's House was the second in a series of realist plays by Ibsen. The first, The Pillars of Society, penned in 1877, caused a stir throughout Europe, quickly spreading to the avant guarde theaters of the island and continent. In adopting the realist form, Ibsen abandoned his earlier style of saga plays, historical epics, and verse allegories. Ibsen's letters reveal that much of what is contained in his realist dramas is based on events from his own life. Indeed, he was particularly interested in the possibility of true wedlock and in women in general, later writing a series of psychological studies on women.

One of the most striking and oft-noted characteristics of A Doll's House is the way in which it challenged the technical tradition of the so-called well made play in which the first act offered an exposition, the second a situation, and the third an unravelling. This had been the standard form from the earliest fables up until A Doll's House. Ibsen's play was noteable for exchanging the last act's unravelling for a discussion. Critics agree that, up until the last moments of the play, A Doll's House could easily be just another modern drama broadcasting another comfortable moral lesson. However, when Nora tells Torvald that they must sit down and "discuss all this that has been happening between us", the play diverges from the traditional form. With this new technical feature, A Doll's House became an international sensation and founded a new school of dramatic art.

Additionally, A Doll's House subverted another dramatic traditions, this one related to character. Namely, Ibsen's realist drama disregarded the tradition of the older male moral figure. Dr. Rank, the character who should serve this role, is far from a moral force; instead, he is sickly--rotting from a disease picked up from his father's earlier sexual exploits--and lascivious, openly coveting Nora. The choice to portray both Dr. Rank and the potentially matronly Mrs. Linde as imperfect, real people was a novel approach at the time.

The real nature of Ibsen's characters were and remain a challenge for actors. Many actresses find it difficult to portray both a silly, immature Nora in the first act or so and the serious, open-minded Nora of the end of the last act. Similarly, actors are challenged to portray the full depth of Torvald's character. Many are tempted to play him as an slimy, patronizing brute, disregarding the character's range and genuininess of emotion and conviction.

A more obvious importance of A Doll's House is the feminist message that rocked the stages of Europe when the play was premiered. Nora's rejection of marriage and motherhood scandalized contemporary audiences. In fact, the first German productions of the play in the 1880s had an altered ending at the request of the producers. Ibsen referred to this version as a "barbaric outrage" to be used only in emergencies.

In large part, Ibsen was reacting to the uncertain tempo of the time; Europe was being reshaped with revolutions. The revolutionary spirit and the emergence of modernism influenced Ibsen's choice to focus on an unlikely hero‹a housewife‹in his attack on middle-class values. Quickly becoming the talk of

parlors across Europe, the play succeeded in its attempt to provoke discussion. In fact, it is the numerous ways that the play can be read (and read it was‹the printed version of A Doll's House sold out even before it hit the stage) that make the play so interesting. Each new generation has had a different way of interpreting the book, from feminist critique to Hegelian allegory of the spirit's historical evolution. The text is simply that rich.

A DOLL'S HOUSE

INTRODUCTION
by William Archer

ON June 27, 1879, Ibsen wrote from Rome to Marcus Gronvold: "It is now rather hot in Rome, so in about a week we are going to Amalfi, which, being close to the sea, is cooler, and offers opportunity for bathing. I intend to complete there a new dramatic work on which I am now engaged." From Amalfi, on September 20, he wrote to John Paulsen: "A new dramatic work, which I have just completed, has occupied so much of my time during these last months that I have had absolutely none to spare for answering letters." This "new dramatic work" was Et Dukkehjem, which was published in Copenhagen, December 4, 1879. Dr. George Brandes has given some account of the episode in real life which suggested to Ibsen the plot of this play; but the real Nora, it appears, committed forgery, not to save her husband's life, but to redecorate her house. The impulse received from this incident must have been trifling. It is much more to the purpose to remember that the character and situation of Nora had been clearly foreshadowed, ten years earlier, in the figure of Selma in The League of Youth.

Of A Doll's House we find in the Literary Remains a first brief memorandum, a fairly detailed scenario, a complete draft, in quite actable form, and a few detached fragments of dialogue. These documents put out of court a theory of my own * that Ibsen originally intended to give the play a "happy ending," and that the relation between Krogstad and Mrs. Linden was devised for that purpose.

* Stated in the Fortnightly Review, July 1906, and repeated in the first edition of this Introduction.

Here is the first memorandum:-

NOTES FOR THE * TRAGEDY OF TO-DAY

ROME, 19/10/78.

There are two kinds of spiritual laws, two kinds of conscience, one in men and a quite different one in women. They do not understand each other; but the woman is judged in practical life according to the man's law, as if she were not a woman but a man.

The wife in the play finds herself at last entirely at sea as to what is right and what wrong; natural feeling on the one side, and belief in authority on the other, leave her in utter bewilderment.

A woman cannot be herself in the society of to-day, which is exclusively a masculine society, with laws written by men, and with accusers and judges who judge feminine conduct from the masculine standpoint.

She has committed forgery, and it is her pride; for she did it for love of her husband, and to save his life. But this husband, full of everyday rectitude, stands on the basis of the law and regards the matter with a masculine eye.

Soul-struggles. Oppressed and bewildered by belief in authority, she loses her faith in her own moral right and ability to bring up her children. Bitterness. A mother in the society of to-day, like certain insects, (ought to) go away and die when she has done her duty towards the continuance of the species. Love of life, of home, of husband and children and kin. Now and then a womanlike shaking off of cares. Then a sudden return of apprehension and dread. She must bear it all alone. The catastrophe approaches, inexorably, inevitably. Despair, struggle, and disaster.

* The definite article does not, I think, imply that Ibsen ever intended this to be the title of the play, but merely that the notes refer to "the" tragedy of contemporary life which he has had for sometime in his mind.

In reading Ibsen's statement of the conflict he meant to portray between the male and female conscience, one cannot but feel that he somewhat shirked the issue in making Nora's crime a formal rather than a real one. She had no intention of defrauding Krogstad; and though it is an interesting point of casuistry to determine whether, under the stated circumstances, she had a moral right to sign her father's name, opinion on the point would scarcely be divided along the line of sex. One feels that, in order to illustrate the "two kinds of conscience," Ibsen ought to have made his play turn upon some point of conduct (if such there be) which would sharply divide masculine from feminine sympathies. The fact that such a point would be extremely hard to find seems to cast doubt on the ultimate validity of the thesis. If, for instance, Nora had deliberately stolen the money from Krogstad, with no intention of repaying it, that would certainly have revealed a great gulf between her morality and Helmer's; but would any considerable number of her sex have sympathised with her? I am not denying a marked difference between the average man and the average woman in the development of such characteristics as the sense of justice; but I doubt whether, when women have their full share in legislation, the laws relating to forgery will be seriously altered.

A parallel-text edition of the provisional and the final forms of A Doll's House would be intensely interesting. For the present, I can note only a few of the most salient differences between the two versions.

Helmer is at first called "Stenborg"; * it is not till the scene with Krogstad in the second act that the name Helmer makes its first appearance. Ibsen was constantly changing his characters' names in the course of composition- trying them on, as it were, until he found one that was a perfect fit.

* This name seems to have haunted Ibsen. It was also the original name of Stensgard in The League of Youth.

The first scene, down to the entrance of Mrs. Linden, though it contains all that is necessary for the mere development of the plot, runs to only twenty-three speeches, as compared with eighty-one in the completed text. The business of the macaroons is not even indicated; there is none of the charming talk about the Christmas-tree and the children's presents; no request on Nora's part that her present may take the form of money, no indication on Helmer's part that he regards her supposed extravagance as an inheritance from her father. Helmer knows that she toils at copying far into the night in order to earn a few crowns, though of course he has no suspicion as to how she employs the money. Ibsen evidently felt it inconsistent with his character that he should permit this, so in the completed version we learn that Nora, in order to do her copying, locked herself in under the pretext of making decorations for the Christmas-tree, and, when no result appeared, declared that the cat had destroyed her handiwork. The first version, in short, is like a stained glass window seen from without, the second like the same window seen from within.

The long scene between Nora and Mrs. Linden is more fully worked out, though many small touches of character are lacking, such as Nora's remark that some day "when Torvald is not so much in love with me as he is now," she may tell him the great secret of how she saved his life. It is notable throughout that neither Helmer's aestheticism nor the sensual element in his relation to Nora is nearly so much emphasised as in the completed play; while Nora's tendency to small fibbing- that vice of the unfree- is almost an afterthought. In the first appearance of Krogstad, and the indication of his old acquaintance with Mrs. Linden, many small adjustments have been made, all strikingly for the better. The first scene with Dr. Rank,- originally called Dr. Hank- has been almost entirely rewritten. There is in the draft no indication of the doctor's ill-health or of his pessimism; it seems as though he had
at first been designed as a mere confidant or raisonneur. This is how he talks:-

HANK. Hallo! what's this? A new carpet? I congratulate you! Now take, for example, a handsome carpet like this; is it a luxury? I say it isn't. Such a carpet is a paying investment; with it underfoot, one has higher, subtler thoughts, and finer feelings, than when one moves over cold, creaking planks in a comfortless room. Especially where there are children in the house. The race ennobles itself in a beautiful environment.

NORA. Oh, how often I have felt the same, but could never express it.

HANK. No, I dare say not. It is an observation in spiritual statistics- a science as yet very little cultivated.

As to Krogstad, the doctor remarks:-

If Krogstad's home had been, so to speak, on the sunny side of life, with all the spiritual windows opening towards the light,... I dare say he might have been a decent enough fellow, like the rest of us.

MRS. LINDEN. You mean that he is not....?

HANK. He cannot be. His marriage was not of the kind to make it possible. An unhappy marriage, Mrs. Linden, is like small-pox: it scars the soul.

NORA. And what does a happy marriage do?

HANK. It is like a "cure" at the baths; it expels all peccant

humours, and makes all that is good and fine in a man grow and flourish.

It is notable that we find in this scene nothing of Nora's glee on learning that Krogstad is now dependent on her husband; that fine touch of dramatic irony was an afterthought. After Helmer's entrance, the talk is very different in the original version. He remarks upon the painful interview he has just had with Krogstad, whom he is forced to dismiss from the bank; Nora, in a mild way, pleads for him; and the doctor, in the name of the survival of the fittest,[1] denounces humanitarian sentimentality, and then goes off to do his best to save a patient who, he confesses, would be much better dead. This discussion of the Krogstad question before Nora has learnt how vital it is to her, manifestly discounts the effect of the scenes which are to follow: and Ibsen, on revision, did away with it entirely.

Nora's romp with the children, interrupted by the entrance of Krogstad, stands very much as in the final version; and in the scene with Krogstad there is no essential change. One detail is worth noting, as an instance of the art of working up an effect. In the first version, when Krogstad says, "Mrs. Stenborg, you must see to it that I keep my place in the bank," Nora replies: "I? How can you think that I have any such influence with my husband?"- a natural but not specially effective remark. But in the final version she has begun the scene by boasting to Krogstad of her influence, and telling him that people in a subordinate position ought to be careful how they offend such influential persons as herself; so that her subsequent denial that he has any influence becomes a notable dramatic effect.

The final scene of the act, between Nora and Helmer, is not materially altered in the final version; but the first version contains no hint of the business of decorating the Christmas-tree or of Nora's wheedling Helmer by pretending to need his aid in devising her costume for the fancy dress ball. Indeed, this ball has not yet entered Ibsen's mind. He thinks of it first as a children's party in the flat overhead, to which Helmer's family are invited.

In the opening scene of the second act there are one of two traits that might perhaps have been preserved, such as Nora's prayer: "Oh, God! Oh, God! do something to Torvald's mind to prevent him from enraging that terrible man! Oh, God! Oh, God! I have three little children! Do it for my children's sake." Very natural and touching, too, is her exclamation, "Oh, how glorious it would be if I could only wake up, and come to my senses, and cry, 'It was a dream! It was a dream!'" A week, by the way, has passed, instead of a single night, as in the finished play; and Nora has been wearing herself out by going to parties every evening. Helmer enters immediately on the nurse's exit; there is no scene with Mrs. Linden in which she remonstrates with Nora for having (as she thinks) borrowed money from Dr. Rank, and so suggests to her the idea of applying to him for aid. In the scene with Helmer, we miss, among many other characteristic traits, his confession that the ultimate reason why he cannot keep Krogstad in the bank is that Krogstad, an old schoolfellow, is so tactless as to tutoyer him. There is a curious little touch in the passage where Helmer draws a contrast between his own strict rectitude and the doubtful character of Nora's father. "I can give you proof of it," he says. "I never cared to mention it before- but the twelve hundred dollars he gave you when you were set on going to Italy he never entered in his books: we have been quite unable to discover where he got them from." When Dr. Rank enters, he speaks to Helmer and Nora together of his failing health; it is an enormous improvement which transfers this passage, in a carefully polished form, to his scene with Nora alone. That scene, in the draft, is almost insignificant. It consists mainly of somewhat melodramatic forecasts of disaster on Nora's part, and the doctor's alarm as to her health. Of the famous silk-stocking scene- that invaluable sidelight on Nora's relation with Helmer there is not a trace. There is no hint of Nora's appeal to Rank for help, nipped in the bud by his declaration of love for her. All these elements we find in a second draft of the scene which has been preserved. In this second draft, Rank says, "Helmer himself might quite well know every thought I have ever had of you; he shall know when I am gone." It might have been better, so far as England

[1] It is noteworthy that Darwin's two great books were translated into Danish very shortly before Ibsen began to work at A Doll's House.

is concerned, if Ibsen had retained this speech; it might have prevented much critical misunderstanding of a perfectly harmless and really beautiful episode.

Between the scene with Rank and the scene with Krogstad there intervenes, in the draft, a discussion between Nora and Mrs. Linden, containing this curious passage:-

NORA. When an unhappy wife is separated from her husband she is not allowed to keep her children? Is that really so?
MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I think so. That's to say, if she is guilty.
NORA. Oh, guilty, guilty; what does it mean to be guilty? Has a wife no right to love her husband?
MRS. LINDEN. Yes, precisely, her husband- and him only.
NORA. Why, of course; who was thinking of anything else? But that law is unjust, Kristina. You can see clearly that it is the men that have made it.
MRS. LINDEN. Aha- so you have begun to take up the woman question?
NORA. No, I don't care a bit about it.

The scene with Krogstad is essentially the same as in the final form, though sharpened, so to speak, at many points. The question of suicide was originally discussed in a somewhat melodramatic tone:-

NORA. I have been thinking of nothing else all these days.
KROGSTAD. Perhaps. But how to do it? Poison? Not so easy to get hold of. Shooting? It needs some skill, Mrs. Helmer. Hanging? Bah- there's something ugly in that....
NORA. Do you hear that rushing sound?
KROGSTAD. The river? Yes, of course you have thought of that. But you haven't pictured the thing to yourself.

And he proceeds to do so for her. After he has gone, leaving the letter in the box, Helmer and Rank enter, and Nora implores Helmer to do no work till New Year's Day (the next day) is over. He agrees, but says, "I will just see if any letters have come "; whereupon she rushes to the piano and strikes a few chords. He stops to listen, and she sits down and plays and sings Anitra's song from Peer Gynt. When Mrs. Linden presently enters, Nora makes her take her place at the piano, drapes a shawl around her, and dances Anitra's dance. It must be owned that Ibsen has immensely improved this very strained and arbitrary incident by devising the fancy dress ball and the necessity of rehearsing the tarantella for it; but at the best it remains a piece of theatricalism.

As a study in technique, the re-handling of the last act is immensely interesting. At the beginning, in the earlier form, Nora rushes down from the children's party overhead, and takes a significant farewell of Mrs. Linden, whom she finds awaiting her. Helmer almost forces her to return to the party; and thus the stage is cleared for the scene between Mrs. Linden and Krogstad, which, in the final version, opens the act. Then Nora enters with the two elder children, whom she sends to bed. Helmer immediately follows, and on his heels Dr. Rank, who announces in plain terms that his disease has entered on its last stage, that he is going home to die, and that he will not have Helmer or any one else hanging around his sick-room. In the final version, he says all this to Nora alone in the second act; while in the last act, coming in upon Helmer flushed with wine, and Nora pale and trembling in her masquerade dress, he has a parting scene with them, the significance of which she alone understands. In the earlier version, Rank has several long and heavy speeches in place of the light, swift dialogue of the final form, with its different significance for Helmer and for Nora. There is no trace of the wonderful passage which precedes Rank's exit. To compare the draft with the finished scene is to see a perfect instance of the transmutation of dramatic prose into dramatic poetry.

There is in the draft no indication of Helmer's being warmed with wine, or of the excitement of the senses which gives the final touch of tragedy to Nora's despair. The process of the action is practically the same in both versions; but everywhere in the final form a sharper edge is given to things. One little touch is very significant. In the draft, when Helmer has read the letter with which Krogstad returns the forged bill, he cries, "You are saved, Nora, you are saved!" In the revision, Ibsen cruelly altered this into, "I am saved, Nora, I am saved!" In the final scene, where Nora is telling Helmer how she expected him, when the revelation came, to take all the guilt upon himself, we look in vain, in the first draft, for this passage:-

HELMER. I would gladly work for you night and day, Nora- bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves.
NORA. Millions of women have done so.

This, then, was an afterthought: was there ever a more brilliant one?

It is with A Doll's House that Ibsen enters upon his kingdom as a world-poet. He had done greater work in the past, and he was to do greater work in the future; but this was the play which was destined to carry his name beyond the limits of Scandinavia, and even of Germany, to the remotest regions of civilisation. Here the Fates were not altogether kind to him. The fact that for many years he was known to thousands of people solely as the author of A Doll's House and its successor, Ghosts, was largely responsible for the extravagant misconceptions of his genius and character which prevailed during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and are not yet entirely extinct. In these plays he seemed to be delivering a direct assault on marriage, from the standpoint of feminine individualism; wherefore he was taken to be a preacher and pamphleteer rather than a poet. In these plays, and in these only, he made physical disease a considerable factor in the action; whence it was concluded that he had a morbid predilection for "nauseous" subjects. In these plays he laid special and perhaps disproportionate stress on the influence of heredity; whence he was believed to be possessed by a monomania on the point. In these plays, finally, he was trying to act the essentially uncongenial part of the prosaic realist. The effort broke down at many points, and the poet reasserted himself; but these flaws in the prosaic texture were regarded as mere bewildering errors and eccentricities. In short, he was introduced to the world at large through two plays which showed his power, indeed, almost in perfection, but left the higher and subtler qualities of his genius for the most part unrepresented. Hence the grotesquely distorted vision of him which for so long haunted the minds even of intelligent people. Hence, for example, the amazing opinion, given forth as a truism by more than one critic of great ability, that the author of Peer Gynt was devoid of humour.

Within a little more than a fortnight of its publication, A Doll's House was presented at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, where Fru Hennings, as Nora, made the great success of her career. The play was soon being acted, as well as read, all over Scandinavia. Nora's startling "declaration of independence" afforded such an inexhaustible theme for heated discussion, that at last it had to be formally barred at social gatherings, just as, in Paris twenty years later, the Dreyfus Case was proclaimed a prohibited topic. The popularity of Pillars of Society in Germany had paved the way for its successor, which spread far and wide over the German stage in the spring of 1880, and has ever since held its place in the repertory of the leading theatres. As his works were at that time wholly unprotected in Germany, Ibsen could not prevent managers from altering the end of the play to suit their taste and fancy. He was thus driven, under protest, to write an alternative ending, in which, at the last moment, the thought of her children restrained Nora from leaving home. He preferred, as he said, "to commit the outrage himself, rather than leave his work to the tender mercies of adaptors." The patched-up ending soon dropped out of use and out of memory. Ibsen's own account of the matter will be found in his Correspondence, Letter 142.

It took ten years for the play to pass beyond the limits of Scandinavia and Germany. Madame Modjeska, it is true, presented a version of it in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1883, but it attracted no attention. In the following year Messrs. Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman produced at the Prince

of Wales's Theatre, London, a play entitled Breaking a Butterfly, which was described as being "founded on Ibsen's Norah," but bore only a remote resemblance to the original. In this production Mr. Beerbohm Tree took the part of Dunkley, a melodramatic villain who filled the place of Krogstad. In 1885, again, an adventurous amateur club gave a quaint performance of Miss Lord's translation of the play at a hall in Argyle Street, London. Not until June 7, 1889, was A Doll's House competently, and even brilliantly, presented to the English public, by Mr. Charles Charrington and Miss Janet Achurch, at the Novelty Theatre, London, afterwards re-named the Kingsway Theatre. It was this production that really made Ibsen known to the English-speaking peoples. In other words, it marked his second great stride towards world-wide, as distinct from merely national, renown- if we reckon as the first stride the success of Pillars of Society in Germany. Mr. and Mrs. Charrington took A Doll's House with them on a long Australian tour; Miss Beatrice Cameron (Mrs. Richard Mansfield) was encouraged by the success of the London production to present the play in New York, whence it soon spread to other American cities; while in London itself it was frequently revived and vehemently discussed. The Ibsen controversy, indeed, did not break out in its full virulence until 1891, when Ghosts and Hedda Gabler were produced in London; but from the date of the Novelty production onwards, Ibsen was generally recognised as a potent factor in the intellectual and artistic life of the day.

A French adaptation of Et Dukkehjem was produced in Brussels in March 1889, but attracted little attention. Not until 1894 was the play introduced to the Parisian public, at the Gymnase, with Madame Rejane as Nora. This actress has since played the part frequently, not only in Paris but in London and in America. In Italian the play was first produced in 1889, and soon passed into the repertory of Eleonora Duse, who appeared as Nora in London in 1893. Few heroines in modern drama have been played by so many actresses of the first rank. To those already enumerated must be added Hedwig Niemann-Raabe and Agnes Sorma in Germany, and Minnie Maddern-Fiske and Alla Nazimova in America; and, even so, the list is far from complete. There is probably no country in the world, possessing a theatre on the European model, in which A Doll's House has not been more or less frequently acted.

Undoubtedly the great attraction of the part of Nora to the average actress was the tarantella scene. This was a theatrical effect, of an obvious, unmistakable kind. It might have been- though I am not aware that it ever actually was- made the subject of a picture-poster. But this, as it seems to me, was Ibsen's last concession to the ideal of technique which he had acquired, in the old Bergen days, from his French masters. It was at this point- or, more precisely, a little later, in the middle of the third act- that Ibsen definitely outgrew the theatrical orthodox of his earlier years. When the action, in the theatrical sense, was over, he found himself only on the threshold of the essential drama; and in that drama, compressed into the final scene of the play, he proclaimed his true power and his true mission.

How impossible, in his subsequent work, would be such figures as Mrs. Linden, the confidant, and Krogstad, the villain! They are not quite the ordinary confidant and villain, for Ibsen is always Ibsen, and his power of vitalization is extraordinary. Yet we clearly feel them to belong to a different order of art from that of his later plays. How impossible, too, in the poet's after years, would have been the little tricks of ironic coincidence and picturesque contrast which abound in A Doll's House! The festal atmosphere of the whole play, the Christmas-tree, the tarantella, the masquerade ball, with its distant sounds of music- all the shimmer and tinsel of the background, against which Nora's soul-torture and Rank's despair are thrown into relief, belong to the system of external, artificial antithesis beloved by romantic playwrights from Lope de Vega onward, and carried to its limit by Victor Hugo. The same artificiality is apparent in minor details. "Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to live to be happy!" cries Nora, and instantly "The hall-door bell rings" and Krogstad's shadow falls across the threshold. So, too, for his second entrance, an elaborate effect of contrast is arranged, between Nora's gleeful romp with her children and the sinister figure which stands unannounced in their midst. It would be too much to call these things absolutely unnatural, but the very precision of the coincidence is eloquent of pre-arrangement. At any rate, they belong to an order of effects which in future Ibsen sedulously eschews. The one apparent exception to this rule which I can remember occurs in The Master Builder, where Solness's remark, "Presently the younger generation will come knocking at my door," gives the cue for

Hilda's knock and entrance. But here an interesting distinction is to be noted. Throughout The Master Builder the poet subtly indicates the operation of mysterious, unseen agencies- the "helpers and servers" of whom Solness speaks, as well as the Power with which he held converse at the crisis in his life- guiding, or at any rate tampering with, the destinies of the characters. This being so, it is evident that the effect of pre-arrangement produced by Hilda's appearing exactly on the given cue was deliberately aimed at. Like so many other details in the play, it might be a mere coincidence, or it might be a result of inscrutable design- we were purposely left in doubt. But the suggestion of pre-arrangement which helped to create the atmosphere of The Master Builder was wholly out of place in A Doll's House. In the later play it was a subtle stroke of art; in the earlier it was the effect of imperfectly dissembled artifice.

The fact that Ibsen's full originality first reveals itself in the latter half of the third act is proved by the very protests, nay, the actual rebellion, which the last scene called forth. Up to that point he had been doing, approximately, what theatrical orthodoxy demanded of him. But when Nora, having put off her masquerade dress, returned to make up her account with Helmer, and with marriage as Helmer understood it, the poet flew in the face of orthodoxy, and its professors cried, out in bewilderment and wrath. But it was just at this point that, in practice, the real grip and thrill of the drama were found to come in. The tarantella scene never, in my experience- and I have seen five or six great actresses in the part- produced an effect in any degree commensurate with the effort involved. But when Nora and Helmer faced each other, one on each side of the table, and set to work to ravel out the skein of their illusions, then one felt oneself face to face with a new thing in drama- an order of experience, at once intellectual and emotional, not hitherto attained in the theatre. This every one felt, I think, who was in any way accessible to that order of experience. For my own part, I shall never forget how surprised I was on first seeing the play, to find this scene, in its naked simplicity, far more exciting and moving than all the artfully-arranged situations of the earlier acts. To the same effect, from another point of view, we have the testimony of Fru Hennings, the first actress who ever played the part of Nora. In an interview published soon after Ibsen's death, she spoke of the delight it was to her, in her youth, to embody the Nora of the first and second acts, the "lark," the "squirrel," the irresponsible, butterfly Nora. "When I now play the part," she went on, "the first acts leave me indifferent. Not until the third act am I really interested- but then, intensely." To call the first and second acts positively uninteresting would of course be a gross exaggeration. What one really means is that their workmanship is still a little derivative and immature, and that not until the third act does the poet reveal the full originality and individuality of his genius.

SUMMARY OF PLAY

Act I:

Summary:

Nora enters a late nineteenth-century living room furnished comfortably and tastefully but not extravagantly carrying a Christmas tree and presents. After she nibbles on a few macaroons, she begins unwrapping parcels. Torvald, from his study (adjacent to the living room), hears her and comes out. Nora hides her macaroons. When Torvald sees the numerous purchases Nora has made, he chastises her for being a spendthrift. Torvald's tone is of a father talking to a small child. Nora responds to Torvald's concerns by saying that money is not important and that, should it become so, they will simply borrow money until Torvald gets paid again. Torvald gently objects to the idea of being in debt. Seeing that Nora is put out by his chastisement, Torvald offers her money for housekeeping, much to Nora's excitement.

Nora shows him the presents she has bought. Torvald then asks Nora what she would like for Christmas. After hesitating for a bit, Nora says that she would most like money. Laughing, Torvald again patronizingly accuses Nora of being a spendthrift.

Torvald then asks if Nora has been breaking rules and eating sweets. Nora lies and denies that she has been eating macaroons, protesting that she would never go against Torvald's wishes. Torvald believes her and they begin discussing how much they are looking forward to Christmas. They reminisce about the past, including how Nora locked herself up in a room in order to surprise everyone with homemade ornaments the year before only for them to be torn up by the cat. Nora begins to talk to Torvald about her plans for after Christmas when the maid interrupts with news of visitors.

Torvald retreats to his study where his friend Doctor Rank has gone while Nora receives Mrs. Linde, an old friend from school. At first, Nora does not recognize Mrs. Linde, who she has not seen for about a decade. The two quickly catch up on the events of their lives, including the death of Mrs. Linde's husband. Mrs. Linde reports that she feels that she has become much older but quickly asks Nora to tell her about herself. Nora happily shares that Torvald has been appointed to manager of the bank and that she is relieved that they will soon have heaps of money. Mrs. Linde, smiling, chastises Nora for fixing on money and they reminisce about Nora being a spendthrift when they were younger. Nora qualifies this comment by revealing that she and Torvald have both had to work very hard to make what they have. In fact, she reports that, early in their marriage, Torvald fell ill from overwork and they had to take a very costly vacation to Italy, paid for by Nora's father, in order to allow Torvald to recover. Nora laments the fact that, because she was looking after Torvald and expecting her first child, she could not nurse her father when he fell fatally ill just prior to their departure for Italy. Returning to the present, Nora happily reports that Torvald has been in good health ever since their trip.

The two women then turn to a discussion of Mrs. Linde. At Nora's request, Mrs. Linde explains why she married her husband despite the fact that she did not love him, reporting that the draw of his financial status was too compelling, given her circumstances. Mrs. Linde reports that, unfortunately, her husband died penniless and she has had to work to make ends meet and support her relatives for the last few years. Now that her mother is dead and her brother comfortable, Mrs. Linde says that she feels empty because she has no one for whom to care. She slyly asks Nora if Torvald would be able to secure some work for her. Nora agrees.

Mrs. Linde makes an off-hand remark about how little Nora has had to worry about in life, calling Nora a child. Nora objects, challenging Mrs. Linde's superior attitude. To prove how much she has been through, Nora shares with Mrs. Linde that, despite what she had just told her, it was actually Nora who, through a loan from an undivulged source, procured the money necessary to go to Italy and save Torvald's life. Mrs. Linde wonders aloud if Nora has not acted imprudently, having never shared this secret with her husband. Nora rejects this view, claiming that Torvald and her marriage could not sustain the knowledge of this secret. Mrs. Linde questions Nora as to whether Nora ever plans to tell Torvald. Nora replies that she may some day, if her good looks and charm wear off and she is in need of some compelling way to keep

Torvald, but not for quite a while. She then launches into a description of how hard it has been to find the money she has needed to repay this loan and how happy she is that she will be free of its burden thanks to Torvald's promotion.

The doorbell rings and the maid informs Nora that Krogstad desires to see Torvald. Nora, shocked and worried that Krogstad has come to inform Torvald of Nora's secret, questions Krogstad about his business. Krogstad assures her that it is mere bank business and so Nora assents. Mrs. Linde reveals that she once knew the man. When Krogstad goes into the study, Dr. Rank comes out to chat with Nora and Mrs. Linde.

Discussing the human urge to sustain life, Dr. Rank grudgingly admits that he does want to preserve his own despite his physical pain resulting from a disease. He then begins to discourse on the pervasiveness of morally corrupt characters, including Krogstad. Nora feigns ignorance and inquires about Krogstad about whom Dr. Rank only has unflattering reports.

Nora suddenly breaks out into laughter. Avoiding a direct reply to the questioning looks of Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank, she asks if the employees of the bank will be under the power of Torvald after his promotion. She revels in the idea. Still happy, she offers a macaroon to Dr. Rank, falsely claiming that they were a gift from an unaware Mrs. Linde after Dr. Rank expresses surprise (knowing that they are forbidden). Nora then impulsively shares with Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank that there is something that she would very much like to say if Torvald was able to hear: "I'll be damned!" Her companions' reactions are cut short, though, by the emergence of Torvald from the study.

Hiding the macaroons, Nora introduces Torvald to Mrs. Linde after he emerges from the study. After the initial introductions and explanation of Mrs. Linde's situation, Torvald agrees to secure a bookkeeping job for her at the bank. Torvald and Dr. Rank then exit followed by Mrs. Linde, who is going off to look for a room.

As they are leaving, the nurse enters with the children. The maid leaves for a bit and Nora proceeds to play with her children. While they are engrossed in a game of hide-and-go-seek, Krogstad knocks and half enters the room. The game abruptly stops when his presence is recognized. Nora sends the kids to the Nurse and talks to Krogstad at his request.

Krogstad inquires whether Mrs. Linde has been given an appointment at the bank. Nora confirms this and cautions Krogstad to be careful about offending those in power since he is in a subordinate position. Krogstad then asks Nora to use her influence to ensure that he will be able to keep his own position at the bank. Nora is confused and explains that she has no influence on such matters. After making a disparaging remark about Torvald, Krogstad reveals that he is prepared to fight for his position at the bank as if for his life, implying that he will not hesitate to reveal Nora's secret. Torvald explains that his reputation at the bank, sullied by an indiscretion of the distant past, is extremely important to him because it will influence the lot of his maturing sons. Nora again replies that she has no power to influence his status. Krogstad threatens again to reveal her secret to which Nora replies that she is not worried; she believes that Torvald's knowledge would not bring great harm to the family. As a last resort, Krogstad points out the fact that Nora had committed fraud by signing her father's name for him, to which Nora admits. Nora scoffs that surely her indiscretion was not important but Krogstad calls that into question by comparing it to his own problem of the past and the potential reaction of a court of law. Nora is in disbelief that what she sees as an act of love could ever be considered illegal or wrong but is perturbed nonetheless. Krogstad threatens her one last time with legal action and leaves.

When Krogstad leaves, Nora's children enter. Nora tells them not to mention Krogstad's visit to Torvald and reneges on her earlier promise to play with them, shooing them away. She then busies herself with needlework and asks for the Christmas tree.

While Nora is dressing the tree and talking the problem out aloud to herself, Torvald returns and questions whether Krogstad has visited. After first denying it, Nora admits to the meeting because Torvald tells her that he believes that she is acting out of pity for a man who has come begging her to put a good word in for him to Torvald. Torvald reprimands her for participating in a lie and dealing with a man of questionable character. He then dismisses the subject.

Nora, still dressing the tree, weaves a conversation that alternates between discussing the approaching fancy-dress ball (and asking for Torvald's help with it) and Krogstad. Torvald finally takes the bait and reveals that he plans to dismiss Krogstad because he despises Krogstad's character. Divulging that Krogstad's past indiscretion had been a forgery, Torvald admits that he would have forgiven the man had Krogstad owned up to his lie. Instead, Torvald vigorously condemns the lie that Krogstad used to escape his problem, claiming that Krogstad's hypocrisy is treacherous because it even infects his family; Torvald even goes so far as to claim that each breath that Krogstad takes necessarily pollutes his home and children. Nora mildly questions this and Torvald replies that he has often seen this sort of thing. In fact, Torvald claims that all children who go bad do so as a result of bad mothering (and perhaps fathering). Telling Nora never to pled Krogstad's case again, Torvald says that he would be unable to work with Krogstad because Torvald becomes physically ill in his presence. Nora is agitated and comments on how hot she is. Torvald, oblivious, goes off to his study to take care of business while Nora whispers to herself that the situation cannot be real.

The Nurse asks if the children can come in and play, to which Nora strongly refuses. Left alone, Nora is pale with terror and wonders if she can really be depraving her children. As the act closes, Nora tosses her head and states that these fears cannot be true.

Analysis:

Act I, in the tradition of the well made play in which the first act serves as an exposition, the second an event, and the third an unraveling (though Ibsen diverges from the traditional third act by presenting not an unraveling, but a discussion), establishes the tensions that explode later in the play. Ibsen sets up the Act by first introducing us to the central issue: Nora and her relation to the exterior world (Nora entering with her packages). Nora serves as a symbol for women of the time; women who were thought to be content with the luxuries of modern society with no thought or care of the world in which they lived. Indeed, there is some truth in this (the extent of this is debatable). As the play reveals, Nora does delight in material wealth, having been labeled a spendthrift from an early age. She projects the attitude that money is the key to happiness. By presenting this theme of the relationship between women and their surroundings at the beginning, Ibsen indicates to the reader that this is the most basic and important idea at work in the play.

However, it is also clear that Nora's simplistic approach to the world is not entirely her fault. Torvald's treatment of Nora as a small helpless child only contributes to Nora's isolation from reality. Just as Nora relates to the exterior world primarily through material objects, Torvald relates to Nora as an object to be possessed. The question becomes who is more detached from reality? Though Torvald's attitude pervades every word he speaks to Nora, his objectification of her is most evident in his use of animal imagery. He refers to her as his little "lark" and "squirrel"‹small harmless animals. Similarly, Torvald repeatedly calls Nora his "little one" or "little girl", maintaining the approach of a father rather than husband. Nora is fully

dependent on Torvald, from money to diet (the macaroons); and, because she is so sheltered, her perception of the world is romanticized.

Nora's skewed vision of the world is most evident in her interactions with Mrs. Linde. Whereas her old school friend is wizened and somber, Nora is impetuous. Her choice to tell Mrs. Linde about her secret seems to be more of a boast of a small child than a thoughtful adult; in fact, Nora only reveals her secret after being called a child by Mrs. Linde. Similarly, in her talk with Krogstad, Nora seems unable to accept that what she sees as acts of love could be seen as illegal and wrong. She refuses to believe that she is just as guilty as Krogstad.

However, it is apparent that Nora is at least partly aware of the falseness of her life. When pressed as to whether she will ever tell Torvald about the loan, she replies that she would, but only in time. For now, she believes that it would upset the lies that have built her home: Torvald's "manly independence" and even the basis of their marriage. This suggests that Nora is at least vaguely aware that Torvald's position as the manly provider and lawgiver is just as fabricated as her role as the helpless child-wife and mother. Indeed, it is important to examine the language of the opening scene between Nora and Torvald and realize that Nora's words can be read as both sincere and insincere; the text suggests an ambiguity in Nora's awareness of her situation. However, though Nora is somewhat aware, she does not want to face the implications of this reality, believing that material wealth will render her "free from care", allowing her to play with her children, keep the house beautifully, and do everything the way that Torvald likes. The lie can be preserved. Moreover, it seems that it is her lie, her knowledge that she has done something for Torvald that keeps Nora happy. Mrs. Linde's complaint that she feels unspeakably empty without anyone to care for reinforces the importance of this role for women in general in the text.

Consequently, Nora is content to continue to act as a child, romping with her children as if she is one of them. Indeed, it is clear that, just as she is not as much a wife as a child in her marriage, she is not a mother in any real sense either. It is the nurse who actually takes care of the children; Nora mostly plays with them and occasionally takes on more serious responsibilities but only because she views them as "great fun".

When Nora realizes that all may not go to plan after her talk with Krogstad because she is unable to either influence Torvald or talk to him on a straight level about her predicament, she begins to feel helpless. In the last scene of the act, when Nora is trimming the tree and conversing with Torvald, the full falseness of her situation becomes clear. Acting helpless, Nora tells Torvald that she absolutely needs his help, even with such a trifling thing as picking a costume for the upcoming ball. Torvald is not surprised and is even delighted, promising to help her. When the subject turns to the more serious matter of Torvald's views on Krogstad, it becomes apparent that Torvald is perhaps hopelessly invested in a false and twisted image of the world in which women are charged with the moral purity of the world, claiming that if men turn out badly it is because of poor mothering. As a result, at the end of the scene, when Nora reassures herself that "it must be impossible", she is worried both about the impossibility of her position in the immediate sense (i.e., concerning the loan) as well as the impossibility of her larger situation‹as a participant in a marriage and family built on lies. In fact, it is possible to view her last words of the act‹a defiance of Torvald's views on women‹as the beginning of her rejection of the marriage altogether.

Act II:

Summary:

The second Act begins where the first left off--Nora still pacing the living room uneasily, worried that Krogstad will expose her. Still denying the possibility of negative repercussions, Nora is interrupted by

the Nurse who brings in Nora's ball dress. Nora asks if her children have been asking for her. The Nurse confirms that they have and Nora, continuing to hint at negative events yet to come, tells the Nurse that Nora will not be able to be with her children as much as before. When the Nurse comments that the children will be able to cope with such a loss, Nora wonders aloud if they would forget her altogether if she were to go away. The Nurse is shocked. Nora then asks her a question she claims to have had for a long time: how the Nurse could have felt comfortable leaving her own children among strangers while she came to work as Nora's nurse when Nora was little. The Nurse tells her that she was grateful for such a good position and, given her financially unstable situation (and her dislike of her husband), something she could not pass up. Nora further probes if the Nurse's daughter, as a result of her absence, had forgotten the Nurse. Nurse says no. Nora throws her arms around the Nurse, telling the Nurse what a wonderful mother she had been for her. Nora also begins to say that she is sure that the Nurse would also be a wonderful mother to Nora's children if they were suddenly without a mother but dismisses her thought as silly and sends the Nurse back to the children, turning the conversation to the ball.

While alone, Nora unsuccessfully tries to concentrate on the ball and forget the problem of the possibility of Krogstad revealing her secret. She is interrupted by Mrs. Linde's arrival. Happy to see her, Nora asks Mrs. Linde to help her repair her dress for the ball the next evening. While sewing, Mrs. Linde thanks Nora for her hospitality and begins to ask about Dr. Rank and whether he is usually as depressing as he had been the day before. Nora reports that, as Mrs. Linde expected, he had been particularly bad and explains to her friend that Dr. Rank suffers from a very dangerous consumption of the spine that he has had from childhood; Nora hints that Dr. Rank's problem is the result of his father's sexual indiscretions (though it is unclear as to whether Nora is really hinting and aware of the fact that they were sexual in nature). Shocked by Nora's understanding of the matter, Mrs. Linde drops her sewing and asks Nora how it is that she knows of such things. Nora dismisses Mrs. Linde's inquiry by telling her that the married women friends that occasionally stop by have a good knowledge of medical problems. Resuming her sewing, Mrs. Linde quietly continues her probe of Nora's relationship with Dr. Rank, asking Nora if he is often at the house. Nora replies that Dr. Rank is a good friend of both she and Torvald and stops by the house daily. Curious about Dr. Rank's motives as well as his familiarity with Mrs. Linde's name (and Torvald's lack of familiarity), Mrs. Linde asks Nora to describe her relationship with the Doctor. Nora confesses that, because of Torvald's own tastes, she does often tell Dr. Rank things that she does not share with Torvald. Suspicious of Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde, citing her superior experience and knowledge of the world, counsels Nora to end her relationship with Dr. Rank. Puzzled, Nora asks Mrs. Linde exactly what it is that she should be ending. Mrs. Linde explains that she is afraid that Dr. Rank is the rich admirer who Nora described the day before as a potential source of money. Interrupting her, Nora clarifies that such a man does not exist. Still pursuing her line of thought, Mrs. Linde calls Dr. Rank tactless and tells Nora that it is obvious that he is the man from whom Nora has borrowed money. Nora denies this, but muses on the potential help that a man could bring to rectifying the situation. Sensing a change in Nora's disposition, Mrs. Linde asks Nora what has happened in the last day. Hearing Torvald approaching, Nora does not answer and asks Mrs. Linde to retire to another room with her sewing, explaining that Torvald dislikes seeing dressmaking. Mrs. Linde obliges Nora but warns her that she will not leave the house until Nora explains what has happened.

Torvald enters and asks if it was the dressmaker who had just left. Nora tells him that it was Mrs. Linde and replies that he must be very pleased that she had taken his advice to ask Mrs. Linde for help. Scoffing at the idea that he should be pleased that his wife had done his bidding, he excuses himself, saying that she will probably want to be trying on her dress. Nora remarks that she expects that he will retire to the study with his work. As he leaves, Nora stops him, asking him repeatedly if he would do something for his "little squirrel" or "skylark" if she were to act very "prettily", dancing and singing for him. Torvald answers that, despite these promises, he would still like to hear what the deed would be before he agrees. While Nora continues to promise that she will act like a fairy and dance for him in the moonlight, he abruptly asks her if she is making her request from earlier‹the appeal to not fire Krogstad. When Nora

confirms that she is, begging him to reconsider, Torvald grows angry, observing that it is Krogstad's post that he has promised Mrs. Linde; Torvald implies that he is annoyed that Nora seems to think that he would change his mind simply because of Nora's promise to Krogstad. Nora interrupts him, telling him that it is not just her promise that makes the matter so urgent-- she is concerned that Krogstad will besmirch their name in the newspapers. Torvald, thinking that Nora is afraid of libel because of past experiences with her father's name being trashed in the newspapers after his death, reassures Nora that, unlike her father, he is beyond reproach. Nora again pleads, warning that men like Krogstad are certainly capable of contriving things to bring harm to their happy, snug home. Torvald finally replies that Nora's pleas make it all the more impossible for him to change his mind; what would happen to his reputation if word got out that he had reversed his decision simply because of his wife's entreaties? Moreover, Torvald argues that Krogstad is not only morally corrupt, but he also takes advantage of their early childhood friendship to speak to him in what Torvald believes to be an inappropriately familiar manner. Torvald believes that this would make his position as manager intolerable. Incredulous, Nora tells Torvald that he surely must not be so narrow-minded. Angry at being called narrow-minded (which Nora tries to qualify), Torvald orders the maid to send Krogstad his dismissal which Torvald has already composed. Horrified, Nora begs him to call the letter back, warning Torvald that he must do it for the sake of the marriage and family. Torvald says it is too late and Nora agrees. Torvald then launches into a speech on how insulting he finds Nora's alarm but concludes by telling her that he forgives her because her worries are surely only an expression of her great love for him. He assures her that, come what may, he will have the courage to take upon him anything and everything that happens. Nora is particularly intrigued and horrified by this statement and asks Torvald to clarify. He simply repeats that he will take upon everything that comes their way. Nora states that that will never happen. Torvald interprets her statement as a desire to share the burdens as husband and wife and assures her that this is what he has in mind as well. He then dismisses the whole topic, asking her if she feels better and telling her to go back to practicing her dancing for the next night's ball in the tone of a father figure. He also instructs her to direct Dr. Rank to his study, leaving her for work.

Alone, Nora is bewildered with anxiety, whispering the cryptic statement: "he was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything. No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it!" The doorbell interrupts her monologue. Pulling herself together, she welcomes Dr. Rank with whom she converses while it falls dark. Nora detains him from Torvald for a while, telling him that, unlike the busy Torvald, she always has time for him. Dr. Rank replies that he will make as much use of her time as possible. Confused by his statement, Nora asks him to clarify his meaning, asking him if there is anything likely to happen between them. Dr. Rank enigmatically answers that nothing will happen for which he has not long been prepared, though he had not expected anything to happen so soon. Nora, alarmed, grips her friend by the arm, demanding him to tell her what he has found out. Sitting down, Dr. Rank reveals that he expects that he will be dead within a month. Nora is relieved that Dr. Rank has actually been talking about himself and not her own situation and comments on the ugliness of the matter. Dr. Rank agrees and asks Nora to prevent Torvald from entering Rank's sickroom once Rank knows that he is about to enter the final stages of death because Rank does not want Torvald to witness the ugliness of the disease since he knows that Torvald's refined nature gives Torvald an unconquerable disgust of everything ugly. Nora, upset by his pessimistic and ugly tone, comments that she had hoped that he would be in good spirits today. Rank scoffs at the idea of being in good humor (pun probably not intended) when he knows that he is dying for the sins of his father. Besides, he says, such revenge for indiscretion is being exacted in every household. Unclear as to what Rank is talking about, Nora comments that Rank's father must have eaten a lot of unhealthy foods and alcohol when he was younger. The conversation (it is unclear as to whether the two have really understood each other throughout the exchange) peters out with Nora commenting that the biggest tragedy has been that Dr. Rank has not been able to enjoy these pleasures himself. Dr. Rank is intrigued by this nebulous statement and makes a small exclamation. The conversation becomes confused and degenerates into a comment on the silly moods that two are in. Nora, rising and placing her hands on Dr. Rank's shoulders, comments

that she and Torvald would hate to lose Dr. Rank to death. Dr. Rank replies that those who are gone are easily forgotten, piquing Nora's interest. Dr. Rank, explaining the matter, observes that Mrs. Linde has already begun to replace him. Nora tells him to be quiet and promises that, if he is nice, she will dance the next day and he will be able to imagine that it is all for him (and, as a quick qualifier, Torvald as well). Nora, continuing (consciously or unconsciously) to flirt with the Doctor, pulls out a pair of silk stockings to show him. They banter a bit about how much leg Nora will have to show him for him to form an opinion of the stockings. Dr. Rank comments on the great deal of intimacy and comfort he has enjoyed with the Helmers and how he would like to leave some token of appreciation for their generosity before he passes away. Nora, interested, begins to ask him about doing her a big favor when Dr. Rank reveals that he is in love with her and would give his life for her, saddening Nora and deterring her from pursuing the favor. Nora, chastising Dr. Rank for making such a comment, leaves the room to bring in a lamp. Steering the conversation back to safer territory, Nora explains why she loves Torvald but seems to enjoy her time with Dr. Rank more. While she is observing how similar her relationship with Torvald is with that of her deceased father, the maid enters with the news that Krogstad is in the house and refuses to leave until he sees Nora. Dr. Rank, unaware of the circumstances, retires to Torvald's study, buying Nora's explanation that she has just received a new dress about which she would prefer Torvald not know.

Temporarily alone while the maid fetches Krogstad, Nora comments to herself that "this dreadful thing is going to happen! It will happen in spite of me! No, no, no it can't happen‹it shan't happen!"

When Krogstad enters, Nora tells him to speak low, warning him that Torvald is home. Krogstad, unperturbed, asks her for an explanation of his dismissal. Nora replies that she did her best pleading his case, but could not sway her husband. Krogstad, assuming that Nora told him everything, comments that Torvald must love her very little to have made such a decision. Nora informs him that Torvald does not know anything about the matter, inspiring Krogstad to make a few derogatory remarks about Nora's husband. Settling down a bit, Krogstad asks Nora if she now has a clearer idea of what she has done than the day before. Nora replies that she does indeed. In fact, she says that she understands more than Krogstad could ever teach her and asks him what he wants of her. Krogstad replies that, despite the words exchanged in their last meeting, he has in fact been concerned about her and wants to know how she is doing. He informs her that he will not make the matter public, but will keep it between he, Nora, and Torvald. Nora protests that Torvald must not know but Krogstad replies that, even if she did have the money to pay the outstanding balance on the loan, he would still need to engage her husband. He also tells her that he will still not part with the bond and counsels her not to think of running away or committing suicide (to which Nora admits considering) because she will not be publicly exposed. To Nora's continued protests, Krogstad explains that he must involve Torvald because his intent is to ask Torvald not for money but for help in rehabilitating himself. Krogstad predicts that, with Torvald's help, he will soon replace Torvald as the manager of the bank. Nora, horrified, threatens him not to do any such thing. Brushing off her threats, he leaves her with the reminder that he holds her reputation in his power and the observation that it is Torvald's actions that have forced Krogstad to act this way again. He then exits and drops his letter to Torvald into the locked letter box for which only Torvald has a key.

Mrs. Linde enters with the dress as Nora watches Krogstad put the letter in the box. Nora seizes Mrs. Linde and reveals her problem, asking her friend to be her witness in case anything should befall Nora. She insists that Mrs. Linde tell everyone that Nora was not insane and, more importantly, was completely responsible for everything. Mrs. Linde, confused, tells Nora that she does not understand what Nora is talking about, prompting Nora to observe that "How should you understand it? A wonderful thing is about to happen," leaving Mrs. Linde even more confused. Nora elaborates, explaining that this wonderful thing is also terrible and "musn't happen for all the world". Mrs. Linde offers to go to Krogstad and convince him to ask for the letter back using her old amorous connection with him as a method of persuasion. Nora says that it is hopeless. However, while Torvald begins knocking on the door, asking to enter, Mrs. Linde

resolves to go to Krogstad and exits quickly. As she leaves, Nora unlocks the door for Torvald and Dr. Rank. The two men are surprised because they expected Nora to be trying on her dress. Torvald observes that Nora looks worn out and asks her if she has been practicing too much. Nora replies that she has not been practicing at all and, in fact, she is incapable of practicing without Torvald because she cannot seem to remember anything without him. Hoping to distract him long enough to solve the letter problem, she asks him to help her all day and night until the ball. Torvald agrees. However, before they begin to practice, he begins to go out to the letterbox to check for mail. Nora, afraid, stops him by playing the first bars of the Tarantella she is going to dance; she lures him to play for her and correct her while she dances (Dr. Rank, until now an observer, eventually takes over at the piano so Torvald can stand and correct Nora better). Her dancing is wild, growing more so as it continues until her hair has come all undone. While Nora is still dancing, Mrs. Linde returns and observes to Nora that she is dancing like her life depended on it, to which Nora agrees. Torvald eventually calls everything to a halt, chastising Nora for having forgotten everything he has taught her. Nora replies that she has indeed forgotten everything and needs his help to relearn the dance. She tells him that he must not think of anything else, especially not any letters. Torvald, catching on a bit, remarks that he can tell from her behavior that there is a letter from Krogstad waiting for him. Nora responds that she does not know, but that there might be; she implores him not to let anything horrible come between them until "this is all over". Dr. Rank whispers to Torvald that Torvald must not contradict her and Torvald takes her into his arms, calling her a child that must have her way. He promises to work with her until after the ball but says that, after that, he will be free (the words of Nora). They then all retire to dinner, Nora calling for lots of macaroons. As they leave, Torvald and Dr. Rank exchange a few words on Nora's state of mind, making it clear that they have discussed it before. Dr. Rank, concerned, asks if Nora is expecting something, but Torvald dismisses the concerns as evidence of childish nervousness. They exit.

Alone, Mrs. Linde tells Nora that Krogstad has gone out of town. Nora seems unconcerned, telling Mrs. Linde that she should not have bothered because nothing should impede the "wonderful" thing that Nora claims will soon happen. Mrs. Linde presses Nora to explain this wonderful thing, but Nora dismisses her questions, telling her she would not understand and sends Mrs. Linde into the dining room. Nora alone, composes herself, and checks the time. She observes that she has thirty-one hours to live (until after the tarantella). Torvald's voice is then heard asking for his "little skylark" and the Act ends with Nora going to him with outstretched arms.

Analysis:

Whereas Act I set up the initial invasion of reality into Nora's world and the rattling of the basic underpinnings of the falseness of Nora's life (i.e., marriage and motherhood), Act II eventually sees her set up a test that will determine whether or not her world is false. In other words, she is confronted with the fact that Torvald will find out about her lie but believes that, if he is the man she thinks he is, his discovery will only strengthen their marriage. Her reaction to Krogstad finally dropping his letter in the letter box is the climax of the play. In the traditional well made play, this would be followed by a unraveling and moral resolution of the dilemma set up in the first act and brought to head in the second. However, Ibsen deviates from this mold, turning the third act into a discussion.

At the beginning of the second Act, before the climax, Nora is still trying to confront the fact that her world can be touched and shattered. Though she is shaken, she still believes that her family and her material comforts will protect her. However, she is worried enough about the matter that she has already begun to consider the idea of both running away and committing suicide (though she admits that she does not have the courage for this last part). Luckily, the ball temporarily distracts her. This ball is extremely important for Nora because, through the costumes and dance, she is able to embrace the basic elements of the basis of her relationship with Torvald that she is still trying to preserve; she can sing and dance for

him as a lovely creature. Mrs. Linde refers to Nora's dress as her "fine feathers" reinforcing the general perception of Nora as a non-human entity, a creature free of cares. In fact, the dress itself serves as a potent symbol of Nora's "character". Like Nora, it is torn and in need of repair. However, as in real life, Nora feels she is incapable of fixing the problem herself, giving the dress to Mrs. Linde to mend. The idea of the dress serving as a symbol for Nora's everyday mask is reinforced when Nora reports that Torvald dislikes seeing dressmaking in action. In other words, Torvald enjoys the character that Nora adopts but has no desire to see its origins, the real Nora.

Indeed, Nora tries to maintain her relationship with Torvald, unsuccessfully attempting to manipulate him on behalf of Krogstad through playing the part of his innocent and darling creature. One of the key turning points of the play comes when Torvald tells her that, come what may, he will take everything upon himself. Whereas before, Nora merely sought to find some way to avoid this disaster, now the idea that this episode may prove the strength of her marriage has been planted in her head. An important quotation to look at is Nora's remarks after she is left alone that "He was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything. No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it!" One way to read this is as a comment on Krogstad's actions‹that he will reveal her after all. Another way to read this statement is as a commentary on Torvald's decision to fire Krogstad and the problems it will cause. Still another way to read this is as concern that Torvald will take responsibility for her actions as he promised.

After this realization, Nora begins to act a bit more daring than before, using her awareness of the possibility of Dr. Rank's affection to manipulate him. When things go too far for her, however, and he admits that he is in love with her, she can not continue, her manipulation ruined by the blatant statement of reality. After all, Dr. Ranks' revelation that he, like Torvald, would give his life to save Nora's ruins her belief that Torvald's position is somehow unique.

Nora's hopes of averting disaster are dashed when she sees Krogstad drop the letter into Torvald's box. Perhaps already aware of the inherent problems of the relationship, she exclaims that all is lost for her and Torvald as Krogstad deposits the letter. Nora's fear, now that she knows that there is no turning back, is that the "wonderful thing" will happen: that Torvald will try to take this all upon himself and that, by knowing what she has done for him, they will become equal partners in the marriage. Nora both fears this and wishes for it. But, Nora is not ready to face this just yet. She wants to act out her last chance to be a creature for Torvald, dancing the tarantella. It is only after this dancing that she consents to letting him free. Interestingly, her last statement that she only has thirty-one hours to live can be read two different ways. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as saying that she plans on committing suicide in order to free Torvald from having to take the responsibility on himself; she would die knowing that she had once again saved his life. On the other hand, it may be a comment only that her life as she knows it will be over and that, in thirty-one hours, she will have to embark upon a new, radically different life because her relationship with Torvald will be over.

Act III:

Summary:

Act III opens with Mrs. Linde ostensibly trying to read in the living room the next night. As the sounds of dance music suggest, Torvald and Nora are upstairs at the ball. Mrs. Linde is waiting for Krogstad so that she can talk to him about Nora's predicament. When Krogstad arrives, he and Mrs. Linde turn almost immediately to a discussion of why Mrs. Linde jilted him for her now-deceased husband many years ago. Mrs. Linde explains that, though she questioned her decision many times, she had to pursue her former husband's money given the number of people that depended on her at the time for their livelihood.

Krogstad reveals that her departure left him a shipwrecked man clinging to wreckage. Mrs. Linde replies that, like him, she is now a shipwrecked woman clinging to wreckage and asks if it would not be smart if they should join forces. She tells him that he is the reason that she came to town and that, since he believes that he could be a better man with her and she wants a family to look after, they should be together. The music of the tarantella is heard above and Mrs. Linde urges Krogstad to be quick. Krogstad grows suspicious, questioning Mrs. Linde as to whether she is saying all of this simply on behalf of Nora (i.e., to get him to take the letter back); she denies it and he offers to take the letter back. However, she urges him not to, admitting that this had been her original intention. She tells him that, since her first discovery of the problem the day before, she has witnessed enough in the house to convince her that Torvald must read the letter. Mrs. Linde observes that, in order for a complete understanding between Nora and Torvald (which she believes to be key to a successful marriage), all secrets must be revealed. Krogstad leaves, promising Mrs. Linde that he will meet her in a few minutes. Mrs. Linde, hearing Nora and Torvald coming, prepares to leave, commenting on what a difference having people to care for makes in her life.

Still in costume (Nora as a Capri maiden and Torvald in evening wear and a domino), Torvald brings Nora into the room, almost by force. She is trying to get him to return to the ball for as long as possible. Torvald refuses, citing their earlier agreement. They greet Mrs. Linde, who explains that she had stayed up in order to see Nora in her dress. Torvald brags about how lovely Nora looks, describing his wife's successful evening. He tells Mrs. Linde that Nora danced the tarantella marvelously, if a bit too realistically for proper artistic appreciation, and that he tried to make her exit (after such a success) equally artistic by ushering her around the room for a last bow and then disappearing into the night; he complains that Nora did not appreciate his attempts. Torvald then goes off to light some candles and air out the house a bit, leaving Nora the chance to ask Mrs. Linde for news from Krogstad. Mrs. Linde tells Nora that Nora must tell Torvald everything. Nora is not shocked and simply thanks Mrs. Linde and tells her that she now knows what she must do.

Torvald returns and gives a short speech on the merits of embroidery over knitting to Mrs. Linde who has forgotten her knitting. Mrs. Linde soon leaves, and Torvald exclaims that he is happy that she is finally gone, calling her a bore. Nora then asks Torvald if he is tired, telling him that she is quite sleepy. Torvald replies that he is in fact, quite awake; moreover, he has been waiting to be alone with his wife all evening. He calls her beautiful and fascinating, telling her that she is his treasure‹all his. Nora tells him that he must speak that way to her tonight, but he only finds this more alluring, observing that she must still have the tarantella in her blood. He then launches into an explanation of why he pretends not to know her at parties: he is fantasizing about meeting and seducing her for the first time; in fact, while they are leaving, he pretends that she is his new bride about to be his for the first time. Nora tries to push him off much to Torvald's confusion and displeasure.

They are interrupted, however, by Dr. Rank who Torvald earlier claimed had been in quite high spirits all night. Annoyed but pretending to be delighted, Torvald welcomes the Doctor into the room. The three talk about the ball and all its finery. Unknown to Torvald, Dr. Rank reveals to Nora through his conversation that he has made his final diagnosis today and that he will soon die. Dr. Rank elaborates on how much he has enjoyed himself this evening, telling them how much he has indulged in the wine and sights; he also asks Torvald for a cigar, further indulging himself. Dr. Rank eventually leaves, with Nora wishing him a good sleep. Torvald, still unaware, comments on what he believes to be Dr. Rank's drunkenness and begins to head out to empty the mailbox so that the morning paper will be able to fit. Nora unsuccessfully tries to stop him. At the mailbox, Torvald is surprised to find that someone has tried to pick the lock with one of Nora's hairpins. Nora tells him that it must have been one of the children and Torvald tells her to keep them away from the box.

Torvald is surprised to find two letters from Dr. Rank, one of which has a black cross through his name. Torvald comments on the morbidity of such a mark and Nora confirms that it is their friend's way of announcing his death. Torvald briefly muses on the sadness of losing their friend but concludes that it is probably better for both Dr. Rank and for he and Nora, for now he and his wife are quite alone. Torvald embraces Nora, telling her how much he cares for her. In fact, he says, he wishes that he could somehow save her from some great danger so that he could risk everything for her sake. Nora disengages herself from his embrace and tells him in a resolved tone that he must now read his letters. Torvald replies that he would much rather be with her, but Nora questions whether this would be appropriate given Dr. Rank's news. Torvald assents that something ugly has come between them because of the news and that it would be best to spend the night apart. Nora hangs on his neck and tells him good night and Torvald goes off to read his letters in another room.

Alone, Nora prepares to rush off to commit suicide by jumping into the icy depths of the river, throwing on Torvald's domino and her shawl. As she bids adieu to her family and rushes out the door, Torvald hurries out of his room and stops her, letter in hand. Torvald asks her if she knows what is in the letter but Nora still tries to leave, telling him that he "shan't save" her. Torvald stops her, locking the door, and continues to wonder out loud how this could be true, dismissing her pleas that all was done out of love and protests that he will not suffer at her hands. When Nora realizes, however, that Torvald has no intention of taking the burden the problem upon himself and only blames Nora for ruining his life (claiming that he should have probably seen this coming given the character of her father), she grows still. Torvald only continues to berate her and her character, going on about how horrible it is that the actions of a thoughtless woman could ruin his life, prompting Nora to only grow colder. Not allowing Nora to speak, Torvald begins to speculate about their future, saying that they will keep up appearances but, of course, Nora will not be allowed near the children nor will their marriage be maintained.

He is interrupted by the maid, who is bearing a note from Krogstad to Nora. Torvald intercepts the letter and reads it himself, learning that Krogstad has had a change of heart and has sent back the bond. Torvald, overjoyed, shouts, "I am saved," prompting Nora to ask whether she is as well. Having a change of heart, Torvald replies that she is also saved. Overcome with relief, he comments on how hard this all must have been for Nora and tells her that he has forgiven her; he tells her that he will think of it only as a bad dream and that, in his mind, it is all over. Realizing perhaps that Nora is not having the same reaction, Torvald explains to her that he knows that she did this all out of love and that he can forgive her because he also knows that, as a woman, she is unequipped to make the proper decisions. In fact, he tells her that her helplessness and full dependency on him make her all the more endearing to him. Nora thanks him for his forgiveness and leaves the room to take off her ball dress.

As she is removing her dress, Torvald stands in the doorway and muses about the comfort of their home and how much he wants to and will protect her, assuring her that everything will soon be as it was before. He tells her that the helplessness of a wife makes the wife even more attractive to a husband because she becomes both a wife and child, doubly his own. And, he continues, when a husband forgives a wife, he gives her new life and becomes even closer to her.

As he is promising to be her will and conscience, he notices that she has changed not into bed clothing but into everyday clothing. Torvald is confused. Nora explains to him that she shall not sleep tonight and asks him to sit down with her at the table for a serious "settling of accounts". Alarmed, Torvald tells her that he does not understand her. Nora agrees, telling him that he has never understood her and that, before tonight, she has never understood him. Torvald asks what she means. Rather than replying directly, Nora points out the fact that, in their eight years of marriage, they have never before sat down to have a serious discussion. Torvald protests that such conversations would not have made sense, given Nora's interests. Nora tells him that she has been greatly wrong by both her father and her husband. Shocked, Torvald asks

how this could be possible given that they are the men who have loved her the most. Shaking her head, Nora corrects him, telling him that he has never loved her but has only thought it pleasant to be in love with her. She explains to him that, just as her father did, Torvald has treated her as a doll to be played with, arranging everything to suit himself and forcing her to live only to entertain him. As a result, she has not made anything of her life or even ever been truly happy. Torvald agrees to this analysis, though he qualifies it as exaggerated and strained, and tells her that, from now on, he will stop playing with her and start educating her. Nora refuses, observing that he is not the man to educate her; after all, only a few minutes before, he had told her that she was unfit to raise her children. Nora tells him that she agrees with him about her inability; she acknowledges that she first needs to educate herself before she tries to educate the children and tells him that this is why she is going to leave him. Torvald, shocked, jumps out of his chair, calling her mad and trying to prevent her from leaving. She calmly rebuffs his attempts to forbid her, telling him that she will go to her old home tomorrow. Torvald accuses her of neglecting her "most sacred duties" as wife and mother, refusing to acknowledge Nora's opinion that her duty to herself as a reasonable human being is just as sacred, if not more so. Torvald, at a loss, first appeals to her sense of religion and then morality, both of which Nora shoots down by explaining that she has never had a chance to examine and embrace these things on her own and, as a result, does not know if she agrees with them. Torvald, unable to sway her, tells her that all that he can conclude is that she does not love him. Nora, apologetic, agrees with him, telling him that he lost her love earlier tonight and that, because of this, she cannot stay in the house. She tells him that her love was lost because the wonderful thing did not happen: he did not refuse Krogstad's conditions and try to take all the blame upon himself (which Nora says she would have refused anyway). Torvald replies that, though he would gladly work day and night for her, he would never assent to jeopardizing his honor for a loved one. Nora simply replies that many wives have done just that. Torvald dismisses her words as those of a heedless child. Admitting the possibility of this, Nora describes his selfish perspective and her own horror at earlier realizing that she had lived with and borne children with a stranger for eight years. Sad, Torvald observes that an abyss has opened up between them but asks if there is not a way to fill it up. Nora refuses, telling him that they will both be better off apart. Still trying to appease him, she tells him that she hereby releases him from all obligations to her; she says that there must be perfect freedom on both sides.

Resigned to her leaving, Torvald begs to stay in contact with her, assisting her when she is in need. Nora rejects his offers, telling him that she could never accept anything from a stranger. Torvald then asks her if he could ever be anything more than a stranger to her. Nora replies that that would only be possible if "the most wonderful thing in the world" were to happen but that she no longer believed in the possibility of them. Torvald, still hopeful, presses her for what this would be. She explains that they would both have to be so changed that their life together would be a real wedlock and leaves. Sinking down into a chair with his hand in his face, Torvald moans her name. He then looks up and observes how empty the room has become without her. The play ends with the thought of the most wonderful thing of all flashing across Torvald's hopeful mind followed by the sound of a door shutting below.

Analysis:

Act III is extremely important in A Doll's House. Rather than presenting the traditional unraveling of the well made play, it confronts the reader or viewer with a discussion of the themes presented in the first two acts. The act is also the deciding point of Nora's life: will the "wonderful thing" happen or not? It begins with a foil for Nora and Torvald's marriage. In fact, Mrs. Linde and Krogstad's decision to be together can be seen as ironic in the context of Nora and Torvald's marriage because, though Mrs. Linde and Krogstad both suffer from significant personal and moral problems, they have a better chance of a happy and true marriage than Nora and Torvald. Mrs. Linde advocates revealing all to Torvald because, as her union with Krogstad suggests, she believes that it is possible to build a relationship of mutual dependence of

unformed characters as long as both parties are fully aware of each other's motives. Mrs. Linde hopes that, through this union, both she and Krogstad can become the better people they know that they can be.

The extent of Torvald's investment in a fantasy world and the importance of Nora's false characterization is revealed when he describes how, at parties, he pretends not to know her so that he may seduce her all over again. And, perhaps more importantly, Nora is quite candid about her understanding of all this, telling him flatly that she knows.

It is important to notice that Nora's time at the party has been the first time that she has left the confines of the one room in the entire play. Moreover, she has to be dragged back in. This suggests that it is Torvald's own desires to have Nora entertain him that necessarily forces Nora to journey into the real world. Also, it is interesting to note that she also temporarily leaves the room to exchange her party dress for everyday clothing, her first lone foray from the room. This new trend is the beginning of her final departure from the room‹a departure that ends the play, shattering the values that had supported the walls of the house.

But, when she leaves for the final time, she is leaving for reasons other than what she had intended at the beginning of the Act. Before Torvald confronts her with the letter, she is on her way to commit suicide, determined that Torvald should not have to sacrifice his life for hers. She considers this the appropriate thing to do because she believes that he would willingly give his life for hers as well. In this way, they have an equal relationship. However, she is extremely disappointed to discover that he clearly has no intention of sacrificing himself for her. Instead of refusing to abide by Krogstad's demands and taking the blame on himself, Torvald accuses Nora of ruining his life, telling her that she will no longer be able to see her children or maintain their marriage except in public appearances. Nora even asks him whether he would give his life for her and her fears are confirmed when he answers that he would never sacrifice his honor for a loved one. Consequently, Nora resolves to leave Torvald, aware that true wedlock is impossible between them because neither of them loves the other, or is even capable of doing so. Nora realizes that, before she can be a wife, she must first discover herself through venturing out into the world. She leaves an unformed soul, determined to become a full person rather than the doll of the male figures in her life.