

## Worksheet 1 – Ibsen and *A Doll's House*

### Recall

**Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.**

1. What was the title Ibsen gave to his early draft of *A Doll's House*?
  - a) Notes for a Modern Tragedy
  - b) Notes for *A Doll's House*
  - c) Notes on the Treatment of Women
  - d) Notes on Naturalism
2. What year was *A Doll's House* published?
  - a) 1878
  - b) 1879
  - c) 1888
  - d) 1889
3. How was *The Pillars of Society* different to Ibsen's earlier plays?
  - a) It was his first play to feature a strong female lead character.
  - b) It had a contemporary setting and focused on contemporary problems.
  - c) It was his first play to achieve international success.
  - d) It created a public outcry when it was first performed.
4. Both realism and naturalism try to represent life factually, but Dr Sophie Duncan mentions two ways in which realism and naturalism also differ. What are they? Select two correct answers.
  - a) Naturalism always has a contemporary setting.
  - b) Realism always has a contemporary setting.
  - c) Naturalism explores the spiritual and imaginative side of nature.
  - d) Naturalism applies the discoveries and methodologies of science to literature.
5. How many languages has *A Doll's House* been translated into?
  - a) 48
  - b) 58
  - c) 68
  - d) 78

### Analysis

6. Dr Sophie Duncan discusses a letter that Ibsen sent to the actor August Lindberg in 1883, where he wrote:

*'The play's effect is dependent, to a large degree, on the audience members thinking that they sit and listen and watch something which is happening out there in real life... the spirit and tone of the play will be understood, respected and reproduced without any concession to the demand for full ruthless truth to life.'*

How does this quotation relate to **naturalism**? Give two examples.

7. Rewatch the lecture from 4:49 – 6:28, where Dr Sophie Duncan mentions how Ibsen based Nora's character on a young Norwegian woman called Laura Kieler (*née* Petersen).
  - a) Make bullet point notes of the key information Dr Duncan gives you about Laura Kieler.

- b) How might this historical context have influenced Ibsen's characterisation of Nora in *A Doll's House*? Give three examples.

## Evaluation

8. 'Society needs divine ideality, needs faith in the idea of the good and the beautiful to survive.' – Fredrik Petersen, writing about *A Doll's House* in January 1880.
- a) Rewatch the section of the lecture where Dr Duncan discusses Petersen's opinion of *A Doll's House* (6:40 – 7:20). In your own words explain what Petersen means in this quotation.
- b) Write a paragraph arguing either for or against Petersen's opinion, using *A Doll's House* as evidence.

Challenge: Research the role of religion in Norway in the 1870s and 1880s. Include facts about religion in your argument for 8.b

## Glossary

- **Genesis** – something's origin or starting point; the way something was created  
*e.g. The idea for the movie has its **genesis** in a journey through Southeast Asia.*
- **Masculine** – having qualities perceived to relate to the "male" sex; in Western patriarchal societies often describing strength or activity; used often to contrast with a corresponding object deemed "female".  
*e.g. I prefer the straight cut of those trousers, because they look more **masculine**.*
- **Conservative** – someone who holds traditional values and ideas; an opponent of social and political change.  
*e.g. He had a very **conservative** taste in music, preferring Classic FM to BBC Radio 6 Music.*
- **Naturalism** – (*in philosophy*) the idea or belief that only natural forces operate in the world, as opposed to supernatural or spiritual ones; (*in art*) a style characterised by close adherence to, and representation of, nature or reality.  
*e.g. EastEnders is an example of **naturalism** in TV drama.*
- **Concession** – a thing that is granted, especially in response to demands.  
*e.g. People who couldn't afford their rent were given the **concession** of a rent freeze during the coronavirus quarantine.*
- **Determinism** – the belief that what happens to people has been decided beforehand by their genetics, environment, or an inevitable chain of events.  
*e.g. The fact that weekly horoscopes are still popular is an example of society's continued belief in **determinism**.*
- **Realism** – (*in reference to art, film, and literature*) close resemblance to what is real.  
*e.g. I drew this vase of flowers as accurately as possible, because I'm interested in **realism**.*
- **Objectively** – to do something in a way that is not influenced by personal feelings or opinions; or in a way that is not dependent on the human mind for existence, but is based on external facts.  
*e.g. When writing as a journalist, events should be reported **objectively**.*

