

A LEVEL

Delivery Guide

H472

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Theme: A Doll's House –
Henrik Ibsen

June 2015



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Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: a clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: a range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected that best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

If you have any feedback on this Delivery Guide or suggestions for other resources you would like OCR to develop, please email resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk.

KEY



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Curriculum Content



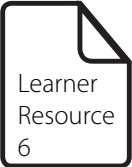
This guide will focus on the text *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen listed for study as part of A Level English Literature component 01: Drama and Poetry pre-1900. The first part of this component requires students to study one Shakespeare text, and for Section 2 students study **one** pre-1900 drama text and **one** pre-1900 poetry text. This guide will focus on using Ibsen's *A Doll's House* as the drama text for Section 2.

For this section there will be six questions on the exam paper, each with a different thematic or literary focus. Candidates must choose **one** question worth 30 marks and base their answer on a comparative study with substantial discussion of both texts. In addition to AO1, Section 2 requires students to establish connections between their chosen texts from the genres of poetry and drama (AO4); demonstrate their appreciation of the significance of cultural and contextual influences on writers, readers and/or audiences (AO3) and read texts in a variety of ways, responding critically and creatively (AO5).

AO2 is not assessed in Section 2 of this component. Setting aside AO2 gives candidates greater opportunity to build and sustain a comparative discussion, focusing on the contexts, connections and interpretations of their chosen poetry and drama texts, without having to interrupt the continuity of their comparisons in order to 'step aside' and demonstrate AO2 in a single text. However, where learners discuss, for example, the use of symbolism or the presentation of poetic persona or character in their chosen texts, such discussion can be rewarded under AO1 ('informed' responses to literary texts), AO4 ('connections' across literary texts) or AO5 ('different interpretations'). Opportunity to satisfy AO2 is afforded by Section 1 of this component, where candidates write a detailed critical analysis of an extract from their chosen Shakespeare play. In this way, Section 1 ensures candidates have an opportunity to address AO2 more directly than the weighting of Section 2 response requires.






Curriculum Content

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 1</p> <p>This activity introduces students to the range of literary terminology relevant to the analysis of a drama text. It is vital that students remain aware that in reading and analysing <i>A Doll's House</i> they are engaging with a drama text, and that class and written discussion must show an awareness of genre. Establishing an informed dramatic vocabulary will help students gain confidence in close reading and analysis. It is important to avoid 'swamping' students with indiscriminate lists of terms they might struggle to understand and that might not help them discuss Ibsen's dramatic strategies. A focused dramatic vocabulary will deter students from the kind of 'commentary' that treats drama as another kind of 'narrative', while also avoiding readings that 'spot' dramatic features regardless of their relevance and effect. Activities that require students (for example) to match cards printed with selected 'dramatic features' to others that contain their 'definitions', and then to match the 'definitions' to examples from <i>A Doll's House</i>, will foster an informed understanding of Ibsen's dramatic practice. Teachers can utilise online resources in compiling tailor-made worksheets/card packs covering 'terms', 'definitions' and 'textual examples.' Alternatively, teachers might provide the 'terms' cards and then set students a research activity to compile the matching 'definition' cards. The cards can be used during class reading to identify relevant techniques.</p> <p>http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/classroom/terms.htm</p> <p>http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/glossary</p>	<p> Click here</p> <p> Click here</p>
<p>Activity 2</p> <p>Students find analysing poetry and drama texts as discrete entities relatively unproblematic but can struggle to make cross-genre comparisons. Comparison exercises that juxtapose short extracts from poems and drama, supported by questions that guide students to the kinds of comparisons that might be drawn, can help them to see how poetry and drama texts can be read alongside each other in ways that illuminate both genres. Any short extracts might be substituted for those used in the model exercise provided (please see Learner Resource 6) and teachers are free to adapt the questions on the grid to suit particular 'partner' extracts or encourage more sophisticated comparisons as students' analytical skills improve. Extracts may be taken from set texts but using unfamiliar texts will widen students' experience of literature. The confidence students will gain from comparison exercises will improve their analysis across the specification as a whole.</p>	<p> Learner Resource 6</p>



Curriculum Content

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 3</p> <p>In reading and responding to Ibsen’s play, students should be aware of a range of possible readings, and be able to comment upon and evaluate different interpretations in light of their own ideas. Interpretation begins, of course, with teacher-led close reading and the class discussion that accompanies reading. To introduce students to a range of possible readings, teachers can guide them to online resources, reviews, journal articles, critical essays and introductions in popular editions of Ibsen’s work. Students should be deterred from using some of the most popular online ‘study/essay guide’ and ‘examination preparation’ resources, many of which are reductive in their approach to texts, and might tend to impose limited readings that preclude the exercise of informed and individual thought rather than facilitating it.</p> <p>http://www.theatrehistory.com/misc/henrik_ibsen_003.html</p> <p>http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/aug/10/dolls-house-henrik-ibsen-relevant</p> <p>http://www.academia.edu/4494926/A_Dolls_House_by_Henrik_Ibsen</p>	<p> Click here</p> <p> Click here</p> <p> Click here</p>
<p>Activity 4: Thinking about <i>A Doll’s House</i></p> <p>Students can be asked to tackle this activity as a homework task or as a pair/group exercise. They can address the questions as a whole or they might be asked, in pairs or groups, to focus on specific questions. In responding, students should quote from the play. Responses can be shared in whole class discussion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Be aware of the connotations of the play’s title. Consider what this title implies about Nora as a character (and as a representative of other married women) and the type of ‘home’ she runs.2) The play is set at a time of year known in Norway by its pagan name <i>jul</i> (Old Norwegian <i>jöl</i>) and familiar to us as Yule. Think about the connotations attached to this period of the year (for example, how it marks a turning point in time: the death of the old year and the birth of a new one). Consider how these connotations are echoed in Ibsen’s characterisation and in the play’s action.3) Torvald’s and Nora’s names have pagan associations – Torvald from the god Thor, Nora is a diminutive of Elanora and is a variant of the Greek Helen. Do these associations affect our interpretation of Ibsen’s characters, are they ironic?4) What religious ideas does Kristine (<i>Christ</i> –ine) Linde’s life of sacrifice for others bring to the play?	



Curriculum Content

Activities	Resources
<p>5) Be aware that in his plays Ibsen presents the entire stage set as a vehicle of symbolic meaning, making it an 'active' element of the drama – look carefully at the lengthy stage setting at the play's opening. How does Ibsen use this to create a sense of a solidly conventional, middle class home?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there any irony in this? <p>6) How does Ibsen make use of props (the Christmas tree, the macaroons, the fancy dress, the letters) to emphasise the play's themes and heighten drama?</p> <p>7) The three doors of the doll's house create separate locations for the play's action. Think about the dramatic effect of this spacial arrangement. To whose 'space' does the door on the left in the rear wall lead?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who 'owns' this space and who is its 'doorkeeper'?• What does the space beyond this door represent? <p>8) The door to the right in the rear wall leads to the outside world. Which characters come and go through this door?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What news/ideas about the world beyond the doll's house do the characters that enter through this door bring?• What does Nora think of the world beyond this door?• What is revealed about Nora's view of the outside world when she praises Kristine's 'courage' in travelling through it alone? <p>9) The third door in the right wall leads to the nursery and to Nora and Torvald's bedroom. What do we learn of the shared private life of Nora and Torvald when they are in this space?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What roles do Torvald and Nora play when they are in this private space? <p>10) Does the symbolism of these three spaces alter in the course of the play's action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the door to the outside world continue to signify a welcome barrier between the 'safety' of the doll's house and the frightening world outside?	



Curriculum Content

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 5 Students can complete the following research as a homework exercise or as a pair/group collaboration. They should quote from the play in responding, and share the results of their research in whole class discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research the terms 'realism' and 'naturalism'. What is their relevance to <i>A Doll's House</i>? How do such terms advance our understanding of Ibsen's moral and political motives in <i>A Doll's House</i>? <p>The following links will help you:</p> <p>http://crossref-it.info/articles/518/Naturalism-and-realism</p> <p>http://www.thedramateacher.com/realism-and-naturalism-theatre-conventions/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think back to the Shakespeare plays you have read, seen and studied. Is the audience experience the same in watching Shakespeare and Ibsen?• Which dramatist is the most accessible to audiences in the 21st century?• What aspects of language, characterisation and dramatic action make a play more or less accessible to modern audiences?• Do the themes and characters that Shakespeare and Ibsen present differ?• Which dramatist most challenges contemporary audiences? <p>Explain your responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think about symbolism: what is the literary definition of a symbol?• What is the dramatic function of symbolism?• Find examples of symbolism in <i>A Doll's House</i> and consider their function and effect. <p>You should quote from the play and analyse the passages you cite to support your response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does Ibsen's use of symbolism enhance, extend and reinforce the audience's understanding of dramatic action? <p>http://www.eliterarysociety.com/symbolism-in-a-dolls-house-ibsen/</p>	<p>▶ Click here</p> <p>▶ Click here</p> <p>▶ Click here</p>



Thinking Conceptually

Approaches to teaching the content

An effective starting point would be to familiarise students with the concept of naturalism. Consideration might then be given to the difference between *A Doll's House* and the Shakespearean dramas with which they will be familiar. Students should be aware that Ibsen is not concerned with the reinstatement of order, hierarchy and tradition that resolves Shakespeare's dramas, his plays dramatise the unresolved conflicts that (for Ibsen) are the necessary means to self-realisation and personal authenticity.

A Doll's House exposes the problems that stem from social (familial) and institutional (marital) forces and shows how they inhibit individuality and moral freedom. The fact that *A Doll's House* exposes and censures rigid gender roles made the play both 'modern' and disturbing to contemporaneous audiences. In watching *A Doll's House*, the audience is embarrassingly aware of the ways its protagonists collude in upholding and enforcing gender roles: a rather supercilious and inept businessman like Torvald can only revel in his 'superiority' because an independently principled woman (such as Nora becomes) fulfils society's expectation that she must loyally demonstrate her 'inferiority'. Students should be aware that Ibsen's aim was to liberate society's imagination by forcing it to confront a more honest representation of itself. To achieve this, falsely sentimental representations of men and women must be replaced by a more realistic treatment of human relationships and personal motivation. This new approach outraged audiences, who expected to have familiar, conventional representations of gender and relationships reinforced by the plays they attended. The call for a socially 'sanitised' alternative ending to appease German audiences is

evidence of audience resistance to the ideas implicit in Ibsen's original conclusion. Teachers should impress upon students the idea that Ibsen's drama is interrogative rather than declarative. In raising uncomfortable questions (about society, marriage, masculinity, sex and motherhood) and refusing to provide comfortable answers or impose conventional resolutions, Ibsen's dénouement consciously denies resolution in favour of debate.

The past is constantly 'present' in *A Doll's House*, as in all of Ibsen's plays, and students should understand how its legacy can be, paradoxically, both imprisoning and liberating. Only by a painful process of self-confrontation does Nora realise how the 'non-identity' that imprisons her is the product of conditioning that can be traced back to her 'loving' father. In realising who and what is responsible for the 'self' that, by the play's ending, she can no longer endure, Nora liberates herself from an 'identity' that, to her, has become unsustainable.

Common misconceptions or difficulties students may have

Some students studying the play today may find that Ibsen's characterisation of Nora stretches their credibility. For some, Nora's early 'twitterings' might make her appear at first, a comic, if not ridiculous character. Teachers should ensure that students are aware of the play's historical context and of the contemporaneous social, financial and gender imperatives that combined to infantilise bourgeois wives, and impose on them patterns of behaviour that to modern audiences seem startlingly artificial. Matters such as marital loyalty, familial integrity, male pride and the maintenance of social status and reputation, imposed strict rules on bourgeois women, whose primary duty was to be seen to 'act' out the role allotted to



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their social station. One way of countering students' credulity might be to ask them to consider recent celebrity wives and girlfriends whose 'loyalty' remains undaunted, even after suffering (and tolerating) physical abuse and public humiliation at the hands of their celebrity partners.

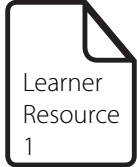
Students often 'read' plays as simply another species of narrative. In doing so, they restrict their attention to character and plot. This kind of 'reading' ignores the devices that make drama a dramatic form. Seeing the play in performance is vital (whether at the theatre or on video). To ensure that students understand that they are required to analyse *A Doll's House* as a *drama*, teachers should ensure that in reading the play due attention is given to devices, such as characterisation, stage setting, the timing of entrances and exits and the use of props. Students must be able to understand how the play's meanings are crafted from the subtle interplay of dramatic strategies.

Conceptual links to other areas of the specification

The approaches outlined above will assist students in developing the technical vocabulary and analytical skills and strategies that will enable them to formulate, test and articulate personal and creative responses to any of the texts they study as part of the A Level English Literature course. The approach to Ibsen's drama draws particular attention to its employment of dramatic techniques, and the insight this affords readers/audiences to the play's themes, plot and characterisation. It is important that students are made aware that even though the focus of Component 1 is poetry and drama the fundamental questions they must consider when studying the play (who is speaking, in what context, who is watching/reading, how can this be interpreted) apply universally, regardless of genre.

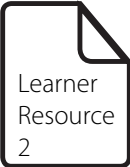
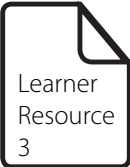
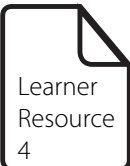
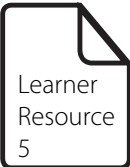


Thinking Conceptually

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 1: Research activity This activity can be set as homework or as a pair/group exercise. Students should quote from the play and make notes of their responses that can be shared and expanded during teacher-led whole class feedback sessions.</p> <p>Ibsen and naturalism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) How would you define naturalism as a literary movement?2) In what ways is naturalism: a) related to and b) distinct from realism?3) In what period and in what location did naturalism originate?4) Who were the first writers to adopt naturalism?5) What subject matter and themes does their work reveal?6) Was naturalism primarily a movement adopted by dramatists?7) What form did the first examples of naturalism take (novels, verse, drama)?8) In what ways does <i>A Doll's House</i> fulfil the conventions of naturalism? <p>Quote from the play to support your response.</p>	
<p>Activity 2: Ibsen the dramatist This activity can be set as homework or as a pair/group exercise. Students should quote from the play and make notes of their responses that can be shared and expanded during teacher-led whole class feedback sessions.</p> <p>See Learner Resource 1.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 1</p>



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Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 3: The concept of 'wonderful' and the 'miraculous' in <i>A Doll's House</i> This exercise requires students to focus on just two words, considering how they contribute to the play's structure and expose Nora's developing sense of crisis. This exercise can be set as homework in preparation for class discussion. Teachers and students should identify and analyse further examples of the use of language. Different translators' linguistic choices will often provide a basis for close analysis. See Learner Resource 2.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 2</p>
<p>Activity 4: Research – critical approaches Learner Resource 3 should provide the basis for class discussion and further research. Students should share their responses in whole class discussion. See Learner Resource 3.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 3</p>
<p>Activity 5: The influence of the past In all of Ibsen's plays characters' past lives (and the mistakes and sins of their forebears) is a crucial force that drives dramatic action. Students should use the grid in Learner Resource 4 to register and evaluate the effect of past events on the play's characters and action. See Learner Resource 4.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 4</p>
<p>Activity 6: The development of Nora and Torvald's characterisation This grid will allow students to log the dramatic trajectories of Nora and Torvald as the play progresses. They should identify (noting quotes, act and page numbers) key points at which the characters' social, marital and gender assumptions are exposed. See Learner Resource 5.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 5</p>



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At a time when the Romantic movement in poetry was flourishing, and the realistic novel establishing itself as the major literary genre, theatre in the 1850s was intellectually unadventurous. Its primary forms (melodrama, farce, comic opera and bowdlerised revivals of Shakespeare) had begun to outlive their appeal. When, in the 1880s, Ibsen's plays took to the European stage, they found an audience impatient with conventional moral, political and religious traditions and eager for a drama that addressed contemporaneous concerns. This was a time of political and intellectual emancipation that saw the emergence of the 'New Woman,' advances in science, increased prosperity (for the middle classes) and agitation for universal suffrage. Regardless of these improvements, the 'modern' world into which Ibsen's plays were launched (post-Darwinian, industrialist and capitalist) was nonetheless beset with uncertainties about identity and personal destiny. Contemporary theatre, according to George Bernard Shaw, was obliged to respond by developing a *new* drama, a *new* style of acting and *new* subject matter. In its rejection of sentimentalised 'reality,' its refusal to shrink from questioning marriage, motherhood, the sexual sins of fathers or the corruption of capitalist society, Ibsen's drama met Shaw's requirements but, in doing so, provoked a storm of outraged controversy. This controversy laid the foundations for twentieth-century drama.



Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 1: Research – ‘The Angel in the House’</p> <p>This activity can be set as individual homework in preparation for class discussion. Alternatively, students can be asked to collaborate in considering Patmore’s poem and to share their ideas by means of a formal ‘paper’ to be read aloud, or a group presentation delivered to the class.</p> <p>The idea of the ‘The Angel in the House’ is established by Coventry Patmore (1823–1896) in his 1854 poem of the same name. The poem celebrates the sanctity of married love, setting forth and praising the virtues (passivity, self-sacrifice, self-effacement, obedience etc.) that, for Patmore (and many other men and women), composed the ideal wife. For this activity, students should research, read and note selected passages from Patmore’s poem (see link below). They should consider Patmore’s original readers’ responses to the poem and the ‘guidelines’ it lays down for the wifely ‘perfection.’ This research should enable students to consider whether Ibsen’s characterisation of Nora at the beginning of the play owes any debt to the idea of the ‘The Angel in the House.’ Students might also consider later responses to the poem (e.g. Virginia Woolf’s 1931 appraisal of the poem would suggest that nearly 100 years after publication, Patmore’s praise of the domestic ‘angel,’ though now controversial had yet to outlive its appeal).</p> <p>http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/patmore/angel</p> <p>http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/coventry-patmores-poem-the-angel-in-the-house</p>	<p>▶ Click here</p> <p>▶ Click here</p>

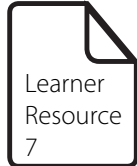


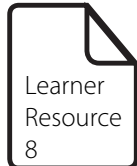


Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 2: Research – the ‘New Woman’</p> <p>This activity can be set as individual homework in preparation for class discussion. Alternatively, students can be asked to collaborate in considering the concept of the New Woman and to share their ideas by means of a formal ‘paper’ to be read aloud, or a group presentation delivered to the class.</p> <p>Some critics have categorised Ibsen as a feminist dramatist. There is evidence to suggest that he himself did not consider this to be the case. However, what is beyond doubt is the fact that, in creating a characters such as Nora Helmer, Ibsen was imagining a woman for whom marriage and motherhood were not, eventually, to be the only means to personal satisfaction and/or authentic identity. It is therefore useful to think of Nora in terms of the ‘New Woman’ debate that was under way when Ibsen was writing. This activity requires students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) research the concept of the New Woman(b) identify writers who contributed to the New Woman debate, and produced literary works that presenting characters that might be defined as New Women(c) consider whether Ibsen’s characterisation of Mrs Linde suggests that she should be viewed as a New Woman (if not, why not?) <p>Students should consider Nora’s progress as the play’s action develops, in the light of the New Woman debate. They should quote and analyse passages in the play that they consider are relevant to the New Woman debate.</p> <p>http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/daughters-of-decadence-the-new-woman-in-the-victorian-fin-de-siecle</p>	<p>▶ Click here</p>



Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Activity 3</p> <p>This activity can be set for homework. Students should share their responses in whole class discussion.</p> <p>In order to understand how and why contemporaneous audiences reacted as they did to <i>A Doll's House</i>, students need to understand the kinds of theatre that preceded Ibsen's plays. The drama of the mid-nineteenth century, though often risqué, was a fundamentally conservative form, whose concern was to uphold and reinforce traditional views about social organisation, gender, and morality. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that Ibsen's plays (in form as well as subject matter) challenged audiences who were not used to the moral and intellectual uncertainties that plays such as <i>A Doll's House</i> generated. This activity requires students to research the different kinds of theatrical productions available to audiences in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Learner Resource 7 gives guidance on the specific forms relevant to this exercise and provides a grid for students to organise their findings.</p> <p>http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/19th-century-theatre</p> <p>http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/0-9/19th-century-theatre</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 7</p> <p> Click here</p> <p> Click here</p>
<p>Activity 4</p> <p>An understanding of the kinds of characters (male and female) that people Ibsen's plays as a whole will help students to consider <i>A Doll's House</i> and the characterisation of Nora, Torvald, Christine and Krogstad in the light of the plays as a whole. It would, of course, be too much to expect that students should read all of Ibsen's plays (though they might read <i>one</i> other). Plot and character summaries of the plays are readily available and will be sufficient to provide an overview of Ibsen's dramatis personae beyond <i>A Doll's House</i>. While no teacher would discourage an able and conscientious student from reading another play by Ibsen, students should understand that this activity does not require them to do more than gain an overview of the range of Ibsen's characterisation. The grid provided (Learner Resource 8) will guide students to relevant characters, and provide a format that will help them to organise their research. Students should be reminded that they are to be assessed on their ability to analyse <i>A Doll's House</i> and that any discussion of other plays by Ibsen, or of any characters beyond those of <i>A Doll's House</i> must be concise and explicitly relevant to their set text.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 8</p>



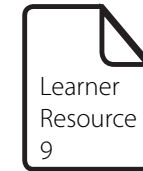
Thinking Contextually

Activities

Activity 5: Ibsen's contemporaries – the dramatic context

This activity requires students to research and consider the subject matter, themes and characterisation of dramatists other than Ibsen, whose plays were written and performed from c.1880 to the beginning of the 1900s. The grid provided (Learner Resource 9) will guide students and provide a form that will aid them in organising their research.

Resources



Learner Resource 1 Ibsen the dramatist



- 1) Ibsen described his naturalist plays as a cycle. He appended the subtitle 'Epilogue' to the title of the final drama (*When We Dead Awaken*) in the cycle.
 - Find out what other plays form part of this cycle.
 - Look up plot summaries.
 - Do you identify any recurring themes or ideas in Ibsen's dramatic output as a whole?

Make notes and use quotes to support your response.

- 2) Ibsen claimed that *A Doll's House* (1879) was an 'introduction' to and 'preparation' for his play *Ghosts* (1881). Both plays provoked controversy. **Look up a plot summary of *Ghosts*.**

- In what ways are *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* linked? What is it about each play that caused such outrage to original audiences?

Make notes and use quotes to support your response.

- 3) What kinds of people would have made up the audience for Ibsen's plays when they were first performed?

- How did Ibsen's original audiences react to his plays?

Find evidence and make notes to support your responses.

- 4) In what ways do Ibsen's plot, characterisation, and the social and personal concerns he raises in *A Doll's House*, remain relevant to 20th century society and audiences?

Quote from the play to support your response.

- 5) What did writers such as Henry James, Thomas Hardy, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce think of Ibsen as a dramatist?

Research the responses of the writers listed and use quotes to show the range of their opinion.

- 6) How long after its first performances in Scandinavia and Germany was *A Doll's House* finally performed in London?

- What caused the delay?
- What response did *A Doll's House* receive from London audiences when first performed?

- 7) Do you think that it would be correct to speak of Ibsen as a consciously 'feminist' dramatist?

To consider this question you will need to research Ibsen's comments about *A Doll's House* and other plays.

You should consider whether it is useful to retrospectively classify the works of earlier periods according to the categories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Provide evidence from your own reading, and from any comments you discover from Ibsen, in responding to this question.



Learner Resource 2



- 1) Think about the definitions attributable to the words 'wonderful' and 'miracle.' Make notes that outline the various definitions and connotations of these words. Read Act 1 and find the point at which Nora proclaims to Mrs Linde: 'When you're happy, life is a wonderful thing!'
 - Consider what it is that makes Nora so happy here.
 - Why do her family's circumstances seem so 'wonderful' to her?
 - What is Nora's definition of 'wonderful' at this point in the play?
 - Who enters shortly after Nora uses this word?
 - How does the entrance of this character call into question and render ironic the 'wonderful' life Nora has been imagining?
- 2) Think particularly about the religious definitions attributable to the word 'miracle.'
 - Who is generally considered responsible for 'miracles'? At the close of Act 2, Nora speaks of a 'miracle' to Mrs Linde (in some translations the word 'wonderful' is reiterated here rather than 'miracle').
 - What is the difference between 'wonderful' and 'miracle'?
 - Why do you think some translators prefer 'miracle' to 'wonderful'?
 - What is the 'miracle' that Nora anticipates?
 - Who will fulfil the 'miracle'? Think back to Nora's use of 'wonderful' in Act 1, what has changed?
- 3) Think about the way that both Nora and Torvald's repeated use of the word 'miracle' at the close of the play (again, some translators use 'wonderful' here). Do Nora and Torvald apply the same definitions to 'miracle'/'wonderful'?
 - Why does Nora no longer believe in 'miracles' and/or the 'wonderful' by the play's ending? What does her rejection of the idea of the 'wonderful' and of the possibility of 'miracles' suggest about Nora's development as a character in the course of the play?
 - Does Nora's rejection of these terms have any religious significance? If so, how does this add to the play's meaning/s?
- 4) Look up the definition of 'iconoclast.' Having studied *A Doll's House* do you think that it would be appropriate to consider it as an iconoclastic drama?



Learner Resource 3



- 1) Some critics have suggested that *A Doll's House* can be compared to *Alcestis*, a play by the Greek dramatist Euripides and first performed in 438 BC. In Euripides' drama, King Admetus' wife Alcestis proves her wifely devotion by agreeing to die in place of her husband in an act of atonement for his misdemeanours. In a similar way, Nora 'dies' figuratively when she considers suicide in Act 2. At the end of Euripides' play, Alcestis is saved by Heracles and escapes Death.

Look up a fuller plot summary of *Alcestis*.

- Do you recognise any echoes from *Alcestis* in *A Doll's House*?
 - What might the fact that Nora and Torvald's dramatic situation reflects that of Alcestis and Admetus in Greek theatre suggest about:
 - (a) the status of marriage partners
 - (b) the expectations attaching to wifehood
 - (c) the moral integrity of husbands
 - (d) the ideas that for Ibsen remained relevant in the late nineteenth century?
- 2) What objections were raised by contemporaneous critics to the ending of *A Doll's House*?
- 3) Ibsen spoke of the rewritten ending as a 'barbaric outrage.' What is your view of the alternative ending (does it undermine or enhance the drama of the original, is it 'weaker' or more conventional than the original)?
- What (social, religious, theatrical and/or commercial) pressures might have persuaded Ibsen to commit what he considered a 'barbaric' act in rewriting the ending?
 - Why do you think that the German 'ending' is no longer performed?
 - What does this suggest about society, marriage, the relative status of men and women and the attitudes of modern audiences?
- 4) In October 1878, Ibsen sketched some ideas for what he called a modern day 'tragedy.' He noted that there were two kinds of moral law and two kinds of conscience, and that the genders did not understand each other's versions. He goes on to assert that society judges women according to 'man's' law. Bearing in mind the literary definition of 'tragedy,' would you agree that the expectation that women should be subject to laws framed, imposed and adjudicated by men is sufficiently profound as to be categorised as tragedy?
- Using quotes, give reasons for your response.
- 5) Nearly twenty years after completing *A Doll's House*, Ibsen was invited to speak to the Norwegian League for Women's Rights. What does this invitation suggest about the way Ibsen's political views and his play were interpreted by the women of the Norwegian League at this time?
- Do you think that *A Doll's House* is a feminist drama?
 - What did Ibsen have to say about the 'women's cause' and his relation to it?



Learner Resource 4



Character	What past misdemeanours/sins/crimes are revealed?	How does the past re-emerge and shape the present?
Nora		
Torvald		
Dr Rank		
Mrs Linde		
Krogstadt		
Anne Marie (nursemaid)		



Learner Resource 5



Act	Nora	Torvald
One		
Two		
Three		



Learner Resource 6 Comparison exercise: drama and poetry pre-1900 (Component 1)



Text A

CORDELIA	Good my lord, You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I Return those duties back as are right fit, Obey you, love you, and most honour you. Why have my sisters husbands if they say They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed, That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry Half my love with him, half my care and duty. Sure I shall never marry like my sisters, To love my father all.	1 5 10
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(Extract from Act 1, Scene 1, *King Lear*)

Text B

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with a passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, --- I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! --- and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barratt Browning, 'How Do I Love Thee?' (Sonnet 43)

Begin by considering:

Cordelia will not follow her sisters in declaring boundless love for her father as she suspects the motivation behind their extravagant professions of 'love.' However, in refusing to flatter Lear, does Cordelia reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of the true nature of love? She seems to think of love in terms of (finite) 'parcels' to be distributed and redistributed amongst those who come to have new claims on her affection. Does Elizabeth Barratt Browning seem to see love as a finite resource? Does she seem to set limits on the distribution of love? Quote from and analyse the extracts to support your views.

Now complete the following grid.



Learner Resource 6

Questions	Shakespeare	Browning
What is the genre of the extract?		
What is the subject of the extract?		
Whose point of view does the extract present?		
Who listens to what is said?		
What relationship is presented and what might be the power relations?		
What do you notice about the use of rhyme and rhythm?		
What literary/poetic devices can you identify?		
What ideas or misapprehensions about the nature of love is revealed?		
How would this extract affect a reader/an audience?		
Having considered the questions above, summarise the similarities/ differences between the poem and drama extract		



Learner Resource 7 Drama before Ibsen



Form	Dramatist/play/date	Subject matter/characterisation / 'message'
Melodrama		
Farce		
Comic opera		
Shakespearean revival		
Burlesque		
Pantomime		



Learner Resource 8 Beyond *A Doll's House*: Ibsen's other characters



Play	Character	Characterisation/themes
	Helene Alving	
	Oswald Alving	
	Hedda Tesman	
	Jörgen Tessman	
	Halvard Solness	
	Aline Solness	
	Gregers Werle	
	Hjalmar Ekdal	
	Dr Relling	



Learner Resource 9



Play	Dramatist	Date	Character and themes/connections
<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>			
<i>Pygmalion</i>			
<i>Miss Julie</i>			
<i>Man and Superman</i>			
<i>Uncle Vanya</i>			
<i>The Father</i>			
<i>The Seagull</i>			
<i>Major Barbara</i>			
<i>The Dance of Death</i>			
<i>Die Ehre 'Honour'</i>			
<i>Heimat 'Home'</i>			





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