

Worksheet 4 – Torvald and Masculinity

Review: Lecture 3

In the last lecture, Dr Duncan discussed the changing role of middle-class women in the 1880s, and the influence this had on *A Doll's House*.

- ✓ What were some of the characteristics ascribed to the 'new woman' in this period?

Recall: Lecture 4

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

1. What year was *A Doll's House* first performed in England?
a) 1879
b) 1889
c) 1884
d) 1894
2. How many years has Nora been married to Torvald in the play?
a) Two
b) Six
c) Four
d) Eight
3. What illness did Torvald suffer from that meant Nora had to pay for him to travel abroad?
a) a sexually transmitted infection
b) tuberculosis of the spine
c) fatigue from overwork

Analysis

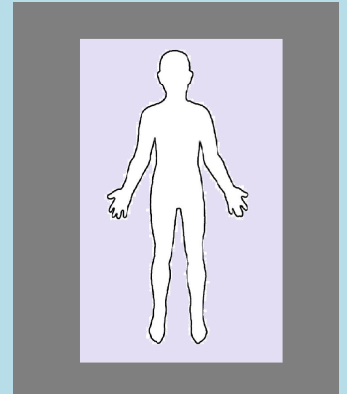
4. Choose one of the quotations below from the play, where Torvald describes Nora.
 - a) Write the quotation out on a separate piece of paper.
 - b) Annotate the quotation, exploring: the significance of key words; the impact of linguistic devices; its portrayal of masculinity; Torvald's view of Nora.

'I would not be a true man if your feminine helplessness did not make you doubly attractive to me in my eyes.'

'...for the first time I am alone with you – quite alone with you, as you stand there young and trembling and beautiful'

'...my clandestine little sweetheart, and nobody knows there's anything at all between us'

5. Use the template to draw a character profile for Torvald on a separate sheet of paper.
- In the outer box: write key facts you know about his character.
 - In the inner box: collect words that other characters use to describe Torvald.
 - Inside the figure: collect phrases Torvald says himself that reveal his personality.



Evaluation

6. Read this speech by Torvald from the end of Act 2, then answer the questions below.

TORVALD. My dear Nora, I forgive you this anxiety. Though it is a bit of an insult to me. Oh, but it is! Isn't it an insult to imply that I should be frightened by the vindictiveness of a depraved hack journalist? But I forgive you, because it so charmingly testifies to the love you bear me. (*Takes her in his arms*). Which is as it should be, my own dearest Nora. Let what will happen, happen. When the real crisis comes, you will not find me lacking in strength and courage. I am man enough to bear the burden for us

- How does this speech from the end of Act 2 demonstrate that Torvald is living out his role as a “man”?
- At this point in the play, what is your opinion of Torvald as a character?
- How does the fragility of Torvald’s masculinity get revealed in the rest of the play?

Glossary

- **Provocative** – intended to arouse a strong emotion, such as anger or sexual desire.
*e.g. That news article was intentionally **provocative**.*
*OR Torvald asked Nora to dress in a **provocative** outfit for the tarantella dance.*
- **Masculinity** – qualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of men.
- **Sensuality** – the enjoyment, expression, or pursuit of physical (esp. sexual), pleasure.

- **Aestheticise** – represent as beautiful or artistically pleasing.
*e.g. The problem with war photography is that sometimes it can **aestheticise** the suffering of victims.*
- **Aestheticism** – the pursuit of, or devotion to, what is beautiful or attractive to the senses, esp. as opposed to an ethically or rationally based outlook.
- **Erroneous** – straying from the proper path; misguided; mistaken.
*e.g. It would be **erroneous** to assume that politicians always tell the truth.*