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# **HENRIK IBSEN: A DOLL HOUSE FEMALE CHARACTER**

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*Done!  
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

(( وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمَ ))

صدق الله العظيم

سورة طه ( الاية ١١٤ )

## **Dedications**

We must and we move past our steps in the university life of the pause  
and go back to the years we spent in the university campus with  
the esteemed our professors who have given us so much effort  
great efforts in building tomorrow's generation to send the nation  
again ...

Before we offer our deepest gratitude and appreciation and love to those who  
carried the message holiest in life

To those who paved the way for us science and knowledge ... All our  
professors Distinguished

## **Dedications**

To the fountain of patience and optimism and hope  
To each of the following in the presence of God and His  
    Messenger, my mother dear  
To those who have demonstrated to me what is the most beautiful  
    of my brother's life  
    To the big heart my dear father  
To the people who paved our way of science and knowledge  
    All our teachers Distinguished  
To the taste of the most beautiful moments with my friends

**I guide this research**

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### Abstract

The paper aims at shedding light on the role of women and their rights as tackled by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen in one of his most controversial plays *A Doll's House* 1879. Ibsen, one of the world's greatest dramatists, is the father of modern drama and one of the great supporters of women. Much light will be shed on the unfair system of marriage, pressure on individuality of women and struggle for their freedom. According to Ibsen, individuality and humanity are the important social issues. Ibsen expands individual perception of women and takes freedom of patriarchal society position.

The paper falls into three sections. Section one focuses on ..... the second section deals with.....while the last section concentrates on ..... the paper ends with a conclusion that sums up the findings of the study, followed by a list of references.

## Chapter One:

### Introduction

#### 1. Henrik Ibsen: A Short Biography:

He was born on March 20, 1828, in Skein Norway. Skein was a small town but had a busy life and an important place in maritime trade. Its size was big enough to offer chance to its citizen and circling area, but small enough for everyone to know each other (Catrin and Parker, 2002:6). His father was a successful merchant and his mother drew, played the piano and loved to go to the theatre (Education pack, 2014:16). In his early childhood, Ibsen's family enjoyed a wealthy lavish life. But soon their financial peace was to come to ruin. At six years old, the pride of Ibsen's father as wealthy merchant, came to an end as he went bankrupt. This had its impact on his life, on his feeling and made him introverted (Peter, 1965:8). When he was 8 years old, his father's business collapsed. Nearly all traces of their previous affluence had to be sold off to cover debt, so that his family left town (ibid), after that the family was fallen from house on out skirts of Skein. Ibsen presented the small\_ middle\_ class school, where he cultivated a talent for painting if nothing else. He was also taught German and Latin as well as drawing. In 1843 he was fifteen years old, he left school and went to work as a junior in an apothecary in Grimsted ([www.gradesover.com](http://www.gradesover.com)). Leaving his family and travelled to Grimsted, small, removed town to begin his apprenticeship. He maintained a strong desire to gain admission to the university to study medicine. He fathered an illegitimate with the maid of the apothecary. He began to write in earnest in Grimsted (ibid). In 1849 he was 21 years old, he wrote first play **Gatiline** a drama written in verse modeled after one of his great influences William Shakespeare



(Catrin and Parker, 2002:6). **Gatiline** was doomed with a failure soon, and in 1851, Ibsen was appointed a theatre manager, director and dramatist at Bergen. It enriched Ibsen's insights as he experienced.

Productions of great dramatists, plays among which were some of Shakespeare and scribe's well-made plays (cluman,1977:4). In 1848, Ibsen left Norway to live in self-determined exile, in Italy and Germany, and spent twenty-seven years. He found that his soul kept longing for and struggled to regain his losses in restless veins. In 189, he returned to Norway as literary hero. The man who left as disappointed artist returned as internationally known playwright ( Education pack, 2014: 6 ). Ibsen's last years, however, became clouded with destruction strokes. The first of which in 1901 left him partially paralyzed. The second in 1902 brought his memory to complete destruction leaving him quite inactive. He died in Christiania ( also) on May 23, 1906 ( Ibrahim, 2002: 10).

Ibsen's dramatic works are national, romantic and historical including play like **Gatiline** along with **The pretenders**. He also wrote drama of ideas such as **love's comedy, Brand, peer Gynt and Emperor and Galilean**. Some other plays, were realistic and psychological including **A doll's house, Ghosts, An enemy of people, The lady from the sea, little Eyolf and when we Dead awaken** (ibsen.nb. no/id/130436.0).

He was called the father of modern drama. Ibsen discarded the scribe's formula for the "well-made play", that had ruled the nineteenth century theatre. He brought the problems and ideas of the day on to his stage emphasizing character rather than ingenious plots, and created realistic plays of the psychological conflict. Through his works, the social dramas as well as symbolic plays, run the twin themes that the individual, not



the group, is of paramount important and that the denial of love is the unforgivable sin, tantamount to denial of life (Benet, 1998:1). Ibsen wrote about 26 dramatic works and published one collection of poetry some of his plays: **Gatiline 1850, Norma 1851, John's Night** (written in 1852, first published in 1909), **Olaf liljekrans** (written in 1856, first published in 1902), **love's comedy 1862, Brand 1866, poem's 1871, A doll's house 1879, and when we Dead Awaken 1899.**

## 2. Ibsen and the theatre of modern realism

Henrik Ibsen is one of the major realist, and is also one of the modern dramatist. Because of him drama has get a good transaction. Ibsen introduction the new boldness (Nicolla, 1925:344). Ibsen's subject matters were rare and thought over. Henrik Ibsen is self-created therefore, he explains the natural life of everyday life. His subject were a reflection of the serious or natural troubles people. Henrik Ibsen was daring enough to perform the social ills through his realistic account (Bently, 1967:92). Henrik Ibsen was a smart person to hauling things in order to transform his own thoughts. He abhors the suggested columns of society and the journalists, the journalists which have a bad effect on the social life. During this time Ibsen thinks a lot and tries to destroy ghosts which make people unable to breathe in their life (Ibsen, 1964: 145).

Ibsen struggles in order to leave the artificial drama Ibsen's factual plays, are to call the normal man's taste, which led to unnoticeable adjust of character. Ibsen introduced a new credo which isn't used in normal language. Ibsen clarifies his new means of communicating : " I want to illustrate human begins and I would not let people or humans speak the language of God " (ibid). Because, Henrik Ibsen was interested in the

images of human being of everyday life, he was able to classify a consonantal comprehending about the self- feeling of people (Shaw, 1913:91).

## Chapter Two

### A Doll's House: A critical Analysis

#### Plot Summary:

When the play opened, it is Christmas eve. Nora makes preparation for Christmas. While she eats macaroons, the visitors ( Dr. Rank and Mrs. Linde ) enter. Rank goes to speak with Torvalds, while Linde speak with Nora. Linde explain that her husband has died and that needs to find a job. Nora agrees to ask her husband to give Linde a job in the bank. Nora tell Linde about borrowing money to pay for a trip to Italy for her and her husband. She explains that Torvald doesn't know that she paid for it. Rank leaves the study and begins to speak with Nora and Linde. He complains about the moral corruption in society. Krogstad arrives and goes to the study to talk to Torvald about keeping his job. After few minutes, he leaves and Rank comments that Krogstad is one of the most morally corrupt people in the world. Rank and Linde leaves and Krogstad reenter. He tells Nora to ask her husband to keep Krogstad, or else he will reveal Nora's crime of forgery. Krogstad leaves and when Torvald reenter. Nora asks him not to fire Krogstad. Torvald says that he must be fired because of his dishonesty and that he would give Krogstad's job to Linde. Torvald returns to his study. The Nurse, Ann-Marie, enters and gives Nora her ball gown. Ann-Marie explains that she had to leave her children to take the job taking care of Nora.

Ann-Marie leaves. Linde returns and begins to help Nora with stitching up her cloth. They talk for a while about Dr. Rank. Torvald enters and Linde leaves to the Nursery. Nora asks Torvald again not fire Krogstad and Torvald refuses. He gives Krogstad a pink slip to the maid to be

mailing to Krogstad. Torvald leaves to his study. Rank tells Nora that he loves her. Nora said that she never loved Rank and only had fun with him. Rank leaves to the study and Krogstad enters. He is angry about his dismissal and leaves a letter to Torvald explaining Nora's crime in the letter box. Nora is frightened. Nora tells Linde about the matter and Linde assures her that she will talk to Krogstad and set things straight. Linde leaves after Krogstad and Rank and Torvald enter from the study. They help Nora practice the tarantella. After practice, Rank and Torvald exist. Linde enters and tells Nora that Krogstad left town, but she left no note for him. Nora tells her that she's waiting for a miracle to happen. That night during the dance, Linde talks to Krogstad in Helmer's apartment. She explains to him that she left him for money, but she still loves him. They get back together and Krogstad decides to forget all things about Nora's matter about borrowing money, however, Linde asks Krogstad not to ask for the letter back since she thinks Torvald needs to know of it. Both leave, Torvald and Nora enter from the dance. Torvald checks his letter box and finds some letters and business cards from Dr. Rank with black crosses on them. Nora explains that they mean that Rank is announcing his death as bad news. Torvald enters his study and Nora prepares to leave. However, before she can get out the door, she is stopped by Torvald who reads Krogstad's letter. He is angry and disavows his love for Nora. The maid comes with a letter. Torvald reads a letter which is from Krogstad. It says that he forgives Nora of her crime and will not reveal it. Torvald burns it along with the IOU that came with it. He is happy and tells Nora that everything will return normal. Nora changes and returns to talk with Helmer. She tells him that they don't understand each other and leaves him.

## 1. Nora Helmer

Nora Helmer is a housewife woman. She is an example of the woman who is treated as a doll in the European age. Nora loves her husband and respects him. She doesn't break her husband's speech or opinion. Nora listens to her husband's speech and everything he says is the right. Nora hasn't got her own opinion or authority. Although, he loves his wife, Nora, he considers her as a thing he owns. Nora doesn't cost anything without her husband Torvald. Nora has a past of sacrifices for her husband. At the beginning of their marriage, Torvald got a bad disease and became a harmless person because of his disease and lost his job ([http://www.up\\_00.com](http://www.up_00.com)).

Nora Helmer is considered as a perfect wife according to the ideas of the age. She is a "Doodle", a "Bunny" for her husband Torvald, and a beautiful or docile mother for her children. For many years, Nora sacrifices in order to save money to get back the amount of money, she borrowed to save her husband's life. She has falsified her father's signature without thinking of the result only to save Helmer's life. This is one of Nora's sacrifices (Batra, 2008 :193). As another, Nora is a very friendly and loving mother, she approximately dotes upon her children. She has three kids Ivar, Emmy and Bob. In act two, there is a brief scene in which we see how Nora loves her kids and looks after them. Though, they have a nurse. It is a local happy scene in which the kids appear as splendidly pleasant in the company of their mother. In this scene Nora appeared very happy in playing with her kids. At the end when Nora wants to leave the house and children, she asks the old Nurse if she will look after them as the way she used to do in the past. This shows Nora as mainly with her children, their happiness and their life (Lall, 2010: 145).

Besides, Nora has a tendency to tell lies which is something in character. Nora, for instance, recants that she had eaten jam. She tells Mrs. Linde that she got the money for her father for their journey to Italy. Here, Nora doesn't tell the truth to Mrs. Linde and she implies lies. Nora tells her husband that Mrs. Linde comes to visit him and she asks her for a job. Helmer accepts the idea and welcomes it. For about eight years, Nora kept the secret from her husband about the contract that she did with Krogstad. What Nora did was to keep the contract as a secret. This shows that Nora doesn't care about the truth and she has always the ability to deceive others and lying on them (ibid). Krogstad begins to threaten Nora about the contract they did together. Krogstad tells Nora, that if she tells to her husband to remain him in his job, then he will keep her secret. Helmer doesn't love Krogstad, because he is a bad man. Nora asks her husband to let Krogstad in his job, but he refused her request. Nora feels sad and she doesn't know what to do. Nora thinks that if her husband knows the truth, he would put the blame upon himself in order to save her, but what he does is that he put all the blame upon her in order not to be criticized by society (Lall, 2010: 146). Nora tells her husband that both he and her father were unfair to her and treated her as a doll. In her father's house, Nora must listen to her father's views and opinion and must obey him while in her husband's home, she must adopt her husband's views and tastes. Nora tells her husband that she is a person who has his own opinions and view as an independent person. Nora tells Helmer that she would teach herself the experience of the world. She tells Helmer that she now stopped loving him because he proves a selfish man. Nora declares to him that she wants to leave him, to leave her home and even to leave her children. Thus, she left the house behind her slapping the outer door of house behind her (ibid: 148).

## **2. Mrs. Linde**

Mrs. Christina Linde is Nora's childhood friend , but she is a widow and has faced much trouble .

**Nora(softly): poor christina ! I forget , you are a widow ?**

**Mrs. Linden : yes ; my husband died three years ago . (Act 1 , 11)**

She looks " Much colorless" and " Much older" than Nora.

She comes to Nora in order to help her to find a job, she had married for money to support her family namely her mother and two young brothers. Now, her mother and husband are dead and her brothers are grown.

**Mrs. Linden. My mother was then alive, bedridden and helpless; and then I had my two younger brothers to think of. I thought it duty to accept him . (Act 1, 15)**

Her husband died bankrupt ,therefore, she has lived an independent life as a single working woman. She has struggled financially and now that she has no one to care. She is then left lonely (<http://www.Novelguide.com>) . She first appears in the first act of play, when she comes to Nora's house. Nora at first doesn't recognize her since the two women have not met for years.

**Mrs. Linden: I don't say you don't recognize me ?**

**Nora: No, I don't think \_\_\_\_\_ oh, yes! \_\_\_\_ I believe \_\_\_\_ (Effusively) what! Christina! It is really you?**

**Mrs. Linden: yes: really me! (Act 1, 10).**

The two have a small talk trying to tell each other something about their past life circumstance (Lall,2010: 160).

Nora tells Linde about the loan, which she had taken several years ago under the pressure of circumstances. She doesn't tell her at this stage the identity of the person from whom the loan had been taken (ibid). She



provides a sub-plot by her relationship with Krogstad and she acts as a foil and model to Nora who recognises through her that is entitled to her own referee and can lead an independent life. She tells Krogstad that she has seen incredible things in Helmer's household (Batra, 2008: 197). By which she means the relationship between Nora and her husband is something very unusual and surprising. Mrs. Linde acts as Nora's confidante. Her greater experiences and steadiness throw Nora's childish excitements into higher relief. But she is most important at the end, where a direct anti-thesis between her and Nora is again established (ibid). Although this seems at first a benefit as yet. Torvald discover all the debt that Nora is able to see the true nature of her marriage this evolution confirmed. Mrs. Linde's belief that honesty is always better than deceit, even if Mrs. Linde's expectation was that it was Nora's deceit that needed to be exposed, not the shallowness of Torvald's feeling (<http://www.litcharts.com>). While Mrs. Linde and Nora were having a talk. Krogstad arrives, Mrs. Linde asks Nora about Krogstad

**Mrs. Linden. Nora who was that man?**

**Nora. A Mr. Krogstad. Do you know him?**

**Mrs. Linden. I used to know him. years ago. He was in lawyer's office in our town.**

**Nora. yes. So he was .**

**Mrs. Linde. How he has changed! (Act 1,25).**

Mrs. Linde and Krogstad were so in love at one time, but Mrs. Linde left him and married another one for money. In the end, when she and Krogstad have decided to marry. She is happy because she will have someone to care for. She decided that Nora cannot continue to deceive Torvald and that Krogstad should not

retrieve his letter presumably, Krogstad will retain his position at the bank (<http://www.enotes.com>).

## Conclusion:

We see the contrast between Mrs. Linde's character and Nora Helmer through Ibsen's portrayal of female. There is a sharp contrast between Nora Helmer and Mrs. Linde. Ibsen draws them in a sharp contrast from the first appearance in the play. These two women move on parallel lines but in opposite directions. Nora enters, making a continuous low noise cheerfully. Nora is obviously happy and she is like a child in her behaviour. She is a satisfied wife and a satisfied mother. Mrs. Linde appears first, she is in a travelling suit. Because of Nora's deviant humming Mrs. Linde is shamed and hesitating. Later on we know that Mrs. Linde is paler, thinner and much older than Nora Helmer. We also know that she is a widow with no family and no children. Mrs. Linde's life was empty and does not have any one to live for any more. Mrs. Linde earns her livelihood by herself in the world of business of which Nora knows nothing. Nora at the beginning was an immature girl and girlish in her conduct and living in a world of imagination, Mrs. Linde has early passed the obstacles of life and achieved mellow. While Nora is leaving her husband's home in order to live her life as an independent person who has her own views and decisions and to face an anxiety future, Mrs. Linde was preparing herself to get married to Krogstad and to settle down into a comfortable life or life of society. Mrs. Linde offers a contrast to Nora Helmer on the side of truth. Nora has been concealing the fact of the loan from her husband, the fact that she forges her father's signature in order to get the money for their journey to Italy. This action includes an act of deceit on her part though it is prompted by good impulses. In act three Mrs. Linde advises Nora to tell the truth to her husband, Helmer, but Nora rejected to do so. Mrs. Linde tells Nora that her husband will know the truth from Krogstad's letter.

Mrs. Lindesupports honest and truth fulness against Nora's deceits which involves deceive and lying .

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