The Doll House

by Henrik Ibsen
translated and adapted by John Murrell
DVxT Theatre Company Study Guide by J.D. Campbell

The purpose of this study guide is to provide materials that might be useful for teachers who are preparing classes for a performance of *The Doll House*, and to suggest a number of approaches to a discussion of the play once the performance has been seen.

Contents

1 The Playwright

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) is one of the three great playwrights, along with August Strindberg of Sweden (1849-1912) and Anton Chekhov of Russia (1860-1904), who are usually considered to be the pioneers of what we call "modern" drama. Ibsen's father, a general merchant, had been a prominent citizen in the small Norwegian town of Skien, where Henrik was born, but when Henrik was about six years old the father began to fall into financial difficulties, soon became hopelessly indebted, and lived most of the rest of his long life relying upon the charity of his relatives.

Between the ages of 15 and 22 Ibsen worked for a pharmacist, first as apprentice and later as assistant, in Grimstad, a town even smaller than Skien along the southern coast of Norway. He wrote his first play while studying on his own in order to qualify for entrance to the university in the capital, Christiana (now called Oslo), where he went in 1850. During his time in Christiana he wrote more plays, some poetry, and a good deal of journalism. He seems to have abandoned his plans for a university education after he was appointed, in 1851, at the astonishing age of 23, as director and playwright for a new theatre in Bergen, Norway's second largest city. Although he was not happy as a director and administrator, over the next 11 years he learned the crafts of the theatre and wrote a number of plays, in Bergen and, later, from 1857 to 1862, in Christiana, where he held a similar post at the Norwegian Theatre. Then, in 1864, impatient with what he saw as the backwardness of Norwegian culture, and wishing to write plays according to his own vision rather than having to satisfy the narrow demands of cultural nationalists, he left for Italy. He lived for the next 27 years away from Norway, mostly in Rome, Dresden, and Munich. It was during these years that he wrote most of his major plays. He returned to Norway in 1891, and remained there until his death in 1906.

The Translator

Born in Texas in 1945, John Murrell immigrated to Canada in 1968, and has lived most of the years since in Alberta. After a few years as a teacher, he established himself as a playwright in the mid- to late 1970s. His first major successes, both from this period, were *Waiting for the Parade* and *Memoir*.

In addition to writing a number of other plays, he has also translated plays from the French, the Russian, and the Norwegian. This is his second translation of Ibsen, the first having been *The Master Builder*, which was produced at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre. Besides his writing,

Murrell has held positions in several cultural institutions, such as Alberta Theatre Projects, the Stratford Festival, Theatre Calgary, the Canada Council, and the Banff Centre for the Arts, where he is currently the Artistic Director and Executive Producer of Theatre Arts.

Sources: Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, eds. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre.* Toronto: Oxford, 1989. 358-59. And web site: http://www.canadiantheatre.com/m/murrellj.html

Matters for Discussion:

Although one must be careful not to try to explain away an artist's works by treating them as if they were simply a collection of illustrations for a psychological biography, it is sometimes useful and illuminating, and usually at least interesting, to observe some relations between work and life. Remember that the answers to such questions, in relation to any substantial work of art, will never be simple, unequivocal, or unambiguous.

1 What might knowledge of some of the details of Ibsen's life contribute to our understanding of *The Doll House*?

2 How may Ibsen's memory of his father's near bankruptcy, and the subsequent fall of the family into relative social disgrace, have guided him when he created Torvald and Krogstad?

> Helmer: We've never borrowed money and we never will. There's something – I don't know – something sad and small about a house built on borrowing – something that stinks.

3 Ibsen's biographer, Michael Meyer, provides a description of the playwright's mother in the years before the collapse of the family's financial—and social—fortunes that could almost be a sketch of Nora:

> Knud Ibsen's wife Marichen … is said to have been very beautiful…. As a young girl she was keen on drawing and painting…; and she was, then, merry and gay, and worried her family by her passionate interest in the theatre…. Her parents were … disturbed by her fondness, even when she was a grown girl, for playing with dolls…. She played the piano and sang, was lively and spontaneous, small and dark-haired, with deep and sensitive eyes.

After the family's decline, however, she

> developed into a withdrawn and melancholy recluse…. [S]he hardly dared to speak to people after her husband's degradation, but hid herself away so as to attract as little notice as possible…. Her daughter Hedvig, many years later, described her as 'a quiet, lovable woman, the soul of the house, everything for her husband and children. She always sacrificed herself; bitterness and fault-finding were unknown to her.'

4 What might Ibsen have been 'saying' (unconsciously) to his late parents as he wrote the play? (It is interesting to note that Ibsen's father died in 1877, the year before Ibsen began work on *The Doll House*.) Note the role that a trip to the south had in Ibsen's—and Nora and Torvald's—biography.

Sources: Michael Meyer. *Ibsen*. Abridged edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.

2 The Setting

a. Norway

All of Norway lies *north* of 58 degrees of latitude (note that *all* of Ontario lies *south* of 57 degrees of latitude). This means that winter days are shorter than ours, and summer days are longer. However, it has a relatively warm climate, which it owes to the Gulf Stream.

Norway is a mountainous country surrounded on three sides by the ocean. Much of the shoreline consists of 'fjords,' which are long, narrow, deep inlets with steep cliffs on either side. Even where the landscape is not quite so dramatic it is characterized by rolling hills and valleys, and most communities, at the time that the play is set, were relatively isolated, and could only be reached by boat.

Norway lies directly in the path of the North Atlantic cyclones, which bring frequent gales and changes in weather. The combination of the warm water of the Gulf Stream, the cold air of the Arctic, and the fjords, in which air masses can get trapped, should be a perfect recipe for frequent foggy conditions.

Matters for Discussion:

1 There are references in the play to the sea, to the cold, to the North, and to the South. A spectator may notice them explicitly, or may pick them up, as it were, subliminally. What do these references contribute to the imagined world of the play, and what contributions do they make to its meaning?

2 Everyone who comes in from downstairs comes in from the cold.
Consider the gestures of taking off winter coats, warming oneself at the stove, and putting on winter coats in preparation to go down into the cold. What meaning might these gestures, which are given some emphasis in the printed text, give to the room in which they occur?

3 The play takes place at the darkest time of the year—at the time when, after the celebration of new life at Christmas, people begin to look ahead to a new year. Why did Ibsen choose to set his play at this time of year?

The sea has at least two meanings in the play: It can be a means of escape, either by going away on a boat (north or south— and these two directions tend to take on very different meanings or by drowning oneself.

> Krogstad refers to "plunging down under … that grey sea of ice," and Nora imagines herself "shatter[ing] the ice with my boots... I plunge down... I never stop... It's done."

4 Another set of meanings is suggested by a speech of Nora's:

> "I'd love to look at the sea again, the real sea, the blue sea, not this endless grey one."

b. Setting

What do we know about the society represented in the play? The power structure represented in Ibsen's realistic plays seems quite different from what we see in contemporary plays and novels from other European countries. The influential characters, the characters with status, those whom other characters admire, fear, or attempt to emulate, tend to be bankers, lawyers, civil servants, managers of local commercial or government institutions, doctors, clergymen. These are almost all middle-class men (the *women* with power of personality tend to be considered eccentric, anti-social, even dangerous) and many of them seem anxious about social status.

Immediately after the Napoleonic Wars there was a reduction in the power of the big business concerns and great estates. The decision to abolish the nobility in 1821 was indicative of the greatly reduced social and economic circumstances of the upper classes. At the same time, the position of the civil servants was strengthened, and from then until the latter part of the 19th century they controlled the political power of the country.

Material concerning Norway, its geography, climate, and social history, can be found at the *Encyclopedia Britannica* web site: http://search.eb.com/bol/search?type=topic&query=norway&DBase=Articles&x=45&y=6

Matters for Discussion:

1 Discuss the divergent career paths of two schoolmates:

Torvald Helmer: Legal studies, civil service, [marriage], several years of private legal practice, executive position at the local bank.

Nils Krogstad: legal studies, lawyer's assistant, [disappointment in love], forger, "defrocked lawyer" (as he calls himself), moneylender, editorial writer for a local paper and sometimes for another in the capital, honest and effective bank employee.

2 Discuss the attitude and behaviour of each to the other, and some possible explanations (recall also Doctor Rank's attitude toward Krogstad). Discuss the social status of each, and its basis.

3 Note that their memories of their relations as schoolmates differ. What, in their respective characters or situations, might have given rise to these differences in memory? Is there any basis for deciding whether either version is strictly accurate? Might both be wrong? Might both be accurate?

c. The Town

Matters for Discussion:

1. Do we learn anything about the town?
2. Do we learn anything about the "other" town—the home town of Nora and Ms. Linde?

   Is it far away?

   How does one get there?

   Is there any indication of its size or importance relative to the town in which the play takes place? Is there any basis for guessing?

   The shortest time one can expect to receive an answer to a message sent from this town to that is a week; Kristina refers to it as "up North"; she also refers to the "isolation" she felt there.

d. The Helmer Home

The Helmers live in an apartment on the second of three storeys (the full number of storeys is not mentioned, but three seems likely).

The living room, where the play takes place, has three doors: one door that leads to the rest of the house, this is the domain of the child and the servant, and of Nora in her domestic mode one door that leads to Torvald's office, he does a great deal of work at home he receives business and other visitors in the office the office can be reached from the hall—without going through the living quarters at various times in the play this door is locked and one door that leads to a landing (visitors' coats may be left here), from which stairs lead *down* to the street and, as we find out late in the play, *up* to the neighbours' flat (the Stenborgs, the upstairs neighbours, have "the biggest [Christmas] party in town").

Ibsen describes the living room as "cozy, ordinary, anything but lavish."

Matters for Discussion:

1 At least three objects in the room will have an important function in the play: the piano, the stove, and the locked letter-box on the door.

2 Up, down, and between: The play takes place in a setting that has a very definite relation to a "down" and an "up"; the Helmers live "between." These directions have some traditional, symbolic associations, although the meanings that are attached to them are not always the same.
We speak, for instance, of being "down to earth" (which is usually thought to be "good"), or, alternatively, "coming down in the world" (which is usually thought to be "bad"); and "rising in society," but also "it's all up in the air"—and a long list of similar phrases might be compiled.

The idea of being *between* is given particular emphasis in this play, because of the frequent use of the hallway, which can take one either *down* to the street level (which leads, first, to the town, and eventually to the sea, which would take one away from the town, or perhaps from life itself), or *up* to the Stenborgs' Christmas party, where, it seems, all the most prominent people in town gather.

Torvald calls Nora a squirrel and a songbird. How do these creatures relate to the world of *up* and *down*? What is the connection of each to the earth? What are some differences, in regard to these matters, between a person, on the one hand, and a bird or a squirrel, on the other?

3 In addition to up and down, there are references to travelling North and South, directions that may also be felt to have different, and opposite, significances.

None of these matters is discussed explicitly in the play, and it is not necessary to be conscious of them to enjoy it, but discussion of them may lead students to think about some of the play's central themes and values.

3 The Characters

NOTE: Whenever something is presented as a "fact" about a character in a play, one must be prepared to be sceptical. If our source of knowledge about character *A* is character *B*, we must be know to what extent character *B* is trustworthy in his or her judgments. Even (perhaps especially) when character *A* is the source of the information, we must consider whether there is a possibility that he or she is lying, misremembering, or, for whatever reason, seeing the past through distorting glasses.

The character summaries that appear below are intended to confine themselves to what Ibsen seems to want his audience to take as fact. Much of what spectators (and the other characters) feel they "know" about the characters is as difficult to confirm as fact as is much of what we think we "know" about other people in real life.

Are there some things listed here as facts that are indeed questionable?

Have some important facts been omitted?

Are there any important "facts" about which certain characters differ?

a. Torvald Helmer

A lawyer; used to work for the government; was sent, as part of his job, to the small town where Nora lived, to investigate her father; his investigation cleared the latter's name; married Nora; left government service to go into private legal practice when he got married; became dangerously ill after a year in private practice; spent a year in Italy with his family, where he recovered his health.

At the time of the play, has recently been appointed Executive Manager at the local bank; it is Christmas, and he will take up his position at the New Year.

b. Nora Helmer

Lived with her father in a town "up North"; Kristina Linde was her friend and Anna-Maria, a servant, was her "substitute mother"; eight years ago married Torvald Helmer, a lawyer who came to town to investigate her father; mother of Ivar; about the time of Ivar's birth, her father entered his final illness, and at the same time Helmer also became dangerously ill; secretly borrowed money to finance a year in Italy so that Helmer could recover his health; has been working very hard ever since to repay the debt.

c. Ivar Helmer

The Helmers' son, about seven years old.

d. Kristina Linde

A childhood friend of Nora; has lived all her life up till now in the same town "up North"; for years was responsible for her invalid mother and two younger brothers; fell in love years ago with Nils Krogstad, who was a poor assistant to a lawyer; the need to ensure her mother's care and her brothers' future led her to marry an apparently prosperous man whom she did not love; discovered she was penniless when her husband died three years ago; struggled to survive, managing a bookstore and then a school, until her mother's recent death and her brothers' becoming independent left her free to come to this larger town to find a better job.

e. Nils Krogstad

A schoolmate of Torvald Helmer; became a lawyer; was assistant to a lawyer in the town where Nora and Kristina Linde lived; fell in love with Kristina Linde; deeply hurt when she rejected him to marry a rich man; committed an act of forgery, for which he was not convicted, but which cost him any social standing he had; kept himself going for some time as a moneylender; unhappily married, with four children, but now a widower; writes editorials for a local paper and sometimes for another paper in the capital; has for several years been re-establishing his reputation by honest and effective work at the bank that Helmer is about to join as manager.

f. Doctor Rank

An older man, best friend of the Helmers; visits them daily; has inherited a disease, "tuberculosis of the spine or something like that" (probably a polite way of referring to syphilis, which at the time of the play was an almost inevitably fatal sexually transmitted disease), from his father; is about to slip into the final stage of the disease (if it is indeed syphilis, symptoms will include loss of motor control, blindness, and insanity); in preparation for the moment when this happens he plans to shut himself away to die without seeing anybody.

g. Anna-Maria

Was a servant in Nora's family when Nora was young; came along with Nora as a servant when she married Helmer; seems to be in charge of the day-to-day running of the Helmer household—child care, meals, sewing, laundry, and the like; at some time in the past had a child out of wedlock, whom she gave up for adoption.

h. Characters Not Present

Characters referred to but not present: Nora's father; Rank's father; Kristina Linde's mother; her brothers; her husband; Nils Krogstad's wife; their children; Anna Maria's daughter; the daughter's father; the Stenborgs.

Matters for Discussion:

1 Certain characters are created because the story needs them; others may exist because they illustrate a theme; still others fulfill both functions, and perhaps others. Discuss the function, in the pattern of the play as a whole, of each of the characters other than Nora and Helmer. More specifically:

- How does the scene in which Nils Krogstad and Kristina Linde agree to marry affect our judgment of the marriage of Torvald and Nora?
- How do Kristina and Nora differ?
- How are they similar? In this regard discuss Kristina's references to "need," and to "survival."

2 What is the dramatic function of Doctor Rank's father, and of the disease he passed on to his son?

Note: Helmer's comments on hereditary evils: "Wickedness and dishonesty are contagious diseases. Nastiness like [Krogstad's] spreads through his house and infects his children."

3 Why are we told of Anna Maria's daughter, and of Kristina Linde's husband?

4 Discuss the widely varying descriptions of Nora's father.

According to Helmer:

Act I: "impractical and charming"

Act II: "He wasn't wicked, but he was extremely careless"

Act III: "your father's … lack of faith, his lack of morals, lack of ethics; he played every scene to the hilt, as long as he was the star"

According to Nora:

Act I: "patient and kind", "wonderful, generous, patient"

Act III: "I [was] completely ignored … by my father, for all those years; he told me what to think, and that's what I thought. And, if I had any thoughts of my own, I kept them secret, so I wouldn't upset him; I haven't become anything, any real thing, thanks to the two of you."

4 The Telling of the Story

a. The "Well-Made" Play

One might approach the structure of the play by considering how Ibsen adapted the conventions of the so-called "well-made play" (*pièce bien faite*) for his purposes. The "well-made play," as a means of organizing the materials of a story for stage presentation was developed as a conscious technique in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Ibsen would have been thoroughly aware of its conventions as a result of his work as artistic administrator of the theatres in Bergen and Christiana, where much of the repertoire would have consisted of French plays written according to this pattern.

These are the main features of the well-made play:

1. A plot based on a withheld secret that, revealed at the climax of the action, turns the tide in the hero's favour;

2. Initial exposition that summarizes the story up to the raising of the curtain, and slowly accelerating action and suspense sustained by such contrivances as precisely timed entrances and exits, letters that miscarry …;

3. A series of ups and downs … in a battle of wits between two adversaries, suspense being initiated by the planting of clues to imminent events and by the withholding of information from certain characters …;

4. A reversal in the action followed by a climactic … scene … representing, respectively, the nadir and the zenith [lowest and the highest points] of the hero's fortune;

5. A logical, credible denouement;

6. A microcosmic repetition of the overall structural pattern in each act.

Source:
John Gassner and Edward Quinn, eds. *The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama.* New York: Crowell, 1969. 911-12

Matters for Discussion:

1 A discussion of the form that each of these features takes in *The Doll House* would lead to a thorough review of the central events and themes of the play.

- How could the "revelation of the secret" be said to lead to a "victory" for Nora, the "hero" figure?
- Are there examples of "precisely timed entrances and exits" and other such contrivances?
- What precisely are the terms of whatever it is in this play that corresponds to a "battle of wits"?
- What are the nadir and the zenith of the "hero" figure's moral fortune?
- Is the dénouement logical and credible?

b. Present, Past & Future

When preparing a story for the theatre, an artist imagines an action that takes place in the present tense. In order for the present to make sense, the audience often needs some information about the characters' past. In a realistic play, this means that a credible situation must be invented in which one character will communicate such information to another. Discuss some of the devices by which Ibsen makes the communication of the facts of the characters' past credible.

After seeing a play like *The Doll House*, in which extreme changes in the characters' lives occur in the final moments, it is tempting to speculate about what might become of the characters after the action of the play is over.

Matters for Discussion:

1 What is in store for Nora? for Helmer? for Kristina Linde and Nils Krogstad?

2 Because the range of possibilities is so great, it might be useful to have groups of students choose widely differing prophecies, and then justify their positions in debate format.

5 Imagery

There are many tools for expressing meaning in the theatre in addition to the story-telling elements—plot, characters, and setting. The word "imagery" is useful word that has a wide range of reference. It can refer to what the audience sees and hears directly, such as the dance that Nora rehearses at the end of Act Two, or the sound that we hear at the end of the play. But the word can also refer to mental pictures or other sense experiences, or memories, or associations, or patterns, or structures, that are called up in our minds and bodies through the dialogue, or through what we find out about the setting or the characters' pasts.

The word imagery may be broadly interpreted: almost anything in a play can be felt to have the force of an image, if it evokes associations beyond itself. Reference has already been made to the presence in the play of the sea, of directions (up, down, north, and south), of squirrels and songbirds, of disease, and of the cold and darkness of winter. The assumption has been that if students allow these presences to work upon their imaginations, the associations will arise that will be become part of the whole experience of the play, even though they may not contribute directly to the presentation of the string of incidents that is the story.

A few more images will be mentioned here, and the hope is that students will be encouraged to carry interpretation beyond the brief questions and comments that follow:

a. Possession

Paying and tipping; bargains; possession; prudence; extravagance:

The play begins with the theatrical image of Nora paying for a service, and then going beyond simple payment by tipping generously; the plot is built upon questions of owing and repaying; the striking of bargains is referred to several times (notably by Kristina Linde, who has had to drive a hard bargain with life in order to survive, and who proves a coolly honest bargainer in her conversation with Krogstad); at the play's end Nora sees herself as an object that was passed from her father's ownership to Helmer's, "like a songbird you bought at the pet store."

b. Locks

Locked doors, the locked letter-box:

The doors have to kept shut tightly, because of the cold; the letter-box is kept locked, and Helmer has the key; at one point the door between the living room and Helmer's office is locked and then unlocked; in the final scene Helmer locks the outside door when Nora asks to be allowed to leave; Dr. Rank is planning to "lock himself away to die."

c. The Doll House

Does Nora live in a doll house, or does she play with dolls? Or both? Are there other characters in the play who “play with dolls”? In the normal world, who plays with dolls? To Helmer, Nora is a “pretend” squirrel and a “pretend” songbird—in other words, a kind of doll; what does that make Helmer? What forces have made Nora into a doll? How has making Nora into a doll affected Helmer’s own development into adulthood?

d. The Tarantella

The tarantella is a very energetic Italian folk dance characterized by light, quick steps and teasing, flirtatious behaviour; according to popular belief, it originated as a cure for the bite of the poisonous tarantula spider. Victims were believed to be cured by frenzied dancing; the poison would spread through the whole body, which would "sweat it out”. Nora learned it in Italy. She rehearses it under Helmer’s direction. Why did Ibsen’s choose this dance for Nora’s performance? Why would Nora choose it, and Helmer encourage it?

Source: See *Encyclopedia Britannica* Web site:
http://search.eb.com/bol/search?type=topic&query=tarantella&DBase=Articles&x=21&y=7

e. Nora’s Clothing

Nora’s entrance wearing a simple house dress near the end of the play:

It would be useful to discuss the costuming of Nora (and, for that matter, the other characters) throughout the play. Here is a moment where what the audience sees tells it much more than what is being said in words. What does this moment “say”? What is Nora saying to Helmer by this gesture? (Consider Helmer’s mood in the moments after they came down from the party.)

f. The Door Slam

The sound of the door closing (the last thing that happens in the play):

According to most translations the door is “slammed,” which may suggest how Helmer experiences it, and how the audience, which is left sharing Helmer’s point of view, experiences it; for Nora it is preceded by an “opening,” which may be of far greater significance for her; how much attention does she pay to how she has closed the door? Does the opening and closing of the door constitute a “happy ending”? Why does Ibsen choose to make the decisive moment the closing of the street door, when he might just as well have used the closing of the door to the hall?

6 Themes

Themes have been left to last, for two reasons; first, too early a consideration of themes might lead to a premature judgment concerning what the play is "about." Ibsen himself tried to fight against the notion that the play is simply about women's "liberation," as we call it now. Certainly that makes an important contribution to what the play has to say thematically—Nora alludes more than once to the fact that women are disadvantaged by their lack of training in the skills by which men master the world. But the more interesting development occurs near the end, when Nora realizes that the games Helmer has been playing with her has prevented him from becoming a complete person too. And because the world respects and admires the partial person that Helmer has become, in all his "littleness," it may well be harder for him than it is for her to sustain the conviction that he must begin again if he has any hope of becoming a complete person.

The second reason for leaving a consideration of themes to the last is that if the play is successful, the themes will emerge as an inevitable result of an examination of the material of the play—the characters, the action, the setting, the imagery. To begin by looking for the theme implies that these elements are merely the means to an end, and that once we have isolated what the play is about, we can take that home and leave the play behind.

Students will already have discovered and pondered the themes of the play, then, if they have been discussing the questions that make up the body of this study guide.

Final Review Discussion:

As a final review, students could be asked to consider the following pair of definitions in relation to the material of the play:

- Freedom: living under conditions, however narrow or onerous, that you have chosen, or at least consciously accepted
- Confinement: living under conditions, however bountiful, that have been chosen for you, or that you have accepted without thinking

Is it possible to interpret each element of the play in such a way that it relates to one or other of these definitions?

7 Speeches for Discussion

1 KRISTINA. I can't afford noble gestures. Neither can you. Life has taught us to eliminate everything but what is necessary to survive.

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2 NORA. I tried to make it sound like it was all my idea, like it was something I wanted for myself. I tried to shame him into it: "So-And-So takes his wife to Italy every year, and the Such-And-Suches always winter in Spain." I cried one night and flirted the next. I told him the doctor said I should have the baby somewhere warmer. I bullied him and seduced him. I said, "The money doesn't matter. People like us can always borrow money." You should have seen how he looked at me then. He got that schoolteacher look on his face, and he said, "People like us? The sort of people we're going to be is honest people, Nora! I'm not going to be one of those weak stupid husbands who runs himself into debt to please his stupid selfish wife. We're better than that!" So – I said to myself, "You have to save him, Nora, in spite of himself."

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3 KRISTINA. ...Unless you borrowed it. And I know you didn't borrow it.

NORA. I didn't?

KRISTINA. Not without your husband's permission. It's against the law.

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4 NORA. If anything took you away from me, I wouldn't care about something as unimportant as money.

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5 KRISTINA. I worry about you. I worry that you got yourself into some serious trouble.

NORA. Serious trouble? *(She sits up abruptly.)* Maybe...To save my husband's life.

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6 NORA. And I found other ways to make money too. Last winter, for example, I corrected and copied manuscripts for a local writer. I shut myself up in the spare room and worked nearly all night sometimes. Of course, the next morning I could hardly keep my eyes open. But – you know something? – I loved it, every minute of it – working and making money for myself. I felt almost like a man.

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7 KRISTINA. But isn't it people with a weakness who need our help most?

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8 NORA. It's a miracle, Mr. Krogstad, to have an opinion that matters for a change. You know what a miracle that is for a woman?

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9 NORA. You're telling me there is no mercy, no sympathy in the law?

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10 NORA. I think it would destroy him if he knew. He's so stubborn and proud. That's how men are, Kristina. It would kill him to think I had to step in and save his life. He could never look at me the same way again. He couldn't be happy and secure in his life, if he thought it was a gift from me. He'd be so disappointed in himself.

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11 NORA. Men get trained their whole lives to deal with things like this. What training do we ever get?

NORA. The law will condemn me? For sparing my father in his last days on this earth? For saving my husband's life? Maybe I don't know much about business or about society – but I'm sure that any rational human being would understand and forgive me…. You're telling me there is no mercy, no sympathy in the law?

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12 NORA. [Torvald]'ll receive it, any moment now...And then [Krogstad]'ll poison my whole family! I'd probably do it too, in his place...

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13 NORA. You're a genius, you know that. And I'm a genius because I let a genius organize my life.

TORVALD. *(He lifts her chin so that she meets his gaze.)* Look at me. You <u>let</u> me organize your life? The songbirds are feeling very liberated this Christmas, aren't they? It's all right – I know what you meant to say. I'll clear out now and let the squirrel play dress-up.

14 NORA. You don't understand the way I am with Torvald. He's not interested in anything that happened to me before we were married. He likes to make believe – that he almost invented me. It used to make him so nervous when I talked about my old friends and my home-town, so I just stopped doing it. Years ago. But I do talk to Dr. Rank about the old days. It makes him laugh.

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15 NORA. You know there's a big difference between the people we love most, and those we'd rather spend a lot of time with.

DR RANK. You're a very wise woman.

NORA. From as early as I can remember, I loved my father best. But sometimes I couldn't wait to get away from him and go gossip with the housemaids. They never wagged their fingers in my face or told me to grow up. And they talked about real life, real people, not just my little world.

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16 KRISTINA. I know all about people now, and the nasty choices we sometimes have to make.

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17 TORVALD. All is forgiven….. I know you did what you did because you love me-

NORA. Yes, I did.

TORVALD. Because you love me without questioning, beyond reason, as every wife should – I know that now. And you were too young, you're too innocent, to understand the big world out there. Don't you know that I love you even more because you're so innocent, so small, so lost? You can afford to be lost, because you will always, always have me to answer for you, to show you the way. Don't you know that's one of a woman's greatest attractions – her weakness? Her sweetness and weakness? Let me be the one to apologize. I said some terrible things to you. When I opened that first letter, I saw my whole world disintegrating around me – But now, I don't care anymore – whatever you've done, I forgive you.

NORA. *(Flatly)* Thank you, Torvald. For making me see.
