

Sympathy for Nora in Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House

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In "A Doll's House," Henrik Ibsen primarily addresses issues not only relating to women in Norway, but to women embarking on twentieth century life in general. To achieve his desired effect, he employs the use of contextual dialog and places Nora as the central character, which gives her a great edge. Because of her prominent role throughout the play, she becomes familiar, and what is familiar is favored. With the lone exception of the exchange between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad at the beginning of Act III, there is not a single scene that features a dialog that in some way does not include a prominent part from Nora. It soon becomes apparent that Nora emerges from the *dramatis personae* as the *pièce de résistance* Ibsen intends to win our sympathies.

In Act I, scene I, the stage is set, bringing the meaning behind the plays' title into sharp focus. Here, Ibsen uses contextual dialog to demonstrate that Nora is indeed, as the title implies, little more than a doll in a toy house, a plaything that [Torvald](#) doesn't take seriously. For instance, Torvald asks: "Is that my little lark twittering out there? Is it my little squirrel bustling about?" (Ibsen, 500). A short [pace](#) later, he calls her "a poor little girl," and then adds "you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands" (502). Nora

appears to willingly-if not a little naïvely-play into this role: after clapping her hands she replies, "No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so" (503).

A second issue Ibsen presents for consideration in the first scene is a discussion of money, Nora appearing to play the role of the pampered child with a penchant for shiny coins clin...

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...lly good reason for favoring Nora beyond our sense of familiarity with her: she lies, she cheats, she rationalizes, she walks out on her husband and children-she is not an innocent character. But is this tendency not the wont of human nature, to excuse that which is connected to us while failing to consider there is a whole other side to the issue?

It would seem that by the prominence Ibsen affords Nora, he masterfully steers our sympathies in her direction like a crafty rhetorician employing the Greek concept of kairos. By what he chooses to reveal (and conceal), Ibsen has us feeding out of the palm of his hand, for in the end, it could be said that life is all a matter of perspective . . . almost.

Works Cited:

Ibsen, [Henrik](#). "A Doll's House." Literature: The Human Experience. 8th ed. Ed. Richard Abcarian and Marvin Klotz. Boston: Bedford, 2002. 499-557.

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