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Advanced Placement in  
English Literature and Composition

Teaching Unit  
Individual Learning Packet

*A Doll's House*

by Henrik Ibsen

Written by Ashlin Bray

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# *A Doll's House*

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. discuss *A Doll's House* in the social and historical context of its time.
2. explain the concept of the “well-made play” and show how *A Doll's House* both adheres to the formula and departs from it.
3. diagram Freytag's pyramid and assign plot elements from *A Doll's House* to each element of the pyramid.
4. define the terms round character, flat character, dynamic character, static character, stock character, and foil, and give an example of each in the play, stating the rationale for the assignments.
5. identify the protagonist and the antagonist of the play, and explain the basis for the choices.
6. discuss the importance of irony and foreshadowing in *A Doll's House*, citing examples.
7. discuss *A Doll's House* in terms of feminist criticism.
8. place *A Doll's House* in the context of the movement for women's suffrage and the emerging societal reevaluation of women's place in society.
9. explain Ibsen's use of language and his handling of figurative language in *A Doll's House*.
10. analyze the characters of Helmer and Nora individually and in relation to each other.
11. trace Nora's awakening sense of herself and discuss the realizations that drove her to the choice she makes at the end of the play.
12. answer multiple-choice questions on the plot, structure, and characters of the play that are similar to those on the Advanced Placement in Literature and Composition exam.
13. complete essay questions displaying a critical understanding of the play and its importance in the dramatic tradition similar to those on the Advanced Placement in Literature and Composition exam.

## Lecture

### The Playwright

Henrik Ibsen, Norway's preeminent dramatist, is considered a realist, dealing objectively with the problems confronting everyday people and looking at these problems without the distortions of romanticism. Ibsen was certainly a prolific dramatist; his career as a playwright lasted from 1851 until his death in 1906. Many of Ibsen's plays were written during a period of nearly 30 years when he lived and worked primarily in Italy and Germany. This long exposure to different European cultures infuses his work with a sense of the universal. Ibsen returned to Christiania (now known as Oslo) in 1891, and he lived there until his death.

Early in his career, he combined his love for poetry with his interest in drama, writing poetic dramas. *Peer Gynt* is the most notable play from this early period. Its fame has been cemented by the incidental music composed for it by Edvard Grieg, a fellow Norwegian. Ibsen's middle career, during which he wrote his most famous plays (including *A Doll's House*), showed his discomfort with and disapproval of the empty social traditions that limited mankind's success. One major theme of this period was the negative effect of treating women primarily as social ornaments or vessels. Ibsen came to believe that women should have equal rights with men and that, in fact, women had the potential to reform social institutions and create a better world. The final phase of Ibsen's work emphasizes the use of symbolism; *The Master Builder* is an example of his work from this period.

Ibsen's gravestone is carved with a hand holding a hammer. For many critics, this symbolizes Ibsen's role in tearing down old dramatic forms and subjects and rebuilding the theater with new norms and topics. Yet this summation narrows the understanding of Ibsen, who was a poet as well as a playwright, and who wrote historical dramas, satire, work with supernatural overtones, and symbolic plays as well as *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, two plays that shine a sharp light on the limited role allowed to women in Ibsen's day.

Critics often cite Ibsen as the father of modern drama because of his willingness to tackle social questions from the role of women to the negative role of social conventions (*Ghosts*) to social divisions themselves (*An Enemy of the People*). Like Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, Ibsen emphasized character over plot. He recognized the power of psychological tension, both within a single character and between two characters. Ibsen's use of psychological tension is amply illustrated in *A Doll's House*, and tracing the psychological shifts of the major characters is one way of understanding the play.

Born to a middle-class family whose economic stability was threatened during his childhood, Ibsen used *A Doll's House* as one vehicle for questioning the importance—and the tyranny—of wealth. This play comes from Ibsen's middle period, when his most radical ideas were presented.

## Reading a Play

As a genre, dramas have particular characteristics and structural components that differ from those of novels, poetry, or nonfiction. Unlike other genres, plays are written in dialog and intended for performance. Understanding the conventions and earmarks of dramatic writing can help the reader appreciate the playwright's intent, pick up clues to the characters' inner workings, and make inferences about what is to follow.

### Plot

In its simplest terms, the plot is the story line of a play. However, a plot is never a collection of random incidents strung together; instead, it is a carefully selected series of incidents (actions) that are presented in an order that is designed to create—and then resolve—a conflict.

The ordering of the incidents can be as important as the incidents themselves. In a play, the incidents are almost never told in the order in which they occurred. Even in a history play, the events can be told from several perspectives so that some characters know certain facts before others do.

In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen presents surface incidents in a straightforward, chronological manner. However, he uses his characters to reveal important information about earlier incidents. These revelations build tension in the play because some characters obtain information that others do not have, and that information changes the dynamics of the play.

### Conflict

A play exists to present a *conflict*—an opposition between two forces—and then to show how that opposition is resolved. When the conflict is between a character and another character or force of nature, it is called an *external conflict*. In *A Doll's House*, the central conflict is between two characters, Torvald Helmer and his wife Nora, so this play revolves around an external conflict. *Interior conflict* occurs when the struggle takes place primarily within a single person; such a play is often called a psychological conflict.

*A Doll's House*, like many memorable plays, combines a dominant external conflict with the internal conflict of one or more characters. There is little in the surface action of *A Doll's House* to indicate Nora's internal conflict, but the play's ending is based on her psychological development in the course of the story. Helmer, who has neither engaged in internal conflict of his own nor observed the changes in Nora, is stunned by the end of the play.

## Exposition

No play can be comprised purely of conflict, however. Some speeches, incidents, or scenes are included to give additional dimension to explain background information that will have an effect on character development, relationships among the characters, or the progress of the plot. Such material is called exposition. In many earlier plays, from the classics of Greek drama through Shakespeare, a chorus or character gives an initial speech that is almost an orientation. Ibsen, however, took a more subtle approach, and he was one of the first playwrights to weave the exposition into the drama itself. In this way, he challenged his audience to understand—almost to participate in—the gradual rise of tension in the conflict.

In *A Doll's House*, the exposition occurs in several scenes, from Mrs. Linde's comments on Nora's youthful reputation as a spendthrift to Helmer's revelations about Nora's father and his character to the nursemaid's acknowledgment that she raised Nora after placing her own child out for adoption. Other scenes of exposition include the gradual building of background on Mrs. Linde's life, Krogstad's earlier struggles, and their previous relationship.

## Characters

The main character in a play is called the *protagonist*; the opposing character is the *antagonist*. While the protagonist can be a hero, many—in fact, most—protagonists are far from heroic. Hamlet, for example, lacks the leadership qualities of a hero, but he is the protagonist in Shakespeare's play. Similarly, the antagonist can have many positive qualities, but in the play, the antagonist's role is to oppose the protagonist.

Characters in a play are developed to different levels. Some are fully formed characters with an interior life; these are *round characters*. In contrast, *flat characters* have limited personalities and offer the audience little real interest. The role of a flat character is to participate in incidents that move the action forward or to behave in a predictable way that moves another character to change.

When a character does grow or change, he or she is said to be a *dynamic character*; it is more likely that a round character will also be a dynamic character, but this is not a requirement. In *A Doll's House*, Nora is the outstanding example of the dynamic character. However, Ibsen has also infused two lesser characters, Mrs. Linde and Krogstad, with the ability to change. By peopling the play with more than one dynamic character, Ibsen has added depth and verisimilitude to his work. The reader should understand that characters other than the protagonist and antagonist can be dynamic characters.

A flat character, by definition, is limited in the ability to change or grow. Thus most flat characters are also *static characters*, meaning that they stay the same, developmentally, throughout the play. In *A Doll's House*, Helmer is a static character. In fact, it is his very inability to change that forces Nora into her shocking decision. Yet Helmer is also the antagonist, taking a central role in the play.

In addition to round and flat characters and to dynamic and static characters, plays can also be peopled by *stock characters*. These are almost like a mass-produced item that is kept in stock in a store: you know exactly what you are buying. A stock character is a stereotype, manifesting universal characteristics. Thus, the dumb blonde could be a stock character, as could the belligerent cop, the whining brat, the prejudiced Southerner. In the case of *A Doll's House*, the nursemaid—loyal, patient, supportive—is a stock character.

Often, a stock, flat, or static character is used as a *foil* for a more highly developed character. In this case, the less developed character is used as a point of contrast in which a dynamic character's growth is made more noticeable by the sameness of the foil.

In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen creates a traditional society in which a theater-goer of his day might expect the husband to be the dominant character, taking the role of protagonist. However, the playwright's purpose in writing this play was to advance his own belief that society at large could not afford to overlook the talent and drive of half its members: that is, of women. By making Nora a more nuanced and dynamic character than Helmer, and by making her the protagonist, Ibsen was notifying his audience that things were not all as traditional as they seemed in the Helmer household. The play's lasting interest owes much to Ibsen's skill in mixing round and flat characters, his inclusion of static characters and bits of stereotypes, all of which contrast with the dynamism that builds Nora's character.

Ibsen uses the notion of the foil to good effect in Act III, where two fairly flat characters, Mrs. Linde and Krogstad, decide to band together in hopes of growing into the fuller selves each dreams of becoming. This development raises questions of whether a marriage of two people who recognize their faults can thrive and whether banding together will actually help them overcome those very faults. The contrast between their decision and the sterility of the Helmer marriage is a strong point of interest in the play, especially given Helmer's absolute inability to change his understanding of Nora.

### Figurative language, or imagery

Figurative language, or figures of speech, includes such devices as metaphor. In a metaphor, a quality is ascribed to a character by tagging the character with a descriptor. For example, when Helmer uses the metaphor of "little squirrel" for Nora, he is suggesting that she is busy—almost frantically so—but not thoughtful or intentional in her actions. When Nora describes herself as a doll-child or a doll-wife, she is saying that she is viewed as a toy, valued for her beauty but not recognized as having any intellectual capacity.

Another figure of speech is the simile, in which a comparison is introduced by the words "like", "as," or "as if." Ibsen is using a simile when he has Helmer say, "He, with his sufferings and his loneliness, was like a cloudy background to our sunlit happiness." (p. 71)

Figurative language is sometimes called imagery because it uses language to project an image. While many plays, especially those by Shakespeare, rely heavily on imagery, Ibsen uses very little imagery in *A Doll's House* because it is a realistic play.

## Symbolism

Although *A Doll's House* is a firmly realistic play, it uses strong visual symbolism to convey its points. The delivery of the Christmas tree and the revelation of Nora's efforts to decorate for Christmas in the previous year symbolize the importance of appearances in the household. The tree itself is an ornament, just as Nora comes to see herself as an ornament in the home. Later in the play, Nora's changes of clothing take on symbolic importance. Her dress for the fancy-dress ball is all about appearances and unreality, for this is a costume to cover up her worries. When Nora changes into everyday clothes at the end of the play, she is symbolizing her new life of plainness, reality, and work.

The repeated references to the letter box are important because they remind the reader that Nora is locked out of the business transactions of the house, having no key to the mailbox.

## The monologue

A monologue is a sustained speech by a single character. In a monologue (or soliloquy), the character reveals something of his or her inner workings, allowing the audience or the reader to understand more about the character's motivations, psychology, or constraints. Perhaps the most famous monologue is Hamlet's soliloquy in Act III, Scene 1, which starts "To be, or not to be." In *A Doll's House*, both Helmer and Nora have monologues in Act III, and they explain their world views in these speeches.

## The Well-Made Play

Many of the plays from Ibsen's early and middle periods, including *A Doll's House*, follow the conventions of the "well-made play." This was a term used by the influential French playwright Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) to describe a play with the following elements:

- A very tight *plot* that typically revolves around a missing element—letters, a lost or stolen document, an absent person.
- *Subplots* that are related to the missing element and add tension to the work. These subplots do not have to be substantial, and they often involve revelation of information, that is, who knows what at any given time in the story.
- A *climax* or scene of revelation, in which the missing element is revealed. This scene often saves the hero of the play from ruin or embarrassment.
- A *dénouement*, or closing scene, in which explanations are supplied to resolve all the earlier questions or mysteries in the play. This scene, according to Scribe, is to follow very soon after the climax. In French, the word *dénouement* means "untying," so the term suggests unraveling all the knotted conditions or circumstances on which the initial problems—and the plot—were based.



After Scribe's death, his ideas continued to be highly influential. Gustav Freytag, a German critic, developed an illustration in the form of a triangle to describe the elements in Scribe's well-made play. *Freytag's pyramid* was designed with the five-act play in mind, and it includes the following elements:

- The pyramid itself is in the form of an equilateral triangle; the left leg is the *inciting moment*, the standing point is the *climax*, and the right leg represents the *last suspense*, the point at which the *dénouement* begins.
- The left leg of the pyramid is built on the inciting moment, that is, the incident that begins the real movement of the play. This is not necessarily the first incident of a play (such as the opening of a door or the introduction of the early characters). Instead, it will be the first incident that introduces elements of conflict, passion, or mystery.
- A line from the inciting moment to the climax encompasses all the *rising action*, that is, all the incidents that add either exposition or complication to the plot. In this sense, *exposition* is additional information, as when the reader learns that Nora has borrowed a significant amount of money without her husband's knowledge. *Complication* ensues when a character or incident makes the action more urgent or more delicate; for example, the introduction of Krogstad is a complication.
- The climax is the crisis-point of the play—the moment of revelation toward which the rising action has been moving.
- After the climax, incidents are considered falling action, as they fall away from the high point along a line from the climax to the moment of last suspense. However, life is untidy, and additional crises can arise, so the falling action can include reversals and even a catastrophe.
- While Freytag's pyramid shows the moment of last suspense as the end of the play, Scribe used the term *dénouement* to point out that explanations often follow the last bit of suspense in a play. Other critics use the term *resolution* for the closing action of the play, in which the conflict is resolved for good or ill.

Interestingly, however, as Ibsen's work matured in the middle period, he began to experiment with form as well as subject. While he tackled the traditional social structures of his day, Ibsen also showed increasing independence from the established form of the "well-made play." *A Doll's House* has several elements of the "well-made play," but it also departs from this model in important respects. Chief among these is the closing structure of the play. In terms of the "well-made play," the climax, which is the revelation of Nora's fraud in obtaining a loan and Helmer's reaction to that news, would be followed by the expected ending of Nora's submission to Helmer. However, the play has a longer *dénouement*, with an ending that shocked audiences in Ibsen's day. The nontraditional resolution is Nora's startling decision to leave husband and home in order to find herself.

## The Use of Irony in Drama

One method of adding depth and dimension to a character in a play is through the use of irony. Several forms of irony can be employed in a single play, and they can achieve different ends, but they all serve to point out a gap between reality and appearance. In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen relies primarily on situational irony, which occurs when the reality of the situation is not what appears on the surface. The gap may be apparent to the audience but not to the characters, or the irony may be recognized by one character but not by another. In Act III of *A Doll's House*, Helmer says, "Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake" (p. 71). In this example of situational irony, Helmer actually is in such a situation; both Nora and the audience know it, but he does not.

Verbal irony occurs when a character makes a comment that is heard one way but meant another. In Act III, after reading Krogstad's letter, Helmer asks if Nora understands what she has done. She answers, "Yes, now I am beginning to understand thoroughly." (p. 72) Helmer hears this as a simple acknowledgment that she knows what she has done wrong in committing a fraud, but Nora is saying—and the audience is hearing—her admission that she is beginning to see how wrong she has been to be beholden to Helmer for eight years.

Irony is often used to foreshadow other events in a play. In Act I, for example, Mrs. Linde says that Nora ". . . knows so little of the burdens and troubles of life." This is an example of verbal irony because Nora does, in fact, know quite a bit about hardness in life. The comment is also important because it foreshadows other events, in which Nora will learn much more about life's difficulties.

## The social context of *A Doll's House*

*A Doll's House* was published in 1879. Ibsen was still living in Europe on his long self-imposed exile when he wrote this play, but he was very closely attuned to social developments in his native Norway as well as to the mores in the rest of the continent. The European social norms at this time were still largely influenced by England, the dominant political and military power. Queen Victoria set a standard of middle-class propriety, with social life tending to be based in the home, the family unit held up as an ideal, and men—in spite of Victoria's own gender—being held up as the superior being in a household. Popular art and literature extolled the calm household under the benign authority of the male. For example, consider the royal portraits by Franz Winterhalter, which idealized the domestic life of Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert.

In contrast to the surface picture of happiness and prosperity, however, challenges to the established concept were being published, although they were considered shocking, even radical. Charles Dickens was writing novels that exposed the bare and brutal underside of Victorian life, with its disregard of the poor, blatant class inequities, grinding exploitation of those who were relegated to domestic service and manual labor because of their lack of educational access, and heartbreak brought into homes by alcohol, poverty, and abuse.

These trends were echoed across Europe and in the United States. By living in Spain, Italy, and Germany, Ibsen was exposed to these social norms and tensions to a much greater extent than he would have been had he remained solely in Norway.

Women did not have the right to vote during this period. In Great Britain, the first resolution proposing that women be empowered to vote was introduced to Parliament in 1851. While this effort failed, social critics began to think and write about the penalty society paid when only half of its members participate fully as voting citizens.

John Stuart Mill, an influential English social critic, published *Subjection of Women* in 1869—ten years before Ibsen published *A Doll's House*. A second bill proposing women's suffrage in Great Britain was introduced in Parliament in 1870. Political action leagues took up the cause, and women sought newspaper coverage as one way of achieving their aims. This strategy put the debate about women's roles and rights in the mainstream of daily life and spread the discussion into novels and plays. In fact, this debate went on for many years; women gained the right to vote in Norway in 1913, with Norway and Finland being the first countries to extend this right. Suffrage was extended to women over the age of 30 after the First World War in Great Britain and revised to be the same as for men in 1928. In the United States, women were granted the right to vote by the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.

Although voting rights were perhaps the most prominent index of women's place in society, other social reforms were also the subject of debate. These included property rights, the role of women in the workplace, and access to education.

### *A Doll's House* and trends in literary criticism.

Ibsen was living in Europe when he wrote *A Doll's House*; it was published in 1879. While social critics, such as John Stuart Mill, were writing and speaking for an expanded role for women (Mill's *Subjection of Women* was published in 1869), the movement for women's suffrage was not yet a robust one, and women had a very narrow role in society. In many countries, as in Norway, they could not borrow money; in many places, women could not even own property. Instead, they were often treated as property rather than as people. Middle- and upper-class women were generally educated at home if at all, and they were not prepared for careers.

Literary critics were, by and large, not social critics, and they tended to accept the status quo for women. Thus, when *A Doll's House* was published, it was regarded as quite a radical work because of the inversion of the social order that occurs in the play.

More recently, however, feminist criticism has emerged as a new way of looking at literary works. Beginning in the 1970s, a number of female critics have argued for a reexamination of literary works with the goal of gaining insights into the evolving role of women and understanding how both women and men have used women in literature to further certain points of view.

In the world of feminist criticism, Henrik Ibsen demands close study for his use of women as protagonists and fully formed characters. Nora Helmer and other women created by Ibsen were intended to drive home the point that no society can flourish if half its members are in bondage. Ibsen's full development of Nora, as contrasted with his limited treatment of Helmer, is designed in part to bolster the argument that women should be full participants in society. Nora's radical decision at the end of the play is intended to argue that a woman can be a better wife and mother if she is fully actualized—that is, if her own intellectual and emotional needs are met in the process.

## Discussion Topics/Questions

1. Diagram the major incidents of the play in terms of rising action.
2. Discuss the falling action of *A Doll's House*, including the secondary crisis that moved this play away from the model of the well-made play.
3. Evaluate how Ibsen departed from the concepts of the well-made play.
4. Cite examples of dramatic irony (verbal and situational) in *A Doll's House*, and explain how this device adds to the tension and movement of the play.
5. Identify a monologue by Helmer and one by Nora, and explain why each monologue is important in character revelation.
6. Analyze the character of Krogstad, including his earlier life, his initial appearance in the play, and his struggle to rise above his past.
7. Discuss the many ways in which the Helmer household—and Torvald Helmer in particular—engages in trying to keep up appearances, and predict how the ending of the play would affect him in the coming weeks.
8. Analyze and judge Mrs. Linde's actions in the context of how the play's events unfold.
9. Compare and contrast the two main characters: Torvald Helmer (is he a villain, a hero, or a man blinded by the social conventions of his time?) and Nora Helmer (is she a victim, a hero, or something in between?).
10. Discuss the theme of male dominance/female subservience as it is presented in *A Doll's House*.
11. Discuss the symbolism of the Christmas tree, the letter box, and the fancy-dress ball in the play.

## FREE-RESPONSE (ESSAY) ITEMS

### PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION 1

The passage that follows is from early in Act I, and it introduces Nora and Helmer to the audience. After reading the passage carefully, write a well organized essay in which you analyze how Nora's and Helmer's characters impact the major theme of the play that is introduced in this passage.

HELMER: Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

NORA: Yes!

HELMER: When did my squirrel come home?

NORA: Just now. *[Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.]*

Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

HELMER: Don't disturb me. *[A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.]* Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

NORA: Yes but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economise.

HELMER: Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly.

## PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION 2

The following passage reveals Helmer's thoughts on moral errors and acceptance of responsibility. After reading the passage carefully, write an essay in which you explore the consequences of Helmer's beliefs, and what kind of ending this scene foreshadows for the play.

HELMER: He forged someone's name. Have you any idea what that means?

NORA: Isn't it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

HELMER: Yes; or, as in so many cases, by imprudence. I am not so heartless as to condemn a man altogether because of a single false step of that kind.

NORA: No you wouldn't, would you, Torvald?

HELMER: Many a man has been able to retrieve his character, if he has openly confessed his fault and taken his punishment.

NORA: Punishment—?

HELMER: But Krogstad did nothing of that sort; he got himself out of it by a cunning trick, and that is why he has gone under altogether.

NORA: But do you think it would—?

HELMER: Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with every one, how he has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children. And about the children—that is the most terrible part of it, Nora.

NORA: How?

HELMER: Because such an atmosphere of lies infects and poisons the whole life of a home. Each breath the children take in such a house is full of the germs of evil.

NORA: [*coming nearer him*]. Are you sure of that?

HELMER: My dear, I have often seen it in the course of my life as a lawyer. Almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother.

### PRACTICE FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION 3

After a careful reading of the following passage, write an essay that discusses the irony of Helmer's attitude toward borrowing, both from the perspective of his forthcoming job and as Nora's husband.

HELMER: Nora! [*Goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*] The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty pounds to-day, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

NORA: [*putting her hands over his mouth*]. Oh! Don't say such horrid things.

HELMER: Still, suppose that happened, —what then?

NORA: If that were to happen, I don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not.

HELMER: Yes, but what about the people who had lent it?

NORA: They? Who would bother about them? I should not know who they were.

HELMER: That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.



#### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4

Read the following text carefully, and then write a well-organized essay on how Ibsen is able to use the dialog in a single scene to create rising action, add exposition, and flesh out character. Do not merely summarize what is happening.

KROGSTAD: Tell me, Mrs. Helmer, can you by any chance remember what day your father died?—on what day of the month, I mean.

NORA: Papa died on the 29th of September.

KROGSTAD: That is correct; I have ascertained it for myself. And, as that is so, there is a discrepancy [*taking a paper from his pocket*] which I cannot account for.

NORA: What discrepancy? I don't know—

KROGSTAD: The discrepancy consists, Mrs. Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

NORA: What do you mean? I don't understand—

KROGSTAD: Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? [*Nora is silent.*] Can you explain it to me? [*Nora is still silent.*] It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and *that* is genuine, I suppose, Mrs. Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

NORA: [*after a short pause, throws her head up and looks defiantly at him*]. No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

KROGSTAD: Are you aware that this is a dangerous confession?

NORA: In what way? You shall have your money soon.

KROGSTAD: Let me ask you a question; why did you not send the paper to your father?

NORA: It was impossible; papa was so ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him what the money was to be used for; and when he was so ill himself I couldn't tell him that my husband's life was in danger—it was impossible.

KROGSTAD: It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

NORA: No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I couldn't give that up.

KROGSTAD: But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

NORA: I couldn't take that into account; I didn't trouble myself about you at all. I couldn't bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in.

KROGSTAD: Mrs. Helmer, you evidently do not realise clearly what it is that you are guilty of. But I can assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

## PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5

After reading the following passage, write a well-organized essay discussing why this scene is pivotal in *A Doll's House* in terms of Freytag's Pyramid, the concept of the well-made play, and Ibsen's rebellion against the convention of the well-made play.

HELMER: [*standing at the open door*]. Yes, do. Try and calm yourself, and make your mind easy again, my frightened little singing-bird. Be at rest, and feel secure: I have broad wings to shelter you under. [*Walks up and down by the door.*] How warm and cosy our home is, Nora. Here is shelter for you: here I will protect you like a hunted dove that I have saved from a hawk's claws; I will bring peace to your poor beating heart. It will come, little by little, Nora, believe me. To-morrow morning you will look upon it all quite differently; soon everything will be just as it was before. Very soon you won't need me to assure you that I have forgiven you: you will yourself feel the certainty that I have done so. Can you suppose I should ever think of such a thing as repudiating you, or even reproaching you? You have no idea what a true man's heart is like, Nora. There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife—forgiven her freely, and with all his heart. It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life, so to speak; and she has in a way become both wife and child to him. So you shall be for me after this, my little scared, helpless darling. Have no anxiety about anything, Nora; only be frank and open with me, and I will serve as will and conscience both to you—. What is this? Not gone to bed? Have you changed your things?

NORA: [*in everyday dress*]. Yes, Torvald, I have changed my things now.

HELMER: But what for?—so late as this.

NORA: I shall not sleep to-night.

HELMER: But, my dear Nora—

NORA: [*looking at her watch*]. It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. You and I have much to say to one another. [*She sits down at one side of the table.*]

HELMER: Nora—what is this?—this cold, set face?

NORA: Sit down. It will take some time; I have a lot to talk over with you.

HELMER: [*sits down at the opposite side of the table*]. You alarm me, Nora!—and I don't understand you.

NORA: No, that is just it. You don't understand me, and I have never understood you either—before to-night. No, you mustn't interrupt me. You must simply listen to what I say. Torvald, this is a settling of accounts.

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6

A foil is a secondary character in a novel or play, who serves to clarify or intensify traits found in one or more of the main characters. Write a well-organized essay in which you discuss the use of Krogstad as a foil in *A Doll's House*. Be sure to identify the character or characters for whom he acts as a foil and to cite examples on which you base your assessment.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

### Multiple Choice Questions 1-7

Read the following excerpts from Act I before answering the questions that follow each part of the text.

HELMER: You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things, Nora.

NORA: Ah, I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

HELMER: And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you are, my sweet little skylark. But, do you know, it strikes me that you are looking rather—what shall I say—rather uneasy to-day?

NORA: Do I?

HELMER: You do, really. Look straight at me.

NORA: *[looks at him]*. Well?

HELMER: *[wagging his finger at her]*. Hasn't Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town to-day?

NORA: No; what makes you think that?

HELMER: Hasn't she paid a visit to the confectioner's?

NORA: No, I assure you, Torvald—

HELMER: Not been nibbling sweets?

NORA: No, certainly not.

HELMER: Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

NORA: No, Torvald, I assure you really—

HELMER: There, there, of course I was only joking.

NORA: *[going to the table on the right]*. I should not think of going against your wishes.

HELMER: No, I am sure of that; besides, you gave me your word—*[Going up to her]*. Keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, my darling. They will all be revealed to-night when the Christmas Tree is lit, no doubt.

NORA: Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

HELMER: No. But there is no need; as a matter of course he will come to dinner with us. However, I will ask him when he comes in this morning. I have ordered some good wine. Nora, you can't think how I am looking forward to this evening.

NORA: So am I! And how the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

HELMER: It is splendid to feel that one has a perfectly safe appointment and a big enough income. It's delightful to think of, isn't it?

NORA: It's wonderful!

HELMER: Do you remember last Christmas? For a full three weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till long after midnight, making ornaments for the Christmas Tree, and all the other fine things that were to be a surprise to us. It was the dulllest three weeks I ever spent!

NORA: I didn't find it dull.

HELMER: *[smiling]*. But there was precious little result, Nora.

NORA: Oh, you shouldn't tease me about that again. How could I help the cat's going in and tearing everything to pieces?

1. In this scene, Ibsen establishes Helmer as a character who
  - (A) is modern in his attitude to women.
  - (B) is paternalistic in dealing with his wife.
  - (C) takes a relaxed attitude toward life.
  - (D) abuses his wife.
  - (E) builds up the confidence of those around him.
2. In interrogating Nora, Helmer reveals his assessment that
  - (A) Nora is a complex individual.
  - (B) Nora's father was wealthy.
  - (C) Nora is immature and requires supervision.
  - (D) Nora should keep better accounts of her spending.
  - (E) her father failed to teach Nora how to keep books.
3. Helmer's statement that Nora is like her father carries two meanings, which are that they are
  - (A) both wheedlers and have a blood condition.
  - (B) both spendthrifts but have inherited money.
  - (C) generous in giving money away, a trait Nora learned from her father.
  - (D) both spendthrifts, and Nora has inherited this trait from her father.
  - (E) poor accountants, but Nora is worse because she has inherited this trait.
4. The playwright's purpose in Helmer's questions about the confectioner's is to convey that Helmer
  - (A) wants candy if Nora has had some.
  - (B) has a strong interest in Nora's activities.
  - (C) is a control-freak.
  - (D) is just making casual conversation.
  - (E) is introducing the theme of Nora's weight.
5. In denying Helmer's accusation that she has been to the confectioner's, Nora introduces an important element in their relationship, which is that she
  - (A) tends to divert him by flirting.
  - (B) laughs at his suggestions.
  - (C) chafes his using a pet name such as "Miss Sweet Tooth" for her.
  - (D) resorts to anger at his suggestion.
  - (E) replies seriously and introduces a pattern of lying.

6. In discussing last year's Christmas preparations, Helmer and Nora reveal that
  - (A) Helmer expects Nora to entertain him in the evenings.
  - (B) Helmer's feelings were hurt because Nora did not include him in the project.
  - (C) Nora has a tendency to tease her husband.
  - (D) Nora is preoccupied with crafts.
  - (E) they agree that Christmas demands sacrifices.
  
7. Their conversation about Christmas also shows
  - (A) Nora's reluctance to include Helmer in projects.
  - (B) Helmer's refusal to give Nora enough housekeeping money.
  - (C) new dimensions to Nora's character, creativity and problem-solving.
  - (D) Helmer's own dullness, always thinking of money.
  - (E) their underlying compatibility.

## Multiple Choice Questions 8-16

Read the following excerpts from Act I before answering the questions that follow each part of the text.

MRS. LINDE: Well, I had to turn my hand to anything I could find—first a small shop, then a small school, and so on. The last three years have seemed like one long working-day, with no rest. Now it is at an end, Nora. My poor mother needs me no more, for she is gone; and the boys do not need me either; they have got situations and can shift for themselves.

NORA: What a relief you must feel it—

MRS. LINDE: No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for any more. [*Gets up restlessly.*] That was why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work—office work of some kind—

NORA: But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

MRS. LINDE: [*walking to the window*]. I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

NORA: [*rising*]. Oh, don't be angry with me!

MRS. LINDE: [*going up to her*]. It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the lookout for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken—you will hardly believe it—I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own.

NORA: How do you mean?—Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Torvald could get you something to do.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

NORA: He must, Christine. Just leave it to me: I will broach the subject very cleverly—I will think of something that will please him very much. It will make me so happy to be of some use to you.

MRS. LINDE: How kind you are, Nora, to be so anxious to help me! It is doubly kind in you, for you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life.

NORA: I—? I know so little of them?

MRS. LINDE: [*smiling*]. My dear! Small household cares and that sort of thing!—You are a child, Nora.

NORA: [*tosses her head and crosses the stage*]. You ought not to be so superior.

MRS. LINDE: No?

NORA: You are just like the others. They all think that I am incapable of anything really serious—

MRS. LINDE: Come, come—

NORA: —that I have gone through nothing in this world of cares.

MRS. LINDE: But my dear Nora, you have just told me all your troubles.

NORA: Pooh!—those were trifles. [*Lowering her voice.*] I have not told you the important thing.

MRS. LINDE: The important thing? What do you mean?

NORA: You look down upon me altogether, Christine—but you ought not to. You are proud, aren't you, of having worked so hard and so long for your mother?

MRS. LINDE: Indeed, I don't look down on anyone. But it is true that I am both proud and glad to think that I was privileged to make the end of my mother's life almost free from care.

NORA: And you are proud to think of what you have done for your brothers?  
MRS. LINDE: I think I have the right to be.  
NORA: I think so, too. But now, listen to this; I too have something to be proud and glad of.  
MRS. LINDE: I have no doubt you have. But what do you refer to?  
NORA: Speak low. Suppose Torvald were to hear! He mustn't on any account—no one in the world must know, Christine, except you.  
MRS. LINDE: But what is it?  
NORA: Come here. *[Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.]* Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life.  
MRS. LINDE: "Saved"? How?  
NORA: I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would never have recovered if he had not gone there—  
MRS. LINDE: Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds.  
NORA: *[smiling]*. Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but—  
MRS. LINDE: But—  
NORA: Papa didn't give us a shilling. It was I who procured the money.  
MRS. LINDE: You? All that large sum?  
NORA: Two hundred and fifty pounds. What do you think of that?  
MRS. LINDE: But, Nora, how could you possibly do it? Did you win a prize in the Lottery?  
NORA: *[contemptuously]*. In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.  
MRS. LINDE: But where did you get it from, then?  
NORA: *[humming and smiling with an air of mystery]*. Hm, hm! Aha!  
MRS. LINDE: Because you couldn't have borrowed it.  
NORA: Couldn't I? Why not?  
MRS. LINDE: No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent.  
NORA: *[tossing her head]*. Oh, if it is a wife who has any head for business—a wife who has the wit to be a little bit clever—  
MRS. LINDE: I don't understand it at all, Nora.  
NORA: There is no need you should. I never said I had borrowed the money. I may have got it some other way. *[Lies back on the sofa.]* Perhaps I got it from some other admirer. When anyone is as attractive as I am—  
MRS. LINDE: You are a mad creature.  
NORA: Now, you know you're full of curiosity, Christine.  
MRS. LINDE: Listen to me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little bit imprudent?  
NORA: *[sits up straight]*. Is it imprudent to save your husband's life?  
MRS. LINDE: It seems to be imprudent, without his knowledge, to—  
NORA: But it was absolutely necessary that he should not know! My goodness, can't you understand that? It was necessary he should have no idea what a dangerous condition he was in. It was to me that the doctors came and said that his life was in danger, and that the only thing to save him was to live in the south. Do you suppose I didn't try, first of all, to get what I wanted as if it were for myself? I told him how much I should love to travel abroad like other young wives; I tried tears and entreaties with him; I told him that he ought to remember the condition I was in, and that he ought to be kind and indulgent to me; I even hinted that he might raise a loan. That nearly made him angry, Christine. He said I was thoughtless, and that it was his duty as my husband not to indulge me in my whims and caprices—as I believe he called them. Very well, I thought, you must be saved—and that was how I came to devise a way out of the difficulty—



MRS. LINDE: And did your husband never get to know from your father that the money had not come from him?

NORA: No, never. Papa died just at that time. I had meant to let him into the secret and beg him never to reveal it. But he was so ill then—alas, there never was any need to tell him.

MRS. LINDE: And since then have you never told your secret to your husband?

NORA: Good Heavens, no! How could you think so? A man who has such strong opinions about these things! And besides, how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether; our beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now.

8. The playwright's purpose in introducing Mrs. Linde into the play is to
  - (A) show how work depersonalizes women.
  - (B) make an ironic comment on the world of work.
  - (C) symbolize worldly success because she has made money on her own.
  - (D) show the futility of work, in that her mother died anyway.
  - (E) allow Nora to give a clear exposition of the source of the money.
9. As a dramatic convention, Mrs. Linde functions in this scene
  - (A) to create situational irony.
  - (B) as a foil to Nora.
  - (C) as comic relief.
  - (D) for verbal irony.
  - (E) as a stock character.
10. In this scene, Mrs. Linde's comment that Nora knows "so little of the burdens and troubles of life" is an example of
  - (A) exaggeration.
  - (B) minimalism.
  - (C) irony.
  - (D) exposition.
  - (E) humor.
11. A long speech by a single character, such as Nora's speech above, is called
  - (A) a point of conflict.
  - (B) symbolic language.
  - (C) rising action.
  - (D) a metaphor.
  - (E) a monologue or soliloquy.
12. Nora's monologue shows that
  - (A) she tried to protect Helmer when he was ill.
  - (B) she engineered their trip to keep up with the lifestyle of others.
  - (C) she is, as Helmer has said, a featherbrain.
  - (D) she gets what she wants by whining and wheedling.
  - (E) she thought of abandoning Helmer when he refused to borrow money.

13. Ibsen included the information that a wife could not borrow without the consent of her husband to emphasize
- (A) how conservative bankers were.
  - (B) that Helmer had to know where the money came from.
  - (C) that women were discriminated against.
  - (D) the importance of work in gaining money.
  - (E) the irony of Helmer's becoming a banker.
14. In literary terms, Nora's admission that she has never told her husband about the source of the money they used to travel
- (A) restates the theme that men are superior.
  - (B) is a complication to the main plot, which involves Mrs. Linde and Helmer.
  - (C) is the conflict that drives the action of the play.
  - (D) is an ironic comment on medical practices at the time.
  - (E) is an example of a foil.
15. Nora's characterization of her husband's "manly independence" reminds the audience of Helmer's nature, which emphasizes
- (A) eagerness to please her.
  - (B) a passive nature and spirit of inclusiveness.
  - (C) a domineering nature and dependence on appearances.
  - (D) his failure to ask key questions before their trip began.
  - (E) his confidence in her business sense.
16. Nora's remarks about the negative impact that learning the secret would have on Helmer are an example of
- (A) conflict.
  - (B) symbolism.
  - (C) her flat character.
  - (D) foreshadowing.
  - (E) imagery.

## Multiple Choice Questions 17-22

Read the following excerpts from Act II before answering the questions that follow each part of the text.

RANK: Who else? It is no use lying to one's self. I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. Lately I have been taking stock of my internal economy. Bankrupt! Probably within a month I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

NORA: What an ugly thing to say!

RANK: The thing itself is cursedly ugly, and the worst of it is that I shall have to face so much more that is ugly before that. I shall only make one more examination of myself; when I have done that, I shall know pretty certainly when it will be that the horrors of dissolution will begin. There is something I want to tell you. Helmer's refined nature gives him an unconquerable disgust at everything that is ugly; I won't have him in my sick-room.

NORA: Oh, but, Doctor Rank—

RANK: I won't have him there. Not on any account. I bar my door to him. As soon as I am quite certain that the worst has come, I shall send you my card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the loathsome end has begun.

NORA: You are quite absurd to-day. And I wanted you so much to be in a really good humour.

RANK: With death stalking beside me?—to have to pay this penalty for another man's sin? Is there any justice in that? And in every single family, in one way or another, some such inexorable retribution is being exacted—

17. In this scene, Doctor Rank's purpose is to
  - (A) lament that he will be unable to share his last days with his friend Helmer.
  - (B) acknowledge that he feels abandoned by Helmer.
  - (C) trust Nora with his own secret.
  - (D) take a perverse pleasure in being a physician to himself in the coming weeks.
  - (E) make no sense, talking in riddles.
18. Doctor Rank's assessment of Helmer
  - (A) shows that he never liked Helmer after all.
  - (B) is completely positive.
  - (C) is completely negative.
  - (D) undercuts Helmer's authority with others at the Bank.
  - (E) reinforces the idea that Helmer is all about appearances.
19. Doctor Rank's assessment of Nora
  - (A) echoes Helmer's assessment of her that she is ornamental but not smart.
  - (B) shows that Mrs. Linde has influenced him into reevaluating Nora.
  - (C) is completely negative.
  - (D) suggests that he thinks she has some strengths that Helmer lacks.
  - (E) shows that he knows she has secrets and therefore will keep his secret.

20. In choosing to confide in Nora, Doctor Rank acts as
- (A) the protagonist, because he is so important.
  - (B) a foil to Helmer, who never confides in Nora.
  - (C) a stock character because he does nothing unexpected.
  - (D) a round character because his death is unexpected.
  - (E) the antagonist.
21. When Doctor Rank says he must “pay this penalty for another man’s sin” he is referring to
- (A) money to be repaid.
  - (B) public embarrassment over his health.
  - (C) his impending death.
  - (D) questions about his skill as a doctor.
  - (E) his love for Nora.
22. Doctor Rank’s comment about paying “this penalty for another man’s sin” reminds the audience of the theme of
- (A) charging an estate for any outstanding debts when someone dies.
  - (B) harsh obituaries that included a list of the errors made in life.
  - (C) discrimination against men, who had to pay for the sins of other men.
  - (D) moral contagion, because his disease was a result of his father’s bad habits.
  - (E) irony, because his poor health was caused by his own bad habits.

## Multiple Choice Questions 23-28

Read the following excerpts from Act II before answering the questions that follow each part of the text.

KROGSTAD: I am not asking your husband for a penny.

NORA: What do you want, then?

KROGSTAD: I will tell you. I want to rehabilitate myself, Mrs. Helmer; I want to get on; and in that your husband must help me. For the last year and a half I have not had a hand in anything dishonourable, and all that time I have been struggling in most restricted circumstances. I was content to work my way up step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not going to be satisfied with merely being taken into favour again. I want to get on, I tell you. I want to get into the Bank again, in a higher position. Your husband must make a place for me—

NORA: That he will never do!

KROGSTAD: He will; I know him; he dare not protest. And as soon as I am in there again with him, then you will see! Within a year I shall be the manager's right hand. It will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who manages the Bank.

NORA: That's a thing you will never see!

KROGSTAD: Do you mean that you will—?

NORA: I have courage enough for it now.

KROGSTAD: Oh, you can't frighten me. A fine, spoilt lady like you—

NORA: You will see, you will see.

KROGSTAD: Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, coal-black water? And then, in the spring, to float up to the surface, all horrible and unrecognizable, with your hair fallen out—

NORA: You can't frighten me.

KROGSTAD: Nor you me. People don't do such things, Mrs. Helmer. Besides, what use would it be? I should have him completely in my power all the same.

NORA: Afterwards? When I am no longer—

KROGSTAD: Have you forgotten that it is I who have the keeping of your reputation? [NORA stands speechlessly looking at him.] Well, now, I have warned you. Do not do anything foolish. When Helmer has had my letter I shall expect a message from him. And be sure you remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me into such ways as this again. I will never forgive him for that. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer.

23. In confronting Nora, Krogstad is
- (A) demanding a promotion at the Bank.
  - (B) threatening Nora with increased demands.
  - (C) suggesting that Helmer is dishonorable.
  - (D) asking for a new start.
  - (E) saying he will be more important than Helmer.

24. In this monologue, Krogstad is
- (A) reinforcing his role as a stock character.
  - (B) becoming a more rounded character.
  - (C) relying on irony to make his point.
  - (D) suggesting that if he can change, Helmer can change.
  - (E) threatening to take Helmer's job as manager.
25. Krogstad's eagerness to change
- (A) is a symptom of his ambition.
  - (B) is attributed to Mrs. Linde.
  - (C) makes him a foil to the unchanging Helmer.
  - (D) is intended to delude Nora.
  - (E) is intended to balance Doctor Rank's death.
26. When she says, "I have courage enough for it now," Nora is referring to
- (A) revealing the secret to Helmer.
  - (B) telling Helmer that Krogstad is trying to blackmail her.
  - (C) preventing Christine from marrying Krogstad.
  - (D) committing suicide.
  - (E) standing trial for fraud.
27. When Krogstad refers to a corpse with its hair fallen out, he is appealing to Nora's
- (A) courage.
  - (B) desperation.
  - (C) vanity.
  - (D) fear of publicity.
  - (E) love for Helmer.
28. Krogstad blames his own desperation on Helmer because
- (A) Christine has convinced him that Helmer is evil.
  - (B) Nora says Helmer will not repay the loan.
  - (C) this is a pattern that goes back to their school days.
  - (D) Helmer refuses to reinstate Krogstad at the bank, so he has no money.
  - (E) Nora says Helmer will repay the loan only if Krogstad confesses to blackmail.

## Questions 29-34

Read the following excerpts from Act III before answering the questions that follow each part of the text.

MRS. LINDE: Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could join forces?

KROGSTAD: What are you saying?

MRS. LINDE: Two on the same piece of wreckage would stand a better chance than each on their own.

KROGSTAD: Christine!

MRS. LINDE: What do you suppose brought me to town?

KROGSTAD: Do you mean that you gave me a thought?

MRS. LINDE: I could not endure life without work. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked, and it has been my greatest and only pleasure. But now I am quite alone in the world—my life is so dreadfully empty and I feel so forsaken. There is not the least pleasure in working for one's self. Nils, give me someone and something to work for.

KROGSTAD: I don't trust that. It is nothing but a woman's overstrained sense of generosity that prompts you to make such an offer of yourself.

MRS. LINDE: Have you ever noticed anything of the sort in me?

KROGSTAD: Could you really do it? Tell me—do you know all about my past life?

MRS. LINDE: Yes.

KROGSTAD: And do you know what they think of me here?

MRS. LINDE: You seemed to me to imply that with me you might have been quite another man.

KROGSTAD: I am certain of it.

MRS. LINDE: Is it too late now?

KROGSTAD: Christine, are you saying this deliberately? Yes, I am sure you are. I see it in your face. Have you really the courage, then—?

MRS. LINDE: I want to be a mother to someone, and your children need a mother. We two need each other. Nils, I have faith in your real character—I can dare anything together with you.

29. Early in this scene, Mrs. Linde takes a radical step when she
- (A) proposes marriage to Krogstad.
  - (B) says she has always found work meaningless.
  - (C) admits that she came to town to find work.
  - (D) reveals that she wants to work for Krogstad.
  - (E) says that Krogstad has forsaken her in the past.
30. Krogstad makes a generalization about women that
- (A) shows he is just another chauvinist.
  - (B) reveals his sense of irony.
  - (C) credits them with the virtue of generosity.
  - (D) is intended to be humorous.
  - (E) puts him in agreement with Helmer.

31. This scene is important because it
- (A) serves as a distraction to the main story.
  - (B) lightens the mood of the play and makes it less realistic.
  - (C) offers a model of marriage that is a foil to the Helmer marriage.
  - (D) is an ironic comment on marriage in general.
  - (E) adds a conventional note to a nontraditional play.
32. Feminist critics praised Ibsen for scenes such as this because
- (A) he validates the role of mother for women.
  - (B) his characters include intelligent, thoughtful women.
  - (C) he gives the dominant role to a beautiful young widow.
  - (D) his women can find insightful men to lean on.
  - (E) his women recognize the need for marriage as a path to success.
33. This scene advances the theory that a marriage based on weaknesses
- (A) has no chance for success.
  - (B) must overcome society's bias against it.
  - (C) can succeed if it is also based on honesty.
  - (D) is an idea to be ridiculed.
  - (E) is the best model.
34. In terms of Freytag's pyramid, this scene represents
- (A) the major conflict.
  - (B) exposition that makes the plot more understandable.
  - (C) resolution of the main conflict.
  - (D) an ironic comment on the main plot.
  - (E) a subplot that would not be part of Freytag's pyramid.



## Multiple Choice Questions 35-40

Read the following excerpts from Act III before answering the questions that follow each part of the text.

NORA: [hanging back in the doorway, and struggling with him]. No, no, no!—don't take me in. I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early.

HELMER: But, my dearest Nora—

NORA: Please, Torvald dear—please, please—only an hour more.

HELMER: Not a single minute, my sweet Nora. You know that was our agreement. Come along into the room; you are catching cold standing there. [He brings her gently into the room, in spite of her resistance.]

MRS. LINDE: Good-evening.

NORA: Christine!

HELMER: You here, so late, Mrs. Linde?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, you must excuse me; I was so anxious to see Nora in her dress.

NORA: Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, unfortunately I came too late, you had already gone upstairs; and I thought I couldn't go away again without having seen you.

HELMER: [taking off Nora's shawl]. Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn't she charming, Mrs. Linde?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, indeed she is.

HELMER: Doesn't she look remarkably pretty? Everyone thought so at the dance.

But she is terribly self-willed, this sweet little person. What are we to do with her? You will hardly believe that I had almost to bring her away by force.

NORA: Torvald, you will repent not having let me stay, even if it were only for half an hour.

HELMER: Listen to her, Mrs. Linde! She had danced her Tarantella, and it had been a tremendous success, as it deserved—although possibly the performance was a trifle too realistic—a little more so, I mean, than was strictly compatible with the limitations of art. But never mind about that! The chief thing is, she made a success—she had made a tremendous success. Do you think I was going to let her remain there after that, and spoil the effect? No, indeed! I took my charming little Capri maiden—my capricious little Capri maiden, I should say—on my arm; took one quick turn round the room; a curtsey on either side, and, as they say in novels, the beautiful apparition disappeared. An exit ought always to be effective, Mrs. Linde; but that is what I cannot make Nora understand. Pooh! This room is hot. . . .

35. Ibsen has Helmer wrestle Nora back to their apartment to emphasize that
- (A) she hates him and resists him.
  - (B) Nora is playing the flirt, pretending to resist him.
  - (C) Nora knows Mrs. Linde will be there as a witness.
  - (D) he dominates the marriage physically as well as in authority.
  - (E) Helmer is a cruel and abusive husband.
36. When Helmer removes Nora's shawl and says, "Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn't she charming, Mrs. Linde?" he is reminding the audience that an important element in his character is
- (A) selfless devotion, with Nora as its object.
  - (B) male chauvinism, including objectifying women.
  - (C) irony, because he has previously said Nora is unattractive.
  - (D) exaggeration.
  - (E) humor, because he is just joking about her charm.
37. When Nora says that Helmer will regret not letting her stay at the party, she means that
- (A) he will regret seeing Mrs. Linde again.
  - (B) she knows they will have a fight because he has had a lot to drink.
  - (C) even more people could admire her beauty if they stayed at the party.
  - (D) she will refuse to sleep with him, and he will be frustrated.
  - (E) he will wish they had stayed at the party longer and put off her revelations.
38. Helmer's pride in Nora reflects the fact that he
- (A) is unselfish in his celebration of her.
  - (B) acknowledges that she has worked hard to achieve success.
  - (C) feels her beauty reflects well on him.
  - (D) loves her deeply.
  - (E) appreciates her independence in social situations.
39. Helmer's comment that exits "ought always to be effective" is an example of
- (A) symbolism.
  - (B) exaggeration.
  - (C) foreshadowing.
  - (D) figurative language.
  - (E) the use of a foil.
40. Helmer's account of Nora's success at the party reinforces one of the central themes of the play, which is that
- (A) women are valued for their appearance, not for their minds.
  - (B) women are tremendously successful.
  - (C) women are better off when men control women's roles.
  - (D) men exist to show women to best advantage.
  - (E) supportive men like Helmer help women realize true success.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS WITH EXPLANATIONS

### PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS QUESTIONS 1-16: ACT I

1. In this scene, Ibsen establishes Helmer as a character who
- (A) is modern in his attitude to women.
  - (B) is paternalistic in dealing with his wife.**
  - (C) takes a relaxed attitude toward life.
  - (D) abuses his wife.
  - (E) builds up the confidence of those around him.

*A modern character would see men and women as equal, so (A) is incorrect. However, Helmer does treat Nora as if she were a child, so (B) is correct. Nothing about Helmer is relaxed (C), and he does not abuse her (D), although he certainly does not build up her confidence or that of anyone else (E).*

2. In interrogating Nora, Helmer reveals his assessment that
- (A) Nora is a complex individual.
  - (B) Nora's father was wealthy.
  - (C) Nora is immature and requires supervision.**
  - (D) Nora should keep better accounts of her spending.
  - (E) her father failed to teach Nora how to keep books.

*Helmer classifies Nora as "odd" and "like her father," neither of which suggest that he thinks she is complex in character, so (A) does not apply. Helmer suggests in (B) that Nora's father, far from being rich, was not good with money and, in fact, borrowed from Helmer on occasion. By badgering Nora about every detail, Helmer is showing that he does not think she is mature enough to manage affairs on her own, so (C) is correct. If Nora did keep better accounts (D), she would not be a spendthrift or so immature. Her father could not teach her to do something that he never did, so (E) does not apply.*

3. Helmer's statement that Nora is like her father carries two meanings, which are
- (A) they are both wheedlers and have a blood condition.
  - (B) they are both spendthrifts but have inherited money.
  - (C) they are generous in giving money away, a trait Nora learned from her father.
  - (D) they are both spendthrifts, and Nora has inherited this trait from her father.**
  - (E) they are poor accountants, but Nora is worse because she has inherited this trait.

*Helmer is talking about hereditary traits, not about a blood-borne illness, so (A) is incorrect. The passage does not suggest that (B) they have inherited money, nor that (C) either is particularly generous. While Helmer says Nora is not good at accounting for money, he does not say (E) that she is worse than her father. He is noting that they share the tendency toward being spendthrifts and that Nora's father passed this trait to her (D).*

4. The playwright's purpose in Helmer's questions about the confectioner's is to convey that Helmer
- (A) wants candy if Nora has had some.
  - (B) has a strong interest in Nora's activities.
  - (C) is a control-freak.**
  - (D) is just making casual conversation.
  - (E) is introducing the theme of Nora's weight.

*Helmer does not ask for candy, his interest in Nora's activities is more than casual, and nothing is said about her weight. His words suggest that going to the confectioner's is bad or forbidden, an idea reinforced by Nora's lie. Answer (C) is the one supported by the text.*

5. In denying Helmer's accusation that she has been to the confectioner's, Nora introduces an important element in their relationship, which is that she
- (A) tends to divert him by flirting.
  - (B) laughs at his suggestions.
  - (C) chafes at his using a pet name such as "Miss Sweet Tooth" for her.
  - (D) resorts to anger at his suggestion.
  - (E) replies seriously and introduces a pattern of lying.**

*Nora does not flirt or laugh at this point (A) or (B), and she does not resist his name for her (C) or get angry (D). She does lie to him, and she does it seriously and convincingly (E).*

6. In discussing last year's Christmas preparations, Helmer and Nora reveal that
- (A) Helmer expects Nora to entertain him in the evenings.**
  - (B) Helmer's feelings were hurt because Nora did not include him in the project.
  - (C) Nora has a tendency to tease her husband.
  - (D) Nora is preoccupied with crafts.
  - (E) they agree that Christmas demands sacrifices.

*Helmer's statement that he had never had a duller three weeks means that (A) is correct. He did not comment that he wanted to be included (B), and Nora did not tease him (C). She is not normally engaged in crafts as a hobby, so (D) is incorrect, and they did not discuss sacrifices (E).*

7. Their conversation about Christmas also shows
- (A) Nora's reluctance to include Helmer in projects.
  - (B) Helmer's refusal to give Nora enough housekeeping money.
  - (C) new dimensions to Nora's character, creativity and problem-solving.**
  - (D) Helmer's own dullness, always thinking of money.
  - (E) their underlying compatibility.

*There is no conversation about including Helmer (A), and this conversation does not include money directly (B) and (D). Instead of compatibility, this conversation shows a lack of shared interests, meaning that (E) is incorrect. Nora's solution to a money shortage is a creative one (C).*

8. The playwright's purpose in introducing Mrs. Linde into the play is to
- (A) show how work depersonalizes women.
  - (B) make an ironic comment on the world of work.
  - (C) symbolize worldly success because she has made money on her own.
  - (D) show the futility of work, in that her mother died anyway.
  - (E) **allow Nora to give a clear exposition of the source of the money.**

*The purpose of this conversation is to tell the audience about how Nora acquired the money, which is the central mystery of the play. Mrs. Linde's work history is not the point of this conversation, so only (E) applies.*

9. As a dramatic convention, Mrs. Linde functions in this scene
- (A) to create situational irony.
  - (B) **as a foil to Nora.**
  - (C) as comic relief.
  - (D) for verbal irony.
  - (E) as a stock character.

*In this passage, Mrs. Linde is used to show the role of a working woman, in contrast (B) to Nora's role as a wife with servants. There is no irony (A) or (D) in the passage, and there is nothing in this short passage to assess her as a stock character (E), who would be totally one-dimensional, because she shows some reflection about her actions and inner life.*

10. In this scene, Mrs. Linde's comment that Nora knows "so little of the burdens and troubles of life" is an example of
- (A) exaggeration.
  - (B) minimalism.
  - (C) **irony.**
  - (D) exposition.
  - (E) humor.

*Mrs. Linde is being factual in her assessment, so neither (A) nor (B) applies. Because there is a gap between Mrs. Linde's words and reality, the comment is an example of irony (C). It does not explain anything further, so it is not exposition (D), nor is it funny (E).*

11. A long speech by a single character, such as Nora's speech above, is called
- (A) a point of conflict.
  - (B) symbolic language.
  - (C) rising action.
  - (D) a metaphor.
  - (E) **a monologue or soliloquy.**

*The definition of a monologue or soliloquy is, as illustrated here, a long speech by a single character.*

12. Nora's monologue shows that
- (A) **she tried to protect Helmer when he was ill.**
  - (B) she engineered their trip to keep up with the lifestyle of others.
  - (C) she is, as Helmer has said, a featherbrain.
  - (D) she gets what she wants by whining and wheedling.
  - (E) she thought of abandoning Helmer when he refused to borrow money.

*The purpose of the trip was to improve his health, and she tried to protect him from knowing how sick he was (A). Although she did try to wheedle (D) money for the trip, these efforts were not successful. She did note that other wives traveled abroad (B) but the purpose of the trip was not keeping up with them. She was clear in her thinking, so (C) is not correct, and she never mentions (E) abandoning her husband.*

13. Ibsen included the information that a wife could not borrow without the consent of her husband to emphasize
- (A) how conservative bankers were.
  - (B) that Helmer had to know where the money came from.
  - (C) **that women were discriminated against.**
  - (D) the importance of work in gaining money.
  - (E) the irony of Helmer's becoming a banker.

*One of Ibsen's concerns was that women were not treated equally. If the law had applied equally to men and women, he would have said that neither spouse could borrow without the consent of the other. (C) is the only answer supported by the text.*

14. In literary terms, Nora's admission that she has never told her husband about the source of the money they used to travel
- (A) restates the theme that men are superior.
  - (B) is a complication to the main plot, which involves Mrs. Linde and Helmer.
  - (C) **is the conflict that drives the action of the play.**
  - (D) is an ironic comment on medical practices at the time.
  - (E) is an example of a foil.

*This admission has nothing to do with the concept of male superiority (A). The main plot (B) involves Nora and Helmer, not Mrs. Linde and Helmer. The secret of the money and its source (C) is the center of the plot. The secret is not related to medical practice (D), and the secret has nothing to do with foils (E).*

15. Nora's characterization of her husband's "manly independence" reminds the audience of Helmer's nature, which emphasizes
- (A) eagerness to please her.
  - (B) a passive nature and spirit of inclusiveness.
  - (C) **a domineering nature and dependence on appearances.**
  - (D) his failure to ask key questions before their trip began.
  - (E) his confidence in her business sense.

*This passage does not suggest that Helmer tries to please Nora (A), and Nora's remarks about Helmer's character show that he is not passive (B). Instead, she remarks that Helmer would find it "painful and humiliating" "with his manly independence" if he knew about the loan, suggesting that he is used to running things and would be humiliated if appearances showed any weakness on his part, so (C) is the correct answer. The passage makes no mention of his failure to ask questions (D), although he clearly did not inquire closely as to the source of the money. Nora makes it clear that their marriage depends on his sense of superiority, which allows no room for a realistic assessment of her business sense (E).*

16. Nora's remarks about the negative impact that learning the secret would have on Helmer are an example of
- (A) conflict.
  - (B) symbolism.
  - (C) her flat character.
  - (D) **foreshadowing.**
  - (E) imagery.

*The passage suggests to the reader what will happen if—and when—Helmer finds out about the loan, so (D), foreshadowing, is correct. The passage does not include the other elements of dramatic writing, although it alludes indirectly to the central conflict of the play, which is the source of the loan.*

17. In this scene, Doctor Rank's purpose is to
- (A) lament that he will be unable to share his last days with his friend Helmer.
  - (B) acknowledge that he feels abandoned by Helmer.
  - (C) **trust Nora with his own secret.**
  - (D) take a perverse pleasure in being a physician to himself in the coming weeks.
  - (E) make no sense, talking in riddles.

*Doctor Rank's comments show that he accepts Helmer for what he is; he does not whine or lament the limitations that will keep Helmer from sharing Rank's final days (A), and he expresses no feelings of abandonment (B). He has simply chosen to confide his secret—that he is dying—to Nora (C). He evinces no pleasure in being his own physician, and he is being quite clear in his explanation, so (E) does not apply.*

18. Doctor Rank's assessment of Helmer  
(A) shows that he never liked Helmer after all.  
(B) is completely positive.  
(C) is completely negative.  
(D) undercuts Helmer's authority with others at the Bank.  
(E) **reinforces the idea that Helmer is all about appearances.**

*Doctor Rank accepts Helmer with his faults, so (A) is incorrect; Rank's assessment is neither fully positive (B) nor fully negative (C). This conversation is personal and has nothing to do with the Bank, so (D) is incorrect. By saying that Helmer is distressed by ugliness and sickness, Doctor Rank is reinforcing the idea that Helmer places great value on appearances (E).*

19. Doctor Rank's assessment of Nora  
(A) echoes Helmer's assessment of her that she is ornamental but not smart.  
(B) shows that Mrs. Linde has influenced him into reevaluating Nora.  
(C) is completely negative.  
(D) **suggests that he thinks she has some strengths that Helmer lacks.**  
(E) shows that he knows she has secrets and therefore will keep his secret.

*By choosing to confide in Nora, Doctor Rank acknowledges that she is more than ornamental, so (A) is incorrect. The scene has nothing to do with Mrs. Linde, so (B) is also incorrect. The doctor does not hold a completely negative opinion of Nora (C) or he would not trust her with his secret. The fact that he does tell her about his impending death suggests that he thinks she can deal with this even if Helmer cannot; therefore, she has some strengths that Helmer lacks (D). Doctor Rank does not know about Nora's secret, so (E) does not apply.*

20. In choosing to confide in Nora, Doctor Rank acts as  
(A) the protagonist, because he is so important.  
(B) **a foil to Helmer, who never confides in Nora.**  
(C) a stock character because he does nothing unexpected.  
(D) a round character because his death is unexpected.  
(E) the antagonist.

*The protagonist and antagonist are the main characters, and Doctor Rank is only a minor character, so neither (A) nor (E) is correct. He does confide in Nora, which Helmer never does, so (B) is correct. He is a flat character, not a stock or round one; (C) and (D) are incorrect.*



21. When Doctor Rank says he must “pay this penalty for another man’s sin” he is referring to
- (A) money to be repaid.
  - (B) public embarrassment over his health.
  - (C) **his impending death.**
  - (D) questions about his skill as a doctor.
  - (E) his love for Nora.

*The penalty is death, so (C) is correct. He does not owe money, so (A) is incorrect; his death will not cause public embarrassment, so (B) does not apply. No one is questioning his medical skill (D), and his love for Nora is not attached to a penalty (E).*

22. Doctor Rank’s comment about paying “this penalty for another man’s sin” reminds the audience of the theme of
- (A) charging an estate for any outstanding debts when someone dies.
  - (B) harsh obituaries that included a list of the errors made in life.
  - (C) discrimination against men, who had to pay for the sins of other men.
  - (D) **moral contagion, because his disease was a result of his father’s bad habits.**
  - (E) irony, because his poor health was caused by his own bad habits.

*Moral contagion is the only answer that refers to a recurring theme (D). The other answers do not apply.*

23. Krogstad is
- (A) demanding a promotion at the Bank.
  - (B) threatening Nora with increased demands.
  - (C) suggesting that Helmer is dishonorable.
  - (D) **asking for a new start.**
  - (E) saying he will be more important than Helmer.

*Krogstad says he wants the job so he can prove himself, or make a new start (D). While he is ambitious and believes his hard work will lead to a promotion, he is not demanding one, so (A) is not correct. He is not demanding more from Nora than he has sought before (C), and he is not commenting on Helmer (C). He says people will ask for him, but he does not claim that he will be more important than Helmer, so (E) is not the best choice.*

24. In this monologue, Krogstad is
- (A) reinforcing his role as a stock character.
  - (B) **becoming a more rounded character.**
  - (C) relying on irony to make his point.
  - (D) suggesting that if he can change, Helmer can change.
  - (E) threatening to take Helmer’s job as manager.

*In this monologue, Krogstad shows that he is not a stock character (A) because he is making a change in personality by showing growth, which qualifies him as a more rounded character (B). His remarks are not ironic (C) but sincere. His intention to change relates only to himself, not to Helmer, so (D) is incorrect. He is not threatening Helmer’s job (E); but he is saying that he will be so productive that people will recognize that he is actually running things while Helmer continues to have the title of manager.*

25. Krogstad's eagerness to change  
(A) is a symptom of his ambition.  
(B) is attributed to Mrs. Linde.  
(C) **makes him a foil to the unchanging Helmer.**  
(D) is intended to delude Nora.  
(E) is intended to balance Doctor Rank's death.

*Krogstad's comments are ambitious but not exclusively so; therefore (A) is not a complete answer. Mrs. Linde has not yet discussed Krogstad's morality with him, so (B) is incorrect. By showing an ability to change, Krogstad's character emphasizes Helmer's inflexibility—in this, he becomes a foil to Helmer (C). Krogstad is telling the truth, not trying to delude Nora (D), and his remarks have nothing to do with Doctor Rank (E).*

26. When she says, "I have courage enough for it now," Nora is referring to  
(A) revealing the secret to Helmer.  
(B) telling Helmer that Krogstad is trying to blackmail her.  
(C) preventing Christine from marrying Krogstad.  
(D) **committing suicide.**  
(E) standing trial for fraud.

*They have previously discussed suicide, and she speaks now of her restored courage, so (D) is correct. She never considers telling Helmer the secret (A) or claiming that Krogstad is blackmailing her (B). She does not know that Krogstad and Christine plan to marry, so (C) does not apply, and she never considers being charged with fraud (E).*

27. When Krogstad refers to a corpse with its hair fallen out, he is appealing to Nora's  
(A) courage.  
(B) desperation.  
(C) **vanity.**  
(D) fear of publicity.  
(E) love for Helmer.

*Nora has already shown that she values her appearance, so he is appealing to her vanity (C). This is the only answer supported by the text.*

28. Krogstad blames his own desperation on Helmer because  
(A) Christine has convinced him that Helmer is evil.  
(B) Nora says Helmer will not repay the loan.  
(C) this is a pattern that goes back to their school days.  
(D) **Helmer refuses to reinstate Krogstad at the bank, so he has no money.**  
(E) Nora says Helmer will repay the loan only if Krogstad confesses to blackmail.

*Christine does not discuss Helmer with Krogstad, so (A) is incorrect. Nora never says Helmer will repay the loan, so (B) does not apply. Although Krogstad and Helmer knew each other as boys, Krogstad did not have a pattern of blaming Helmer for his own faults, so (C) is not correct. Helmer has refused to re-hire Krogstad, which is the cause of Krogstad's financial and emotional desperation, so (D) is correct. (E) is not supported by the text.*

29. Early in this scene, Mrs. Linde takes a radical step when she  
(A) **proposes marriage to Krogstad.**  
(B) says she has always found work meaningless.  
(C) admits that she came to town to find work.  
(D) reveals that she wants to work for Krogstad.  
(E) says that Krogstad has forsaken her in the past.

*It was considered radical for a woman to propose to a man at the time of this play, so (A) is correct. She says that work has been important to her in the past, so (B) is not correct, and she implies that she came to town to find Krogstad, not work, so (C) is incorrect. She does not want to work for Krogstad (D) but in concert with him, and it was she who broke their earlier engagement, not he, so (E) is wrong.*

30. Krogstad makes a generalization about women that  
(A) shows he is just another chauvinist.  
(B) reveals his sense of irony.  
(C) **credits them with the virtue of generosity.**  
(D) is intended to be humorous.  
(E) puts him in agreement with Helmer.

*Since his generalization is a compliment, he is not considered a chauvinist, so (A) does not apply. His comment is sincere, not ironic, ruling (B) out. He is saying women are generous, even overly generous, so (C) is correct. He is serious, not joking, so (D) is incorrect, and he does not agree with Helmer about women and their talents, so (E) is also incorrect.*

31. This scene is important because it  
(A) serves as a distraction to the main story.  
(B) lightens the mood of the play and makes it less realistic.  
(C) **offers a model of marriage that is a foil to the Helmer marriage.**  
(D) is an ironic comment on marriage in general.  
(E) adds a conventional note to a nontraditional play.

*While this scene is part of a subplot, it is used to illuminate the main plot and is not a distraction to it (A), nor does it take away from the seriousness or realism of the play (B). Instead, by combining two people who recognize their weaknesses, it is a stark contrast (foil) to the Helmer marriage, so (C) is correct. This development is sincere, not ironic, so (D) is incorrect, and Mrs. Linde's proposal is not conventional, so (E) does not apply.*

32. Feminist critics praised Ibsen for scenes such as this because
- (A) he validates the role of mother for women.
  - (B) his characters include intelligent, thoughtful women.**
  - (C) he gives the dominant role to a beautiful young widow.
  - (D) his women can find insightful men to lean on.
  - (E) his women recognize the need for marriage as a path to success.

*Mrs. Linde's interaction with Krogstad is one of independent equals, making (B) the correct choice. While Mrs. Linde chooses to mother his children, the conversation is personal, not universal, so (A) is not correct; (C) emphasizes beauty, which is not part of this exchange. Both (D) and (E) suggest that a woman is only complete when attached to a man, which is not at all what Ibsen is suggesting, so they are both incorrect.*

33. This scene advances the theory that a marriage based on weaknesses
- (A) has no chance for success.
  - (B) must overcome society's bias against it.
  - (C) can succeed if it is also based on honesty.**
  - (D) is an idea to be ridiculed.
  - (E) is the best model.

*The optimism expressed by Mrs. Linde and Krogstad argues that their marriage, if based on honesty, could work, so (C) is correct; this rules out (A). Society has not voiced an opinion on this kind of marriage, so (B) is not the best answer. Nothing in the scene suggests that the idea is ridiculed (D) or held up for admiration (E).*

34. In terms of Freytag's pyramid, this scene represents
- (A) the major conflict.
  - (B) exposition that makes the plot more understandable.
  - (C) resolution of the main conflict.
  - (D) an ironic comment on the main plot.
  - (E) a subplot that would not be part of Freytag's pyramid.**

*Freytag's pyramid involves the main plot of the play. This scene is not part of the major conflict, so (A) is not correct; it does not explain more about the main conflict or its resolution, so neither (B) nor (C) is correct. It does not make any ironic comment on the main plot, so (D) is also incorrect. The scene is a subplot (E).*

35. Ibsen has Helmer wrestle Nora back to their apartment to emphasize that
- (A) she hates him and resists him.
  - (B) Nora is playing the flirt, pretending to resist him.
  - (C) Nora knows Mrs. Linde will be there as a witness.
  - (D) he dominates the marriage physically as well as in authority.**
  - (E) Helmer is a cruel and abusive husband.

*This encounter shows Helmer's complete dominance in the marriage, so (D) is correct. Nora wants to stay at the party to put off the time when she must confess to Helmer, but she does not hate him, so (A) is not correct. She is sincere in resisting him, so (B) does not fit. Although she expects to hear from Mrs. Linde about Krogstad and the letter, she does not know that Mrs. Linde is waiting, so (C) is not correct. Although Helmer is not a hero, he is not cruel or physically abusive (E).*

36. When Helmer removes Nora's shawl and says, "Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn't she charming, Mrs. Linde?" he is reminding the audience that an important element in his character is
- (A) selfless devotion, with Nora as its object.
  - (B) male chauvinism, including objectifying women.**
  - (C) irony, because he has previously said Nora is unattractive.
  - (D) exaggeration.
  - (E) humor, because he is just joking about her charm.

*These are not the comments of a selflessly devoted husband, so (A) is incorrect. He is turning Nora into an object based on her appearance, so (B) is correct. He is not being ironic, nor is he exaggerating or being humorous, so (C), (D), and (E) are incorrect.*

37. When Nora says that Helmer will regret not letting her stay at the party, she means that
- (A) he will regret seeing Mrs. Linde again.
  - (B) she knows they will have a fight because he has had a lot to drink.
  - (C) even more people could admire her beauty if they stayed at the party.
  - (D) she will refuse to sleep with him, and he will be frustrated.
  - (E) he will wish they had stayed at the party longer and put off her revelations.**

*Nora is saying that when he learns of her secret, he will wish he were still upstairs dancing, so (E) is correct. Nora is not commenting on Mrs. Linde, so (A) does not apply, and she does not expect a fight because of drink (B). She does not wish more people could be impressed by her looks (C), and, although she does refuse to sleep with him, she did not plan that refusal, so (D) does not apply.*

38. Helmer's pride in Nora reflects the fact that he  
(A) is unselfish in his celebration of her.  
(B) acknowledges that she has worked hard to achieve success.  
(C) **feels her beauty reflects well on him.**  
(D) loves her deeply.  
(E) appreciates her independence in social situations.

*Helmer sees Nora's triumph in terms of himself; he is not celebrating her as an independent or practiced person, so (A) and (B) are incorrect, and (C) is correct. Because of his focus on himself, he is unable to love her for herself (D) or value independence in her (E).*

39. Helmer's comment that exits "ought always to be effective" is an example of  
(A) symbolism.  
(B) exaggeration.  
(C) **foreshadowing.**  
(D) figurative language.  
(E) the use of a foil.

*This is an example of foreshadowing (C) because Helmer is talking about leaving the party, but the audience is to register that another exit will be coming, and that it will be effective in surprising ways. Symbolism (A) is having an object stand in for another; there is neither exaggeration nor figurative language here (B) and (C), and the scene does not feature a foil (D) to either events or characters.*

40. Helmer's account of Nora's success at the party reinforces one of the central themes of the play, which is that  
(A) **women are valued for their appearance, not for their minds.**  
(B) women are tremendously successful.  
(C) women are better off when men control women's roles.  
(D) men exist to show women to best advantage.  
(E) supportive men like Helmer help women realize true success.

*Helmer is focused entirely on Nora's appearance, not on any needs or desires she might have, so (A) is correct. In this play, women are not shown as (B) successful, and Nora is certainly not better off with Helmer controlling her life (C). Men are not portrayed as being responsible for showing women to advantage (D) or for supporting their quest for success (E).*

# A Doll's House

## Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

### Study Guide Teacher's Copy

#### ACT I

1. What does the fact that Nora pays the porter twice what she owes him suggest about Nora? What might this incident foreshadow about the play?

*This incident suggests that Nora spends freely and impulsively and that her poor money management skills will be an important factor in the play.*

2. What is the significance of the fact that Nora eats macaroons, hides the package in her pocket, and wipes the crumbs from her lips?

*This incident is a signal to the reader that Nora keeps secrets from her husband.*

3. Torvald Helmer has several pet names for Nora. What do they include, and what do they say about how he regards her?

*Helmer uses diminutives, such as "little," combined with animal names, such as "little skylark" and "little squirrel." These names suggest that he trivializes Nora, sees himself as a responsible adult and her as a small and capricious animal; he does not view her as intellectually comparable to him.*

4. What points do Helmer and Nora each make in their first conversation about money? How does this set up a framework for future action?

*In their initial conversation, Helmer and Nora reveal their differences in approaches to money. Nora is counting on being able to spend a little more freely, and Helmer insists that they not incur debt or additional expenses until he begins to receive the larger salary he expects in the coming year. Helmer says that Nora's attitude toward debt is typical of how women think, and he adds, "No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt" (p. 12). The reader should expect that Nora and Helmer will continue to disagree about money.*

5. What does Nora's flirtatious behavior suggest about her relationship with Helmer?

*Nora's flirtatiousness suggests that she has found this kind of behavior to be a successful diversion from her husband's patronizing and overbearing manner.*



6. What literary element is used when Helmer refers to Nora's father, and what does Helmer say about the father?

*Ibsen uses this scene to introduce exposition—information about Nora's father. He is showing that Nora has always been a spendthrift and that she developed her attitudes toward money from her father. Helmer goes on to say that these habits are "in the blood," suggesting that he believes Nora could never change or grow (p. 14).*

7. What does the reader learn when Helmer raises the subject of sweets, saying, "Hasn't Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town to-day" (p. 14)?

*This incident illustrates that Helmer is controlling about more than money: he has apparently laid down rules for Nora to follow when she is out. The reader learns that Helmer thinks Nora should not indulge in sweets; the reader is put on alert that Nora may reveal other limitations on her behavior as the play progresses. The reader is reminded that Helmer watches Nora for lapses in her behavior and that Nora, for her part, hides certain facts from him and is prepared to lie to him.*

8. When the family was short of money, what did Nora do so they could all celebrate Christmas? What does this symbolize, and what does it suggest about her character?

*Nora spent three weeks making decorations for the Christmas Tree and small gifts for family members. Symbolically, this represents the importance of appearances. As to Nora's character, it suggests some determination on her part, as well as a willingness to work to improve a situation. Unfortunately, the cat ruined the delicate ornaments and gifts, but Nora believes her effort and initiative were worthwhile.*

9. What does the reader infer about the Helmer family's choice to have servants even when they are in tight economic circumstances?

*This choice suggests that the family is very aware of appearances and that they do not want their neighbors to realize how tight money is for them.*

10. When the doorbell rings, why does Helmer say, "If it is a caller, remember that I am not at home"?

*There are two reasons for Helmer's comment: first, it is a dramatic device to remove him from the scene, and, second, it reminds the reader that he views himself as too important to be available to people who just drop in.*

11. How is Nora's self-centeredness illustrated in her initial conversation with Mrs. Linde?

*Nora chatters mindlessly at Mrs. Linde. Upon realizing that she never sent Mrs. Linde a note of condolence, Nora diverts all the attention of the incident to herself. Although Nora insists that Mrs. Linde discuss her sad past, the younger woman immediately breaks into the conversation again and discusses Helmer's new position as the bank manager.*



12. More exposition occurs when Nora discusses Helmer's early career with Mrs. Linde. What does the reader learn about Helmer's career?

*Although Helmer is a barrister, or lawyer, he has not been a very successful one, so the job as bank manager will bring the family much more financial security.*

13. What behavioral problem does Mrs. Linde chide Nora about?

*Mrs. Linde scolds Nora for being a spendthrift, apparently a long-term behavior.*

14. What does Nora reveal about how she and Helmer have managed financially? How did they raise the money needed to go to Italy for his health? What is significant about her comments?

*Nora reveals that she has worked for money, doing needlework and other small jobs for incidental sums; this, like her willingness to make Christmas gifts, shows creativity and ingenuity. However, they needed a great deal of money to live in Italy, and Nora says, "I ought to tell you that we had it from papa." (p. 18) Her remark is ambiguous—she does not flatly say that she got the money from her father. When the reader remembers Nora's proven ability to lie, this remark should be an indicator that a note of mystery has entered the play. In terms of the "well-made play" concept, the source of the funds becomes an element of mystery.*

15. What does Mrs. Linde admit about her marriage?

*She admits that she never loved her husband.*

16. Why has Mrs. Linde come to Nora's house?

*Mrs. Linde had married her husband because he had enough money to support her aging mother and young brothers. With Mr. Linde's death, his business fell apart. Mrs. Linde is now alone because her mother has died and her brothers are on their own, so she has come to Nora, an old friend, in hope of financial help.*

17. Mrs. Linde says to Nora, ". . . you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life" (p. 20). What literary devices are used here?

*The comment is an example of verbal irony in that Mrs. Linde believes it, but Nora knows differently. In addition, the use of irony here foreshadows other events because Nora is about to learn much more about burdens and troubles.*

18. What is Mrs. Linde's initial reaction as Nora begins to reveal the source of the 250 pounds? What does this conversation reveal about the status of women?

*Mrs. Linde has trouble believing that Nora could raise that kind of money unless she won it. The older woman notes that borrowing the money was out of the question because "a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent." (p. 21)*

*The conversation indicates how powerless women were in society at the time (the play dates from 1879). Women are treated as juveniles, with no power to transact business on their own.*

19. Nora suggests that she might have obtained the money from an admirer, but she is insulted when Mrs. Linde suggests imprudence on Nora's part. How does this exchange add to the reader's understanding of Nora?

*Nora sees herself as attractive, and thus able to draw the attention of a wealthy admirer. She also sees herself as loyal in obtaining the money needed for her husband's health. By picturing herself as loyal, Nora is justifying her behavior, positing that the ends really do justify the means. She sees the whole transaction in terms of situational ethics, where everything is relative and no absolutes exist.*

20. Nora gives Mrs. Linde a summary of the source of the funds. In terms of the "well-made play," why is this important?

*The source of the funds, and the surrounding secrecy, is the central mystery of the play. Helmer's ignorance of the true source of the funds must stay in place to sustain his "manly independence"; revelation of the facts would endanger his and Nora's "mutual relations altogether; their beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now" (p. 22). Thus, this secret will drive the rest of the story, and those who know the secret have a different reality from those who are kept in ignorance.*

21. How has Nora managed her own finances to address her debts?

*Nora receives all household money through her husband. To repay the loan plus interest, she scrimps on the household money when she can, although this option is limited because of the family's need to appear financially sound ("Torvald must have a good table" and she "couldn't let my children be shabbily dressed" (p. 22). She also puts aside half of any money her husband gives her for her own clothing and needs, feeling that she can buy cheap goods for herself because "any clothes look well on me." (p. 23) In addition, she has obtained work copying documents, for which she is paid.*

22. Why has Nora's work copying documents been so important?

*Nora's copying work has been the most rewarding source of income because "it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man," (p. 23).*

23. What dangers exist in Nora's employment?

*The danger of discovery at home is great. Helmer does not know she is working for pay, and he would find this circumstance quite embarrassing, so she locks herself up at night to copy. If he intruded, her secret would be out. In addition, whoever is paying her could reveal her secret.*

24. At this point in the play, where is the power allocated among Helmer, Nora, and Mrs. Linde?

*Helmer has the power of society in his favor: he is a man with the privileges of society, he earns a salary so he has economic power, and he believes he has control of the family's finances.*

*Nora, on the other hand, has no real power in society, although she does have the power conferred on her by being the wife of such a respectable man. In more practical terms, she has used her cleverness to obtain a large loan, and she has employed the power of deception to keep that information from her husband. She uses unacknowledged power to juggle the household finances to free up some money for loan repayments.*

*Mrs. Linde appears to have no power at all: she is poor, and she needs help to find a job.*

25. Who is Krogstad?

*Krogstad is an employee of the bank that Helmer will be managing; he had formerly been a clerk in a law office in the town where Mrs. Linde used to live, and she has recognized him. Nora, also, seems to know him, as evidenced by her furtive conversation with him, in which he assures her that he is only there to talk to her husband on "dry business matters, Mrs. Helmer; absolutely nothing else" (p. 24).*

26. What else could Krogstad possibly come to the Helmer home to discuss?

*It is possible, based on Nora's whispered questions to him, that he has knowledge of her loan.*

27. What does the reader learn when Nora and Mrs. Linde discuss Krogstad?

*The reader learns that Krogstad had an unhappy marriage, his wife has died, he has several children, and he "carries on various kinds of business" (p. 24).*

28. What is revealed in the conversation between Dr. Rank and Mrs. Linde?

*Dr. Rank says that all humans want to live as long as they can, no matter how they suffer. He mentions that Krogstad, whom he passed in the hall, "suffers from a diseased moral character" (p. 25). While this remark is unprofessional, it alerts the reader to the potential for harm that Krogstad carries with him.*

29. What can the reader infer from Nora's question as to whether "all the people who are employed in the Bank" are now "dependent on Torvald" (p. 26)?

*The reader can infer that Krogstad's new state of dependence on Helmer is causing Nora to gloat; she is enjoying the irony of the fact that her husband now has power over Krogstad, who previously wielded some power over Nora. The role of money-lender would certainly confer that kind of power.*

30. What is important about Nora's offer of macaroons to Dr. Rank?

*Nora offers the cookies in spite of the fact that Dr. Rank knows they have been forbidden to Nora by her husband. Nora then lies about the source of the cookies, showing that she is daring and somewhat foolhardy as well as duplicitous.*

31. How does Nora manage the conversation when she asks her husband to give Mrs. Linde a job?

*Nora tells several lies in the course of asking about a job for her friend, saying that she had telegraphed Mrs. Linde about Helmer's new job and that Mrs. Linde came especially to ask Helmer for work.*

32. Why is Nora's management of the conversation significant?

*It shows that she lies to her husband easily and frequently and that she does this to manipulate him.*

33. Why does Ibsen insert a scene of Nora romping with her children?

*He wants the reader to see another side of Nora's character. She appears to be a loving mother whose children adore her.*

34. What is Krogstad's relationship with Nora?

*He appears to be the person who lent her the money, based on her comment that "[i]t is not the first of the month yet" (p. 29). and his response that she will control what kind of Christmas she will have.*

35. What is ironic about the following conversation?

Nora: When anyone is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they should really be careful to avoid offending anyone who—who—

Krogstad: Who has influence? (p. 30)

*Nora is lecturing Mr. Krogstad about how influential she has been in obtaining a job for Mrs. Linde, when actually it is Krogstad who has power over Nora because of his role in lending her the money.*

36. What is discordant about Krogstad's request that Nora influence Helmer in the matter of Krogstad's job?

*Krogstad does not make a request at all; he demands and directs that Nora influence Helmer.*

37. Why does Krogstad think he is being fired?

*He believes that Mrs. Linde has revealed something about him to Nora and that Nora then influenced Helmer to fire Krogstad.*

38. In another example of exposition, what does Krogstad reveal about himself?

*He was involved in some incident in the past for which he could have been taken to court. However, he managed to avoid a court trial, although he subsequently found many doors closed to him. He regards his lowly job at the bank as a step toward regaining respectability, which he desires for the sake of his sons.*

39. What does Krogstad mean when he says, "I have the means to compel you" (p. 31)?

*He is willing to blackmail Nora to gain her aid with Helmer.*

40. What is Nora's reaction?

*At first she is shocked, but then she dares Krogstad to tell Helmer of her debt.*

41. What does Krogstad reveal about the bond used to secure the loan?

*He reveals to Nora that he knows her father's signature is suspect because it is dated after his death. In other words, he knows that she forged her father's signature to the loan documents.*

42. Why did Nora forge her father's signature?

*She says she could not ask her father to sign because he was too ill, and she could not delay her trip because her husband was ill.*

43. How does the conversation end?

*Krogstad explains Nora's position to her: she has committed a crime and he can take her to court, thereby ruining her reputation. Nora, on the other hand, says she believes that the law would not penalize a woman who tried to spare her father and save her husband.*

44. Why does Ibsen show Nora telling her children that she cannot play with them?

*He is showing Nora as a person who breaks promises and disappoints her children. This is an incident intended to reveal more of her character and to foreshadow other events.*

45. What does Helmer scold Nora for when he returns?

*Helmer accuses Nora of lying to him about the fact that Krogstad has visited the house again. He realizes that Krogstad has asked Nora to intercede in the matter of the job. Helmer warns Nora to stay away from Krogstad, who has a bad reputation, and not to interfere with business.*

46. Why does Ibsen include the conversation between Helmer and Nora about the fancy dress ball?

*Ibsen wants to reassert Helmer's dominance in the home, and he uses Nora's plea for help and Helmer's overbearing reply to do this. Helmer is also eager to help because the fancy-dress ball is all about appearances.*

47. What is ironic about Krogstad's crime?

*He committed fraud; ironically, this is the same crime that Nora has committed. However, Krogstad's fraud was revealed, and hers, so far, has not been.*

48. What does Helmer say about Krogstad's morals and his current life?

*Helmer condemns Krogstad for getting away with fraud by being clever, and he says that Krogstad is "a guilty man" who "has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children." (p. 37) In other words, the pressure of keeping up appearances must be a heavy burden.*

49. What does Helmer say about mothers, and why is this ironic?

*He says that people who turn out badly in early life are poisoned by a household atmosphere set by the mother. In this condemnation, Helmer is attributing power—but no authority—to mothers and is, ironically, saying that Nora's moral choices (not his own) will be the determinant in how their children turn out.*

50. Why does Nora reject the return of her children at the end of this act?

*She is afraid that she might poison them by contagion with her own guilt.*

51. What does Nora's final comment—"It's not true. It can't possibly be true."—say about her state of mind (p. 38)?

*It says that Nora is rejecting the idea that she is corrupting her children's morals, but she is also rejecting the larger situation, which includes Krogstad's threat to her, her committing a crime, and her husband's flat refusal to keep Krogstad at the bank.*

52. Looking over Act I, identify the protagonist and antagonist and classify Nora, Helmer, Krogstad, Mrs. Linde, and Doctor Rank as to whether they are round or flat characters.

*Nora is the protagonist; she is a round character. Helmer is less developed than Nora and has shown no capacity for growth; although he is the antagonist, he is also a flat character. At this point, Krogstad is drawn as a one-dimensional, morally lax individual, so he is a flat character. Mrs. Linde has no real character at all, so she is also a flat character. Doctor Rank is a flat character as well.*

53. Are lesser characters used to create foils to Nora and Helmer?

*Lesser characters are used as foils to a very limited extent in Act I. Krogstad, for example, is painted as evil and desperate, which makes Helmer seem even more smug and aware of his public persona. Mrs. Linde, in contrast to Nora, has had to function as a woman alone in the world. Her brittleness and sense of focus contrast with Nora's flightiness.*

54. What are the main themes of the play, as established in Act I?

*The themes include the limitations of a traditional male-dominated marriage; the importance of appearances in society; the connection between wealth and respectability, especially versus poverty and low moral choices; and the theme of retribution for sins.*

## ACT II

1. What is tormenting Nora as Act II opens?

*Nora is anxious that “someone” may be coming, by which she means Krogstad, or that mail might be delivered that would reveal her secret to Helmer (p. 39).*

2. What fears does she reveal as she talks to the nurse?

*She is terrified that she may, indeed, be corrupting her children by her presence. She is worried about what would happen to them if she were taken away—would they miss her? Would her old nurse take care of them?*

3. What is significant about Nora’s account of Doctor Rank’s disease?

*Nora blames the doctor’s physical disease on his father’s wickedness, to which the doctor was exposed as a child. This thinking echoes Helmer’s belief that exposure to a corrupt mother will corrupt the children in a home.*

4. What has Mrs. Linde concluded about the source of the loan?

*She believes that Doctor Rank lent Nora the money and that he calls on her daily in expectation that they will have an intimate relationship because of the loan.*

5. What is Nora’s reaction?

*She is shocked that her friend Christine would think this of her. She says she would never put herself in this compromising situation with a friend of the family.*

6. When Helmer returns, what does Nora ask him to do?

*She repeats her request for him to keep Krogstad at the bank.*

7. What reason does Helmer give for saying Krogstad cannot return to the bank?

*Helmer says he has given that post to Mrs. Linde.*

8. What danger does Nora say Krogstad poses to Helmer?

*Krogstad owns a newspaper that specializes in scandal; he could publish information that would make Helmer’s life at the bank difficult.*



9. How does Helmer dismiss this notion, and what do we learn about the past?

*Helmer says that he has nothing in his past that would compromise him, but that Nora's father was prey to this kind of newspaper because he did not always conduct his affairs with honesty.*

10. What other reasons does Helmer give for refusing to rehire Krogstad?

*He says that he has already told others that Krogstad would be fired, and the staff would laugh at the new manager if he caved in to pressure from his wife—his authority would be undermined from the start. He also says that he unwisely formed a friendship with Krogstad when they were boys, and Krogstad uses a disrespectfully familiar tone when they are in public together; this would further diminish Helmer's authority at the bank.*

11. What errand does Helmer give to Helen, the maid?

*He sends her to deliver a letter formally dismissing Krogstad from the bank.*

12. What assurances does Helmer give Nora when she is horrified about the firing?

*Helmer tells Nora that he can take care of her in any circumstances. He says, "Come what will, you may be sure I shall have both courage and strength if they be needed. You will see I am man enough to take everything upon myself" (p. 46).*

13. What news does Doctor Rank reveal about himself?

*He has "consumption" of the spine and expects to die in the near future, possibly within a month.*

14. What is Doctor Rank's confession to Nora, and how does it change the dynamics among the characters?

*Doctor Rank confesses that he loves Nora, but she finds his declaration unsettling and backs off from her intention of confiding in him.*

15. What does Krogstad propose?

*He says he will hold the forged bond but will not reveal it to anyone else.*

16. What does the reader learn about Nora as she and Krogstad converse?

*Nora has considered running away from home to escape the scandal of her fraud. She has also considered suicide, but she did not have the courage to commit the act.*

17. What does his conversation with Nora reveal about Krogstad's character? Why is this bit of exposition important now?

*In this conversation, Krogstad is shown to be more sympathetic than before. He confesses that he, too, thought of running away from his misdeeds, and that he also considered suicide. He admits he lacked the courage to kill himself. After working hard, in some poverty, Krogstad now has one ambition: to rehabilitate himself, returning himself to good standing in the city as a result of hard work and good business sense at the bank. This exposition is important now because it signals a shift in Krogstad's thinking and the beginning of growth in his character.*

18. How does Krogstad intend to go about his rehabilitation? What is ironic about his plan?

*He has written Helmer a letter explaining his power over Nora, and he expects Helmer to rehire him at the bank, in a higher position. He recognizes the irony of using blackmail to achieve rehabilitation, but he blames Helmer's unfairness for forcing him into this path.*

19. What is Mrs. Linde's plan regarding the letter?

*She plans to ask Krogstad to return to the Helmer house and request the return of his letter before Helmer reads it.*

20. Why would she approach Krogstad to ask for a favor?

*She says, "There was a time when he would gladly do anything for my sake," implying that they were once very close (p. 57).*

21. What does Nora do to distract Helmer from the mail?

*She begs him to help her perfect the Tarantella, growing increasingly manic as she dances.*

22. What is the "wonderful thing" Nora refers to (p. 60)?

*The "wonderful thing" is her freedom from the bind she is in, whether that freedom comes through resolution or tragedy.*

23. What does Nora imply at the end of the act?

*She implies that she is still considering suicide, saying "Thirty-one hours to live" (p. 60).*

24. How does the structure of Act II contrast to that of Act I in terms of rising action, incident, and character development?

*In Act I, a number of incidents unfold in rapid order, but in Act II the scenes are more measured and quieter until the very end, when Nora dances feverishly. While the overall action is still rising, exposition has allowed the audience to see more depth to some of the characters. In Act I, the characters of Helmer and Nora were revealed; in Act II, the reader learns more about Doctor Rank and Krogstad, in particular, with revelations about their emotions and ambitions.*

25. What is the emotional landscape of Act II?

*The act is designed to heighten the emotional tension of the play. Nora, in particular, is increasingly desperate as the act progresses. Her concern for her children is heightened by the theory that a parent's sins will mar the life of a child, which is emphasized through Doctor Rank's illness, thought to be caused by his father's evil ways. Mrs. Linde expresses interest in Doctor Rank, who is single and wealthy. Nora and Helmer discuss Krogstad, and Helmer continues to treat Nora like a child, which does not allay her concerns at all. Helmer does recognize Nora's mental distress and swears to protect her always. Nora becomes increasingly agitated. Krogstad tells Nora that he is determined to restore his own good name, being haunted by his bad reputation. Doctor Rank confesses his love for Nora, even as he reveals the seriousness of his illness. Nora is further agitated by the thought that Doctor Rank loves her. Nora is frantic in her efforts to prevent Helmer from reading Krogstad's letter.*

26. How is figurative language used in Act II?

*The only figurative language is Helmer's return to calling Nora by diminutive animal names, which reminds the reader that he considers himself more responsible and more intellectual than she is. Otherwise, Act II's language is utilitarian, realistic, and very direct.*

27. What is the significance of the stage directions given when Doctor Rank enters to call on Nora: "During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark." (p. 47)

*The use of dimming light is intended to emphasize that Doctor Rank is dying; his human light is dimming. When Nora calls for the maid to bring a lamp, she wants to change the conversation from death and the Doctor's profession of love to more current matters.*

### ACT III

1. What exposition is given for the past relationship of Mrs. Linde and Krogstad?

*They had been engaged, and Mrs. Linde broke off their understanding to marry Mr. Linde instead. Krogstad recognizes that she made her choice for economic reasons but says that her desertion started the downward spiral of his life.*

2. What idea does Mrs. Linde broach to Krogstad?

*She proposes that they be reunited and that she become a mother to his children. She says she has faith in his “real character” (p. 64).*

3. How would a marriage between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad differ from the Helmer marriage, and what literary device is suggested?

*Mrs. Linde believes that two people who recognize their own faults can work together toward improvement; in the case of the Helmers, no effort at such direct and honest understanding has been made. Thus, the alliance between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad is set up as a foil to the relationship between Nora and Helmer.*

4. Why does Mrs. Linde tell Krogstad to leave his letter in the mailbox for Helmer to read?

*Mrs. Linde says that Nora and Helmer must understand each other on the basis of truth, all secrets and lies removed. In other words, she thinks Nora and Helmer should go forward on the basis of honesty, just as she and Krogstad will.*

5. What does the fancy-dress ball symbolize?

*The costume ball symbolizes the fact that Nora and Helmer go through their life play-acting, and their life to this point has been about costume and appearance.*

6. When Mrs. Linde says Nora “must tell [her] husband all about it,” Nora replies “I knew it” (p. 66). What does Nora mean?

*Nora means that she knew Krogstad would not change his mind about the letter and that her own fate was sealed—she knew that she would have to take desperate action on her own.*

7. Why does Ibsen include the scene in which Helmer tries to convince Mrs. Linde to take up embroidery rather than knitting?

*Ibsen wants the reader to understand that Helmer’s intake of champagne at the party has removed some of his usual reserve and that he is acting without inhibition. Ibsen also wants to reemphasize Helmer’s controlling and interfering nature.*

8. What are Helmer's intentions regarding Nora after the dance?

*He wants to seduce her, reclaiming her as if she were a bride again.*

9. How does Ibsen emphasize Helmer's tendency to reshape the world according to his own emotional needs?

*Helmer tells Nora that at a party or a ball, he imagines that they are strangers and he then enters into a ritual of secrecy, courtship, and seduction. Helmer's sexual fantasies about Nora reinforce his fantasies about the perfection of his home and of his very life.*

10. What are Nora and Doctor Rank referring to when they talk about Doctor Rank's well-spent day and his scientific investigations?

*They are speaking in code about whether Doctor Rank has evaluated his symptoms again; he is signaling to Nora that he will not see them again but is going home to die.*

11. What does Doctor Rank mean when he says he will be invisible at the next ball?

*He means that he will be dead by the time the next ball is held.*

12. When Nora and Helmer are discussing Doctor Rank's impending death, what is the significance of Nora's comments on page 71: "If it has to happen, it is best it should be without a word—don't you think so, Torvald?"

*Nora is talking about her own departure, not just Doctor Rank's death. She is ready to leave without a word, whether to commit suicide or to leave the household, just as Doctor Rank is shutting himself off to die.*

13. What literary device is Ibsen using when he has Helmer say, "Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake" (p. 71)?

*This is an example of situational irony because Helmer is in such a situation, but he does not know it. It also ironically foreshadows that, when the time comes, Helmer will not be the heroic savior he imagines himself to be.*

14. What is symbolic about the key to the letter box?

*The fact that only Helmer has a key to the letter box symbolizes the way in which he has locked Nora out of any business decisions for their household and restricted her access to the broader world.*

15. Why does Nora want Helmer to read his letters?

*She is exhausted by the tension of carrying her secret, and she wants him to know what she has done so they can sort the situation out.*

16. What is Nora's emotional state while Helmer is reading the letter?

*She knows that her life as a respectable wife and mother is ending, and she plans to drown herself rather than endure the embarrassment of living in shame.*

17. What is Helmer's attitude toward Nora upon reading Krogstad's letter?

*He is shocked. He blames Nora for making him love her when she was deceiving him all along. He says he should have known that her father's corruption would stain her. Helmer believes he is being punished for overlooking her father's moral laxity.*

18. What is the significance of Helmer's dismissal of Nora's statement, "When I am out of the way, you will be free" (p. 73)?

*He says that will not make any difference; in other words, the value of her life is nothing.*

19. What is Helmer's plan for the future?

*Helmer says that Nora's fraud must be covered up and kept as a secret. Appearances must be maintained in public, but their home life will be lived separately, and Nora will have no say in how the household is run. He says she cannot raise the children, reflecting his belief that moral corruption is contagious.*

20. What is Helmer's reaction when a letter is hand-delivered? How does the audience know what is enclosed in the letter?

*Helmer reads the letter, looks at the enclosed paper, and shouts "I am saved!" The only thing that could save his reputation would be the return of the bond, so the audience is meant to realize that is the enclosure.*

21. What would the audience expect at this point if *A Doll's House* followed the strict guidelines of the well-made play?

*The audience would expect the play to end happily: with the return of the letter and the realization that Nora's fraud would not be exposed.*

22. What is the importance of Nora's question about whether she, too, is saved?

*She is trying to discern whether Helmer is thinking only of himself or if his consciousness has expanded to include her.*

23. What caused Krogstad to return the bond?

*Helmer says, “[h]e says he regrets and repents—that a happy change in his life—never mind what he says!” (p. 74). This lets the reader know that Krogstad has agreed with Mrs. Linde that the two of them together can forge a positive relationship and overcome their past mistakes.*

24. What kind of figurative language does Helmer use in describing Nora’s place in their home after the threat of exposure is over and the bond is burned?

*In addition to calling Nora a “frightened little singing bird,” Helmer says he has “broad wings to shelter” Nora and that he “will protect [her] like a hunted dove that [he has] saved from a hawk’s claws” (p. 75). In this imagery, Nora is a victim and Helmer is her hero, just as he fantasized earlier. He is again assuming the superior position, diminishing her by calling her diminutive animal names.*

25. What is Helmer’s reaction when Nora initiates a “serious conversation” (p. 76)?

*He founders in unfamiliar territory and has trouble adjusting to the fact that Nora is in charge of this conversation.*

26. What is Nora saying when she introduces the image of herself as a doll?

*She is trying to get Helmer to understand that both he and her father regarded her as a pretty plaything devoid of intelligence or emotional needs.*

27. What is Helmer’s reaction to Nora’s statement that he treats her as a doll?

*He grants that perhaps they have been play-acting, but he says, “[p]laytime shall be over, and lesson-time shall begin” (p. 77).*

28. What does this show about Helmer’s understanding of Nora?

*It shows that he still fails to grasp what she is saying, and that a move from simply playing house to a phase of more responsibility under his supervision would not constitute growth for her.*

29. What is Helmer’s reaction to Nora’s decision to leave him?

*He is shocked that she “would neglect [her] most sacred duties” (husband and children) because he believes it is impossible for her to “have other duties just as sacred” (p. 78).*

30. What is the significance of the following speech by Nora?

“I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being, just as you are—or at all events, that I must try and become one. I know quite well, Torvald, that most people would think you right, and that views of that kind are to be found in books; but I can no longer content myself with what most people say, or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them” (p. 78).

*This monologue is Nora’s declaration of independence, but it is also Ibsen’s reply to the criticism he expected from those who supported a traditional social structure.*

31. What does Nora mean when she says she lost her love for her husband “when the wonderful thing did not happen” (p. 79).

*Nora means that Torvald did not treat her as an adult or try to understand her motivations and needs, he did not move away from his worship of appearances over reality, and he did not see his complicity in her crime. In short, he failed her, and she tells him that she saw “you were not the man I had thought you were” (p. 79).*

32. What would Nora require before she would return to her husband?

*She tells her husband that things “would have to be so changed. . . [that] our life together would be a real wedlock” (p. 81).*

33. Why does Nora change her clothes before leaving?

*In practical terms, she would freeze if she left in the dancing dress she wore to the ball. In symbolic terms, she is starting out on a life of utility and independence, and her warm, practical clothes symbolize this.*

34. Why is this play more effective because it is set at the New Year than it would be if it were set at Valentine’s Day or some other holiday?

*The play is ultimately about a new start; the symbolism of the New Year is an important reminder of that theme.*



# *A Doll's House*

## Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

### Study Guide Student Copy

#### ACT I

1. What does the fact that Nora pays the porter twice what she owes him suggest about Nora? What might this incident foreshadow about the play?
2. What is the significance of the fact that Nora eats macaroons, hides the package in her pocket, and wipes the crumbs from her lips?
3. Torvald Helmer has several pet names for Nora. What do they include, and what do they say about how he regards her?
4. What points do Helmer and Nora each make in their first conversation about money? How does this set up a framework for future action?
5. What does Nora's flirtatious behavior suggest about her relationship with Helmer?

6. What literary element is used when Helmer refers to Nora's father, and what does Helmer say about the father?
7. What does the reader learn when Helmer raises the subject of sweets, saying, "Hasn't Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town to-day" (p. 14)?
8. When the family was short of money, what did Nora do so they could all celebrate Christmas? What does this symbolize, and what does it suggest about her character?
9. What does the reader infer about the Helmer family's choice to have servants even when they are in tight economic circumstances?
10. When the doorbell rings, why does Helmer say, "If it is a caller, remember that I am not at home"?
11. How is Nora's self-centeredness illustrated in her initial conversation with Mrs. Linde?

12. More exposition occurs when Nora discusses Helmer's early career with Mrs. Linde. What does the reader learn about Helmer's career?
13. What behavioral problem does Mrs. Linde chide Nora about?
14. What does Nora reveal about how she and Helmer have managed financially? How did they raise the money needed to go to Italy for his health? What is significant about her comments?
15. What does Mrs. Linde admit about her marriage?
16. Why has Mrs. Linde come to Nora's house?
17. Mrs. Linde says to Nora, ". . . you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life" (p. 20). What literary devices are used here?
18. What is Mrs. Linde's initial reaction as Nora begins to reveal the source of the 250 pounds? What does this conversation reveal about the status of women?

19. Nora suggests that she might have obtained the money from an admirer, but she is insulted when Mrs. Linde suggests imprudence on Nora's part. How does this exchange add to the reader's understanding of Nora?
20. Nora gives Mrs. Linde a summary of the source of the funds. In terms of the "well-made play," why is this important?
21. How has Nora managed her own finances to address her debts?
22. Why has Nora's work copying documents been so important?
23. What dangers exist in Nora's employment?
24. At this point in the play, where is the power allocated among Helmer, Nora, and Mrs. Linde?
25. Who is Krogstad?

26. What else could Krogstad possibly come to the Helmer home to discuss?
27. What does the reader learn when Nora and Mrs. Linde discuss Krogstad?
28. What is revealed in the conversation between Dr. Rank and Mrs. Linde?
29. What can the reader infer from Nora's question as to whether "all the people who are employed in the Bank" are now "dependent on Torvald" (p. 26)?
30. What is important about Nora's offer of macaroons to Dr. Rank?
31. How does Nora manage the conversation when she asks her husband to give Mrs. Linde a job?
32. Why is Nora's management of the conversation significant?

33. Why does Ibsen insert a scene of Nora romping with her children?

34. What is Krogstad's relationship with Nora?

35. What is ironic about the following conversation?

Nora: When anyone is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they should really be careful to avoid offending anyone who—who—

Krogstad: Who has influence? (p. 30)

36. What is discordant about Krogstad's request that Nora influence Helmer in the matter of Krogstad's job?

37. Why does Krogstad think he is being fired?

38. In another example of exposition, what does Krogstad reveal about himself?

39. What does Krogstad mean when he says, "I have the means to compel you" (p. 31)?

40. What is Nora's reaction?
41. What does Krogstad reveal about the bond used to secure the loan?
42. Why did Nora forge her father's signature?
43. How does the conversation end?
44. Why does Ibsen show Nora telling her children that she cannot play with them?
45. What does Helmer scold Nora for when he returns?
46. Why does Ibsen include the conversation between Helmer and Nora about the fancy dress ball?
47. What is ironic about Krogstad's crime?

48. What does Helmer say about Krogstad's morals and his current life?
49. What does Helmer say about mothers, and why is this ironic?
50. Why does Nora reject the return of her children at the end of this act?
51. What does Nora's final comment—"It's not true. It can't possibly be true."—say about her state of mind (p. 38)?
52. Looking over Act I, identify the protagonist and antagonist and classify Nora, Helmer, Krogstad, Mrs. Linde, and Doctor Rank as to whether they are round or flat characters.
53. Are lesser characters used to create foils to Nora and Helmer?
54. What are the main themes of the play, as established in Act I?



## ACT II

1. What is tormenting Nora as Act II opens?
2. What fears does she reveal as she talks to the nurse?
3. What is significant about Nora's account of Doctor Rank's disease?
4. What has Mrs. Linde concluded about the source of the loan?
5. What is Nora's reaction?
6. When Helmer returns, what does Nora ask him to do?
7. What reason does Helmer give for saying Krogstad cannot return to the bank?

8. What danger does Nora say Krogstad poses to Helmer?
9. How does Helmer dismiss this notion, and what do we learn about the past?
10. What other reasons does Helmer give for refusing to rehire Krogstad?
11. What errand does Helmer give to Helen, the maid?
12. What assurances does Helmer give Nora when she is horrified about the firing?
13. What news does Doctor Rank reveal about himself?
14. What is Doctor Rank's confession to Nora, and how does it change the dynamics among the characters?

15. What does Krogstad propose?
16. What does the reader learn about Nora as she and Krogstad converse?
17. What does his conversation with Nora reveal about Krogstad's character? Why is this bit of exposition important now?
18. How does Krogstad intend to go about his rehabilitation? What is ironic about his plan?
19. What is Mrs. Linde's plan regarding the letter?
20. Why would she approach Krogstad to ask for a favor?
21. What does Nora do to distract Helmer from the mail?

22. What is the “wonderful thing” Nora refers to (p. 60)?
23. What does Nora imply at the end of the act?
24. How does the structure of Act II contrast to that of Act I in terms of rising action, incident, and character development?
25. What is the emotional landscape of Act II?
26. How is figurative language used in Act II?
27. What is the significance of the stage directions given when Doctor Rank enters to call on Nora: “During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark.” (p. 47)

## ACT III

1. What exposition is given for the past relationship of Mrs. Linde and Krogstad?
2. What idea does Mrs. Linde broach to Krogstad?
3. How would a marriage between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad differ from the Helmer marriage, and what literary device is suggested?
4. Why does Mrs. Linde tell Krogstad to leave his letter in the mailbox for Helmer to read?
5. What does the fancy-dress ball symbolize?
6. When Mrs. Linde says Nora “must tell [her] husband all about it,” Nora replies “I knew it” (p. 66). What does Nora mean?
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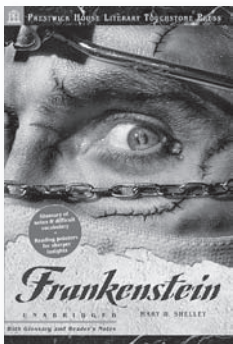
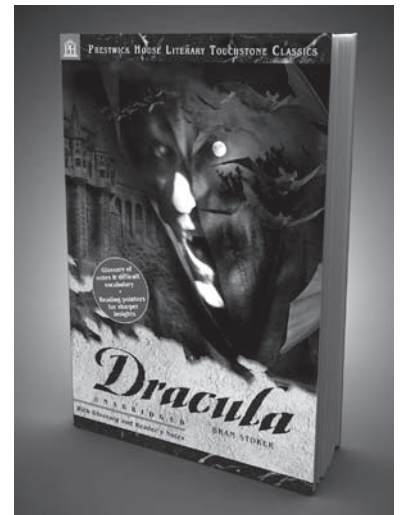
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Shipping 12% S&H (\$6.00 minimum) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Shipping & Handling

For orders of \$50.00 or less, please add \$6.00 for shipping and handling charges. For orders from \$50.01 to \$799.99 add 12%. For orders of \$800.00 and more, add 10%.

### Delivery Service

Most orders are shipped FedEx and you can expect delivery within 7-10 working days. Items in stock are usually shipped within one working day of receiving your order.

### Expedited Delivery

for expedited delivery ask about the following options:

- Overnight Air
- 2nd day air
- 3 Day Select