

English IV AP
Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll House*
Socratic Seminar

1. Is this drama a story concerning women's right or human rights? Explain your rationale.
2. Is the universality of this piece still as strong considering the advancements in women's rights and / or human rights over time? Is the play valuable only as it depicts life in the nineteenth century in Norway, or does it still tell us something about life today?
3. Consider the character of Torvald Helmer. Is Torvald an antagonist, a villain, a chauvinistic bore, an insensitive, insecure man, a misogynist, or a combination therein? Or do you feel sympathy for this man who works hard, saves his hard-earned money, succeeds, and is then betrayed by his deceiving wife? Or could Torvald be just as much a victim of nineteenth century societal norms as Nora?
4. The conclusion of *A Doll House* is quite different from other tragedies such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* for, as the curtain falls, bodies do not litter the stage. In what way does death still pervade the finale?
5. When deciding to leave her family at the end of the play, Nora takes a considerable risk. After all, males in 19th Century Europe dominate not only the home but also the workplace. Moreover, a woman who declares her independence from her family is little esteemed by society. Taking into consideration the social attitudes of the Europe of Ibsen's time, decide whether Nora can succeed on her own. Additionally, many readers find Nora an admirable character for having the courage to make a radical change in her life. However, one question that must be considered in evaluating her character is simply, "Was she right to abandon her children"?
6. There are a number of foils in this play – characters that play off of one another. Choose two (2) pairs to analyze. Discuss how the pairs parallel or contrast behavioral patterns.
 - Torvald and Dr. Rank
 - Nora and Krogstad
 - Torvald and Krogstad
 - Nora and Dr. Rank
 - Mrs. Linde and Nora
 - Torvald / Nora and Krogstad / Mrs. Linde
7. Choose three of the following items that appear in the play and discuss what function they serve.
 - The tarantella
 - The Christmas tree
 - The macaroons
 - The poison imagery
 - The bird imagery
 - The expected miracle
8. The play ends with Nora's famous rebellion against the husband and the Victorian society that have reduced her to a plaything. But throughout the play we see Nora rebelling in symbolic ways – her speech, neurotic habits of behavior, defiances that are timid to frantic. How does Nora rebel against her world prior to her final departure?
9. A major symbolic pattern in the play is Nora and Torvald's incessant need to hide, suggesting on a larger level the Victorian middle class's wish to hide from the ugliness and the harsh realities of capitalistic society. Examine the varieties of hiding in the play (evasion, disguise, lies) and discuss how and why the Helmers attempt to maintain their "charmed life"?
10. Rank the characters in this play in order of virtue, explaining which moral quality each person embodies and why.