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Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

A Doll's House

by Henrik Ibsen

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A Doll's House

To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

A Doll's House

Act I

1. Nora is quite happy at the prospect of Torvald's big new salary. Suppose you suddenly come into a large sum of money. Write a paragraph describing how you got the money, how you will spend it, and how it will change your life.
2. Nora's character is portrayed as a spendthrift. A spendthrift is someone who wastes money. Describe a time when you spent money unwisely. Was it worth it? If you had to do it all over again, would you make the same expenditure? Did you learn any lessons from the experience?
3. Act I takes place on Christmas Eve, and we see Nora decorating their Christmas tree. Apparently, the Helmer's tradition is to hide the tree from the children until Christmas Eve when it is completely decorated. Choose your favorite holiday and write a paragraph describing the traditions your own family observes to make it special. Try to include various elements, such as, the history, the foods that are eaten, the activities performed, and the relatives or friends who attend.
4. Nora is very happy to see her old school friend, Christine Linde, after many years. Choose a close friend of yours and make up a conversation you might have in 10 years. Consider all the events that might have happened in that 10-year period.
5. Like Nora and Christine Linde, most people will have friends they like more than other people they know. There may be numerous reasons for this: similar interests, closeness in location, social status, etc. Compose a poem about friendship focusing on *why* people are friends.

Response Journal

6. Mrs. Linde admits to Nora that she has never loved her husband. In her reason for marrying him, she says, “My mother was alive then and was bedridden and helpless, and I had to provide for my two younger brothers; so I did not think I was justified in refusing his offer.” In light of the options available to women in that era, do you agree with her decision? Would it be as acceptable an option today? Pretend you have a friend marrying for less-than-ideal reasons. Write a letter to that friend, giving advice.

7. Mrs. Linde is very proud that she was able to care for her sick mother and young brothers. Nora is very proud that she was able to save Torvald’s life by procuring the money for their trip to Italy. Describe, in detail, an accomplishment in your own life of which you are very proud.

8. Although he speaks lovingly and teasingly, Torvald often implies Nora’s thoughts are silly and insignificant, and that she doesn’t have enough sense to handle her money. How do you think this might make Nora feel? Write a diary entry where Nora expresses her feelings.

9. Torvald has many pet names for Nora, such as “little lark” and “little squirrel.” Pet names, or nicknames, are usually forms of affection. What are some nicknames used in your family or with friends? Do you have a nickname? In what sense does the nickname describe your character or that of a friend or family member?

10. Dr. Rank says Krogstad has a diseased moral character. What do you think he means by that? List 5 character flaws that might be considered “diseased.” Then, think of one character flaw that you possess and write down what you can do to improve yourself.

A Doll's House

11. In response to Dr. Rank's position on people with diseased moral character, Mrs. Linde says, "the sick are those who most need taking care of." This statement indicates that Mrs. Linde is probably a caring person. Write a short story featuring a character that performs a caring act, and the effect it has on others.

12. Nora brags to Krogstad about her influence with her husband in getting Mrs. Linde a job. How does this get Nora in trouble? List three negative results that can occur when someone brags. Describe a personal experience that involves bragging. The bragger may be you or someone else.

13. Nora is surprised to learn that forging her father's signature on the loan document would be considered a crime, even though her motives were good and she has nearly repaid the money. Pretend you are her lawyer arguing her case in court. Write the closing statement you will present to the jury defending her actions. Remember, a closing statement is a lawyer's last chance to summarize his case, and try to convince the jury that his client is not guilty.

14. Krogstad reveals to Nora that what she has done is no more or no less than what he did to ruin his reputation. Nora says, "You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life?" Do you agree that Nora acted bravely in obtaining the loan, or do you think she acted imprudently as Mrs. Linde suggests? Please explain your reason.

Response Journal

15. By obtaining the money for the trip in secret, Nora felt she did what was necessary to save Torvald's life, and also to preserve his "manly independence." She also felt that forging her father's signature on loan papers was necessary to spare her dying father anxiety and care. What do you think about her decisions? What would you have done if you were in Nora's situation? What would you have done differently?

16. Bearing in mind that honesty is the best policy, write a letter from Nora to Torvald explaining what she has done, and why. Use the information from the text, but you may add creative details.

17. Early in Act I, we see Nora as a loving mother, playing with her children and buying them Christmas gifts. However, by the end of Act I she is aghast to learn that she has unknowingly caused her little children to become depraved, and poisoned their home with her deceit. Do you think this is true? Explain why or why not.

A Doll's House, Act II

18. In the beginning of Act II, we see Nora beginning to separate herself from her children so as to avoid “poisoning” them further with her deceit. We also discover that Nurse Anne gave up a child for adoption when she was young. Make a list briefly describing the circumstances that make it acceptable for a mother to give up a child. Then, imagine that your friend is in the position where she must give up her child. In a letter to this friend, summarize her circumstances and offer her advice.
19. Nora is very agitated as she waits to see what Krogstad will do about her secret loan and the forgery. She tries to put the thoughts from her head by staying busy. She ends up brushing her muff, which is a mitten-like item. In a journal entry, explain how you handle stress. Describe the things you do when you feel stressed out and worried?
20. Dr. Rank was sickly from childhood because his father was “a horrible man who committed all sorts of excesses.” Today we have made great advances in healthcare. Research prenatal care and list 5 things pregnant women can do to increase their chances of having healthy babies.
21. Nora tells Torvald that Krogstad writes for the most scurrilous newspapers, and can do them an unspeakable amount of harm. Using the information you have from the play, write a “scurrilous” gossip column for the newspaper about Nora and Torvald, as if Nora’s secret were discovered.
22. Torvald ends up sending Krogstad’s dismissal letter because he is angered by Nora’s claim that he is narrow-minded. Think of a time when you, or someone you know, acted out of anger. Describe what happened, as well as the end result. Then, construct a more productive way you could have handled the situation.

Response Journal

23. Nora decides to enlist Dr. Rank to help in solving the problem with Krogstad. Then, she decides she can't go through with her confession when Dr. Rank professes his feelings for her. Why do you think she decides to stay quiet? What does this say about Nora's character? Is this an indication of a "diseased moral character" or not? Explain your reasoning in an essay.
24. Dr. Rank is determined to express his feelings for Nora before he dies. However, he does not achieve the results he desires—his profession seems to have pushed her away. Write two descriptive paragraphs. The first paragraph should consist of something you thought about saying but you didn't have the courage to say. In the second paragraph describe a time when you had the courage to say something that was on your mind, but, based on the results, it would've been better if you had kept quiet.
25. Nora makes an interesting comment about love when she says that there are "some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions." Make a list of the people that you truly love and describe what type of love it is. What are the differences between these types of love?
26. Krogstad seems to have an insight into Torvald's character when he says, "It would not be the least like our dear Torvald Helmer to show so much courage." Nora seems to have quite a different view, seeing Torvald as quite heroic. Read through Acts I and II, and list a supporting reference for each view.
27. Krogstad blames Torvald for forcing him into dishonest ways again. Do you feel his motives are justified? Do you feel Torvald is responsible for Krogstad's actions, or do you feel Krogstad should take responsibility for himself? Write a short essay supporting either opinion.

A Doll's House

28. In Act I, we see that Nora believes her illegal and scandalous actions are justified because they were done in order to save Torvald's life. In Act II, we see that Krogstad believes his dishonest method of blackmailing the Helmers is justified in order to preserve his social standing for his children. Compare and contrast these two acts of dishonesty. Be sure to examine the motives, and how the actions affected others. Determine whether you believe one action to be more dishonest than the other, and why.

29. Sometimes it is argued that the end justifies the means. In other words, the goal (or end) is so important that it justifies whatever methods (or means) are used to achieve that goal. Others argue that it isn't whether you win or lose, but how you play the game. Do you feel the ends justify the means in the cases of Nora and Krogstad? Describe why or why not.

30. Nora contemplates suicide as a means to save Torvald from taking the blame for her crime. Write an editorial for the school newspaper on why suicide is never the answer.

31. Anne says she has heard from her daughter, whom she gave up for adoption. People who are adopted often try to reach their birth mothers. If you were adopted you might have many questions to ask your biological mother. Imagine you are an adopted child trying to contact you biological mother. Compose a letter describing your feelings about her actions. Include any questions you would have.

32. Nora has Mrs. Linde come over to help repair her dress. Presumably, Mrs. Linde is good at sewing. Think of something you are good at, or something you enjoy doing. Write directions detailing how to perform that activity. Be specific and include illustrations if necessary. Assume that the reader has no knowledge of that activity at all.

Response Journal

33. In the era in which *A Doll's House* was written, men often treated women as possessions—objects that were cherished, but played with and not taken seriously. How does this differ from the way men and women treat each other today? Which era would you rather live in? Explain your reasons.
34. One purpose of literature and theater is to highlight social issues, and attempt to promote social change through awareness. In *A Doll's House*, the author illustrates women's issues during the era. Think of a social issue relevant to today's society (racism, gun control, nuclear weapons, etc). Write a story or storyline for a play that explains your opinions on that issue. Don't forget a catchy title that will make people want to read your story or watch your play. You can't effect social change if people don't read or hear what you have to say!

A Doll's House

Act III

35. We learn that Krogstad and Christine Linde were once engaged to be married. Christine decided to marry someone with better prospects in order to support her sick mother and young brothers. Compose the letter that Christine wrote to Krogstad breaking their engagement. Use the information given in the text.
36. Krogstad told Mrs. Linde that when he lost her, “it was as if all the solid ground went from under my feet.” A broken heart is often the topic of song. Write the lyrics to a song, in the country and western style, about a broken heart.
37. Mrs. Linde tells Krogstad not to recall his letter because she realizes that there must be complete understanding between Nora and Torvald, which was impossible with Nora’s secret. Write a fictional story about a person who conceals information for some reason. Write two different endings describing alternate results of different choices that person could have made.
38. Throughout the whole play, Mrs. Linde repeatedly advises Nora that she should tell Torvald the truth. Imagine you are talking with a classmate who is also studying *A Doll's House*. Complete the following conversation (or make up your own):
- Classmate:** I can’t believe Nora keeps refusing to tell Torvald the truth. I wonder what she thinks will happen if she does?
- You:** I don’t know. Maybe she thinks...
39. It seems, at times, that Torvald is guilty of saying one thing, but doing another. He declares he has often wished for Nora to be threatened by some great danger so he could risk everything for her sake. However, when a threat occurs, he thinks only of himself and the impact it will have upon his own life. Describe a time when you have said one thing, but done another. Were the results satisfactory? If you had to do it over again, would you choose the same action?

Response Journal

40. In Act II, Torvald says, “Come what may, you may be sure I shall have courage and strength if they be needed. You will see I am man enough to take everything upon myself.” This is where Nora gets her idea that Torvald will take the blame for her scandalous actions. Do you think Torvald lives up to his claim in Act III? Why or why not?
41. Many organizations have a motto. A motto is a word or phrase used to express the goals, ideals, or behaviors of that organization. In America, most states have an official motto. For instance, the state motto for North Carolina is “To Be Rather Than to Seem.” Describe how you think this motto relates to *A Doll’s House*. (Hint: Look at the characters’ behavior to determine if they “are” as they “seem.”) Next, write a letter to a character from the story giving advice that is based upon that motto.
42. Do you think Torvald’s reaction to Nora’s deeds would have been different if she had told him the truth, rather than to have it revealed by Krogstad? Why do you suppose Nora feels it is so important to keep her secret from Torvald? Write a dialogue that might occur between Nora and Torvald if she were to confess her secret before he received the letter from Krogstad.
43. Nora considers herself to be an unfit mother because she did not have the judgment to determine the consequences of her actions. Do you agree with her assessment? In what ways are today’s standards different from those of the era in which *A Doll’s House* was written? Would Nora be considered a bad mother by today’s standards?
44. Do you think Nora’s children will be better off without her? Try to explain how you would feel if you were one of her children. Do you think they will understand when they are older? Write a dialogue between Nurse Anne and the children explaining why their mother has left. Or, write a letter from Nora to her children explaining why she left.
45. Nora tells Torvald that she must “get some sense.” She says she can no longer content herself with what most people say or with what is found in books. “I must think over things for myself and get to understand them,” she says. How do you think she will do this? How would you do it? Make a list of resources Nora might use to find such help, and the type of help each resource might provide. One example might be a minister or pastor to provide moral guidance and religious education.

A Doll's House

46. Torvald tells Nora that her most sacred duties should be to her husband and children. Nora says her most sacred duties are to herself. What do you think your most sacred duties are? Write an essay on what you believe to be your most sacred duties and how they will change as you grow from student, to single adult, to married adult, to parent.
47. Nora feels that her father and Torvald have both done her a great disservice by treating her as a doll. She says, "You and Papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life." In a journal entry, describe the ways in which your parents affect your life. How do they restrict your behavior and shape your future? How does this differ from them just wanting to protect you?
48. Nora reminds Torvald that he said she was unfit to bring up their children. This must have been hurt Nora deeply. Torvald replies that he said it in a moment of anger. "Why do you pay any heed to that?" he asks. People often say things they don't really mean when they are angry. Describe a time when you said something in anger that you didn't really mean. What were the results? How did you feel later, after you had calmed down? What did you do to "make it right?"
49. Torvald acts selfishly upon reading Krogstad's letter. In response to her husband, Nora tells him that he neither thinks nor talks like the man she could bind herself to. We all have ideas about the type of person we want to marry and of the special qualities they should possess. Make a list of these qualities. Then, write a personal advertisement for a dating service describing the qualities you seek in a spouse and the qualities you possess.
50. Nora thought Torvald would try to protect her by taking the blame for her mistake. Torvald says that no man would sacrifice his honor for the one he loves. With whom do you agree? What would you have done if you were in Torvald's situation?

Response Journal

51. When Nora is honest with Torvald and tells him why she doesn't love him anymore, he wants to try to change. He says, "I have it in me to become a different man." Do you think this is possible? Do you think people can change? Do you think Nora should give him a second chance before leaving him? Do you think it would be better for Nora to stay and for both of them to work on their problems together? Write an alternate ending to the story as if Torvald were able to convince Nora to stay.
52. Nora refers to "the most wonderful thing of all" several times in the play. The definition of this phrase changes depending on the situation. Write a poem describing what would be the most wonderful thing that could occur in your own life?
53. Do you agree with Nora's decision to leave Torvald and her children? Write a letter to Nora giving her your opinion about her decision. Explain your reasoning.
54. What do you think Nora means when she says their life together would be a "real wedlock?"
55. Even though Nora leaves her husband, the ending of the play does offer hope. Nora admits to a circumstance under which they could be reunited, and Torvald believes he can change enough to make "the most wonderful thing of all" happen. Write a brief sequel to this play in which, Nora and Torvald reunite after five years apart. Construct a conversation between the two. What will happen between them? How are their lives? What has changed? How could they have a happy ending?

A Doll's House

W r a p - u p

56. Explain the significance of the title. Create a new title that is equally significant.
57. For what purpose do you think the author wrote this play? What do you think the main message is?
58. Which character in the play do you think exhibited the most “moral disease”? Why?
59. For which character do you feel the most sympathy at the end? Why? Did it change throughout the story? If so, what caused the change?
60. When this play was first produced, it was considered scandalous. Do you think it is by today's standards? Do you think the issues are still relevant? Suppose you learn that your school board is going to drop *A Doll's House* from the reading list because they believe it is no longer relevant for today's student. Write a letter to the school board to persuade them to continue allowing students to study this play.
61. Sequels are popular because readers wish to know more about the characters. For what reason do you think this play should, or should not, have a sequel?
62. Write the dialog that might take place twenty years later when Nora and Mrs. Linde run into each other on the street.
63. Write a letter to a friend telling why you liked the ending, or why not. If you didn't like the ending, include an alternate ending that you think would've been better.
64. If you had a chance to speak with the author of *A Doll's House*, what questions or comments would you make?
65. If you were to choose one character from this novel to be your husband or wife, who would it be? Explain the reason for your choice.

Response Journal

66. All the characters in the play serve a purpose to the story. For each character, write a sentence or two describing their function. For example: Dr. Rank serves as an example of how poor parenting affects children. This substantiates Nora's decision to leave her children in more fit hands.
67. Imagine you are a newspaper critic. You have just seen this play. Write a review about the play. How is this play powerful or weak? What suggestions do you have to make it better; what elements make the play great? Be brutal; be honest.

A Doll's House

Test

1. Nora doesn't tell Torvald that she borrowed the money for their trip to Italy because
 - A. Nora wants to keep the secret for a time in the future when she is no longer attractive.
 - B. it would be painful and humiliating for Torvald to owe Nora anything.
 - C. Nora really wanted to go to Italy and Torvald's health was an excuse to get her way.
 - D. Nora wanted to earn money like a man.

2. What crime did Krogstad commit?
 - A. theft
 - B. usury
 - C. fraud
 - D. forgery

3. Nora wants Torvald to give her money for Christmas in order to
 - A. have more time to think about what she really wants for Christmas.
 - B. secretly give it to Mrs. Linde who doesn't have a job.
 - C. secretly repay a loan.
 - D. buy macaroons.

4. Why does Mrs. Linde marry the man she chose?
 - A. she was desperately in love with him
 - B. he asked her repeatedly
 - C. she didn't feel justified in declining him because she had to take care of her family
 - D. she had no other offers and was afraid she would end up an old maid

5. Krogstad want to keep his job at the bank so he can
 - A. gain respectability and repair his reputation.
 - B. earn money for his family.
 - C. cover up his illegal activities.
 - D. annoy Torvald.

Response Journal

6. Why does Nora forge her father's signature on the loan?
 - A. she wanted her father to repay the loan
 - B. Krogstad told her to do it
 - C. all of the above
 - D. her father was too ill to disturb with the bad news of Torvald's illness

 7. Why was Dr. Rank in poor health?
 - A. Dr. Rank drank alcohol as a child
 - B. his father committed too many excesses
 - C. he has tuberculosis
 - D. he doesn't eat his vegetables

 8. The purpose of Dr. Rank's character in the story is to
 - A. show what happens to children when they have bad parents.
 - B. provide comic relief.
 - C. show that not all men were like Torvald.
 - D. serve as a contrast to Nora and Torvald's happiness.

 9. Why does Nora think she is an unfit mother?
 - A. she sneaks macaroons when Torvald isn't looking
 - B. she is a spendthrift
 - C. she has brought deceit into their home
 - D. she doesn't like her children anymore

 10. What is the "wonderful, terrible thing" Nora is afraid will happen?
 - A. Torvald will heroically take the blame for her poor actions
 - B. no one will find out what she did
 - C. Krogstad will move away and leave them alone
 - D. Dr. Rank will die and leave her the money to pay off the loan

 11. Nora pretends she has forgotten how to dance the Tarantella to
 - A. get Torvald to spend more quality time with her.
 - B. make Torvald feel that Nora can't do anything right without him.
 - C. reinforce Torvald's idea that Nora is scatterbrained.
 - D. delay the time when Torvald will open Krogstad's letter.
-

A Doll's House

12. Krogstad blames Torvald for causing him to return to dishonest ways because
- A. Torvald is a bully and enjoys ruining peoples' careers.
 - B. Torvald won't allow Krogstad to keep his job and Krogstad is desperate.
 - C. Krogstad is jealous of Torvald's new appointment as manager of the bank.
 - D. Krogstad feels Torvald won't listen to reason.
13. Nora feels she is living in a dollhouse because
- A. people can see through the windows.
 - B. everything is too easily broken.
 - C. she is treated as a toy instead of a person.
 - D. her life has no real meaning.
14. Mrs. Linde wants to marry Krogstad because
- A. she wants someone and something to work for.
 - B. she feels bad because she took his job.
 - C. she wants to help her friend at any cost.
 - D. she wants to make up for having jilted Krogstad previously.
15. Why does Mrs. Linde tell Krogstad NOT to take back his letter from Torvald?
- A. she thinks the unhappy secret must be disclosed
 - B. she is angry with Nora and wants to see her suffer
 - C. she wants Krogstad to use the letter to get his job back
 - D. she feels the letter will make no difference anyway
16. What does the black cross on Dr. Rank's card signify?
- A. Torvald's impending death
 - B. the end of Nora and Torvald's marriage
 - C. Dr. Rank's impending death
 - D. Dr. Rank's intention to commit suicide

Response Journal

17. Nora contemplates suicide because
- A. like Dr. Rank, she is tired of living.
 - B. she wants to prevent Torvald from suffering for her sake.
 - C. she wants Krogstad to feel remorse for blackmailing her.
 - D. she wants to avoid being found guilty of forgery.
18. Torvald does not fulfill Nora's expectations concerning the "most wonderful, terrible thing" because
- A. he is so angry with Nora that his actions are out of control.
 - B. he is distraught to learn of Dr. Rank's impending death.
 - C. he believes Nora's feelings are inconsequential.
 - D. he believes no man should sacrifice his honor for the one he loves.
19. Nora decides to leave Torvald because she
- A. needs to be on her own to learn how to think for herself.
 - B. realizes she doesn't love Torvald anymore.
 - C. is tired of being Torvald's plaything.
 - D. all of the above
20. What is the "most wonderful thing of all" that must happen before Nora and Torvald could resume their relationship?
- A. Torvald must apologize and promise never to speak condescendingly to Nora again.
 - B. Nora and Torvald must agree to "forgive and forget."
 - C. Nora and Torvald must both change to create a true wedlock.
 - D. Nora must grow up.

A Doll's House

Test
Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

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Response Journal

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on Response Journals**

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A Doll's House

Test
Answer Key

1. ___B___

2. ___D___

3. ___C___

4. ___C___

5. ___A___

6. ___D___

7. ___B___

8. ___A___

9. ___C___

10. ___A___

11. ___D___

12. ___B___

13. ___C___

14. ___A___

15. ___A___

16. ___C___

17. ___B___

18. ___D___

19. ___D___

20. ___C___

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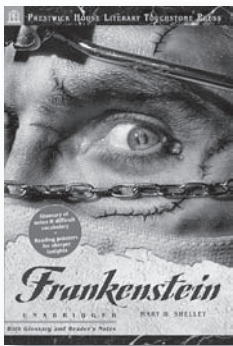
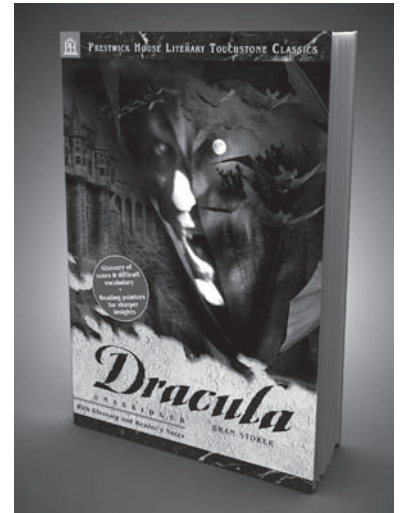
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