

Knowledge Organiser

You should endeavour to learn everything included in this Knowledge Organiser. This is not the only thing you need to learn for the exam (!) but will ensure you have got additional information to draw on in your Paper 1 in comparison with Christina Rossetti poetry. Remember to use all the materials and notes you have been given.

Start testing yourself on the knowledge organiser using the look, cover, say, write and check method for each box. Remember, by learning this earlier it will enter your long term memory and be easier to recall in your exams.

Context	
Arguments raged all over Scandinavia as to whether Nora was right (<i>'I believe that before everything else I'm a human being – just as much as you are.. or at any rate I shall try to become one'</i>)	The play is concerned not just with the status of women, but how society is damaged by refusing them equality with men. All in the house are changed by Nora's personal journey.
By the end of the nineteenth century it had been performed in Germany, France, Britain and the USA although most performances were modified or censored as it was considered so shocking.	<i>A Doll's House</i> 'exploded like a bomb into contemporary life' (Halvdan Koht, Ibsen's biographer)
The relationship between crime and sickness was debated in the nineteenth century – Darwinism suggesting that criminals are unhealthy and will thus die out, rather than people responsible for their actions. Moral invalidity is satirically explored in <i>Erewhon</i> (1872) a novel by Butler (Ibsen's contemporary) – the sick are treated as criminals and those who commit crimes are cared for as if they are ill.	In the 1920s <i>A Doll's House</i> was banned in China . Jiang Qing (1914-91), later wife of Mao Zedong, was an advocate of rights for women (such as the right not to have their feet bound) and made her name as Nora in the 1935 production, seen as the beginning of cultural modernity in China.

Characters	
Nora	Long and complex female dramatic role, often misunderstood by early audiences. She takes charge of her own growth from the flighty girl in Act 1 to the sober figure in Act 3. Her physical vitality reflects the nature of her inner journey. She becomes aware that her personality has been constructed by others (the hegemony of male authority to the church).
Torvald/Helmer	A good husband by nineteenth century standards. He is gentle and expresses real anxiety as well as playful exaggeration. He believes he loves Nora and is often playful in spirit. His tragedy is that he doesn't know himself –he conforms and doesn't question the rules of society and believes that his titles ('husband' and 'employer') give him unquestionable wisdom.
Mrs Linde	Quiet and polite, a little frail – a foil to Nora and her confidante. She is independent and has a passion for work. She isn't a passive victim and owns her choices including that of not marrying Krogstad but a wealthier man.
Krogstad	Name means ' crooked ' – he begins the play as a stock villain. He refuses to discuss the morality of Nora's crime, what matters is the transgression not the motive. He doesn't see Helmer as a moral superior and fights to keep his job for his children. He feels contempt for Helmer but not Nora. He becomes decisive once he knows Mrs Linde loves him.
Dr Rank	Shares Voltaire's (French writer and philosopher) cynical approach to life. Acts as a detached observer, offering advice to the protagonists but not changing the course of the action. He is an 'honest man' cut off from participating fully in life because of the moral sickness of his father. He has a fantasy of being Nora's husband.
The Nurse (Anna-Maria)	A few lines but an important role; the children are happy around her and Nora respects her and her domain, asking permission to remove the children's coats. She feels proud of Nora's beauty as she gets ready for the party. She has suffered most of all the characters, experiencing poverty and disgrace and having to give up her own child.

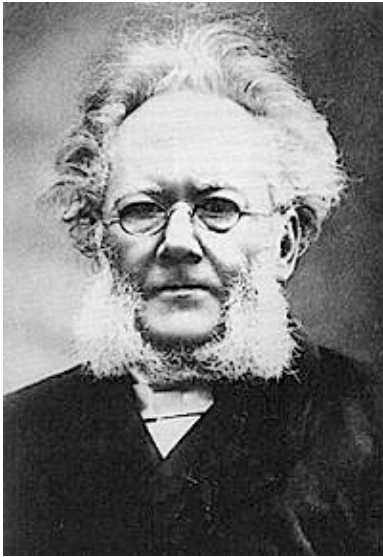
Synopsis	
Act 1	Set on Christmas Eve . Torvald is concerned about Nora's extravagance who eats sweets and wants money for Christmas. Mrs Linde arrives and wants Nora to influence Torvald to get her a job at the bank. Krogstad arrives, he is facing redundancy at the bank. He blackmails Nora to use her influence to help him, or he will reveal the loan she took. Torvald condemns liars and <i>"lying mothers"</i> .
Act 2	Christmas Day . Nora tries to intercede for Krogstad before Torvald becomes angry. He recalls the shoddy reputation of Nora's father and sends Krogstad a letter of dismissal promising he is <i>"man enough"</i> to deal with any trouble. Dr Rank tells Nora he is dying from syphilis and declares his love for her. Krogstad leaves a note in the letterbox telling Torvald everything. Nora considers suicide and confides in Mrs Linde.
Act 3	The party is going on upstairs . Krogstad and Mrs Linde rekindle their love, she believes the truth must come out for the sake of Nora and Torvald. After the party Torvald wants to make love with Nora. Dr Rank arrives to tell Nora he is now in the final stages of the disease and leaves two calling cards with black crosses on them. Nora tells Torvald off for being insensitive as he wants to continue, she tells him to read all his letters. He goes in to a rage when he reads the letter from Krogstad informing Nora their marriage is over but they will pretend to remain respectable. Krogstad sends another letter promising no further action, Torvald thinks he is saved but Nora is disillusioned. Nora tells Torvald he denied her a chance to grow up, she has ceased to love him and leaves slamming the door behind her.

Themes	
The individual and society	A doll's character is determined by its owner and doesn't have a role in public. Existentialism is the idea that a person is not born with innate characteristics but shapes a self through the choices they make. Nora's identity is determined by others and eventually chooses not to 'act out' the role of mother and wife but to leave.
Death, disease and heredity	Helmer thinks Nora's requests for money are hereditary and doesn't waver from the Darwinism idea that physical and moral qualities can be inherited. Dr Rank does not feel anger at his father (unlike Nora who judges him ' <i>a horrible man</i> ') and is surprisingly forgiving, angry only at the unjustness of hereditary disease. Helmer and Rank use the metaphor of corrupt behaviour as moral sickness. Helmer thinks it spreads around the home; Rank thinks that society should act with limited compassion with 'moral invalids'; Mrs Linde argues society is responsible to care for those who are 'sick' in this way. The play has graphic images of death from Rank, Nora and Krogstad.
Theatricality	Ibsen told his actors to avoid 'theatrical accents' and to copy the life they saw around them. When Helmer and Nora are most conscious they are performing they express themselves and their relationship most clearly (e.g. the fancy dress party). Following the dance Nora is able to express the role performance has played in her life, her flirtatiousness and games mean she has hidden herself from her husband and doesn't know who she is anymore.
Money	Nora borrowed twelve hundred dollars to save her husband's life – it is represented by a piece of paper that shows her crime. Her criminal act bought her out of the domestic sphere and into the world of money, which belongs to men. Helmer is quick to condemn Nora because he is afraid of the power of money.
The Law	The contemporary judicial system was particularly male. Ibsen said "... <i>with laws written by men and prosecutors and judges who regard feminine conduct from a masculine point of view.</i> " Nora's views on laws taking in to account motives is radical and feminist. The fact she suggests what laws should be like is revolutionary.
Morality	Ibsen undermines a didactic moral view and a didactic society (i.e. the protagonist should be punished for what they have done, but they aren't). There are contradictions between the conservative and Christian idea of moral causality and the radical liberalism of the value system that Ibsen uses in the play.

Dramatic points	
<i>A Doll's House</i> can be considered one of the first naturalist plays. It was radical and original by showing a slice of real life.	Symbolism is used in Nora's tarantella – it reveals Nora's inner conflict through the wildness of her dance and shows Nora as a work of art for her husband to stare at and enjoy.
<i>A Doll's House</i> rejected romanticism through realistic stage sets; a less declamatory acting style and; a realistic situation.	Ibsen told his friends that Nora's name was actually a pet name for Leonora. This means she is never once addressed as an adult in the play.
Clearly a Norwegian play – the imagery when contemplating suicide are dark and icy; the conversation with Dr Rank in Act 2 showing mutual sorrow is set in the darkness of a wintry day in the north.	<i>A Doll's House</i> follows Scribe's prescription for a well made play . The exposition sets up the situation, the development and complication in Act 2 shows Nora's trouble and her tarantella to delay the inevitable is a strong curtain . Act 3 moves towards the climax , a possible resolution is hinted at. At the denouement all secrets are revealed before a reversal of expectation when Nora announces she is leaving her marriage.
A contemporary commentator at the time wrote of the ending that when Nora leaves " <i>that slammed door reverberated across the roof of the world</i> ".	

Social and political protest	
Power and powerlessness	Torvald represents an authoritative masculine middle class who asserts power even by forgiving Nora. When Nora leaves, she asserts her power.
Respectability	Fears over reputations being ruined by the decisions that have been made.
The power of money	Money is how control is asserted and the characters' lack of money and need for money drives much of the action.
Rebellion	Nora's dramatic exit demonstrates rebellion against oppression and control.
Setting	A domestic setting in one room. It shows the oppression and repression in day to day life and demonstrates the focus of the middle classes of 'keeping up appearances'.
Social commentary	<i>A Doll's House</i> reflects Ibsen's concerns about women's rights and explores how 'free' people can be oppressed by social expectations and what sacrifices might need to be made to be truly free.

HENRIK IBSEN



Henrik Johan Ibsen was born in Skien, Norway on March 20, 1828. His father was a successful merchant and his mother painted, played the piano and loved to go to the theatre.

When Ibsen was 8 years old his father's business collapsed. Nearly all traces of their previous affluence had to be sold off to cover debts, and the family moved out of town. This financial ruin was later to become a recurrent theme in much of Ibsen's work as a playwright. At the age of 15, Ibsen left school and went to work as an apprentice in an apothecary in Grimstad. In 1849, at the age of 21, he wrote his first play *Catiline*, a drama written in verse modeled after one of his great influences, William Shakespeare.

Ibsen moved to Kristiania (now Oslo) in 1850 with the intent of studying at the University there. However instead he focused on writing plays. *Catiline* was published there, but to little acclaim. The following year, Ibsen was offered a job as a writer and manager for the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen, where he wrote and staged six of his plays. In Bergen he met Suzannah Daae Thoresen whom he later married and with whom he had a son named Sigurd.

In 1857 Ibsen was offered the position of Artistic Director at Kristiania Norske Theater and moved back to the capital city. Some turbulent and difficult years followed there, ending with the Kristiania Norske Theater going bankrupt in 1862. He was then taken on by Kristiania Theater as a literary consultant. In 1864 he staged his own play *The Pretenders* at this theatre.

Ibsen left Norway in 1864, living first in Rome (where he wrote *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*) then Dresden (*Emperor and Galilean*), Munich (*Pillars of Society*), Rome again (*A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*) and finally Munich again (*The Wild Duck*, *Hedda Gabler*). All of these plays were published in Copenhagen to great success. *A Doll's House* in particular signified Ibsen's international breakthrough as a playwright as it was performed all over Europe. He returned to Norway in 1891 a literary hero.

Ibsen died on May 23, 1906. His last words were "To the contrary!" in Norwegian. Considered a literary titan at the time of his passing, he received a state funeral from the Norwegian government. In addition to his plays, Ibsen also wrote around 300 poems.

A DOLL'S HOUSE CHARACTERS

NORA HELMER

Nora is the protagonist in the play. Married to Torvald, she is a young wife and mother of three children who seems to lead quite a comfortable, happy life. At the beginning of the play, Nora appears to be very playful, naïve and childlike. Torvald calls her his “squirrel” and “skylark” and she responds affectionately to this. She also appears to be obsessed by money; a spendthrift who is constantly squandering all the money her husband gives her.

As the play progresses, we learn that Nora is not as carefree and naïve as she initially seems, but a determined and hard working young woman who was willing to break the law in order to save her husband's life. She possesses capacities beyond the normal limits of a 19th century wife and mother, she enjoys working and earning money “like a man” and shows independence of thought in her actions. Her description of her years of secret labour undertaken to pay off her debt shows her fierce determination and ambition.

At the end of the play, Nora comes to the stark realization that Torvald is not the man she thought he was and that their whole marriage has been a game; she has lived like his “doll-wife” in their real-life “doll's house”. She has pretended to be someone she is not, in order to fulfill the role that society has expected of her. Nora takes the controversial decision to leave her husband and children to make her own way in the world, rejecting the idea of the ‘ideal’ family life and society's expectations of her.

TORVALD HELMER

Torvald has been married to Nora for eight years. He is a lawyer who has recently been appointed Director of an investment bank. In many ways Torvald is a typical middle-class husband of the time. He and Nora appear to have a happy, loving marriage and he is very affectionate to her. Torvald treats Nora like a pet; he rewards her with gifts of money and tells her off for squandering it. He is also very controlling, forbidding her from eating sweet things and instructing her almost like a father would a child.

Torvald has a strong sense of morals. We learn that as a barrister he refused to involve himself with any cases that he didn't believe to be morally sound, and he frequently moralises on subjects such as debt and the role of parents. He also refers to God and religion in the last scene of the play. However as the play progresses we learn that Torvald's morality is actually more concerned with pride, social appearances and being respected by others, rather than being a deep rooted belief in right and wrong. For example, as soon as he learns that Krogstad won't publicise Nora's crime he is quite content to cover it up. He reveals himself to be a hypocrite and childishly petty, very conscious of other people's perceptions of him and of his standing in the community.

We also learn that Torvald appreciates beauty and has an aversion to anything ‘ugly’ or distasteful. This includes sickness – Dr Rank says that he doesn't wish Torvald to visit him on his deathbed for this very reason.

Although through most of the play Torvald seems to hold the power in his relationship with Nora, at the end of the play this changes and it is she who has the upper hand. His girl becomes a woman and he is unable to cope with this, telling her that “first and foremost” she is “a wife and mother”. When Nora finally leaves him he becomes a pathetic figure who attracts our sympathy.

NILS KROGSTAD

Nils Krogstad is a solicitor who holds a small position at the bank. It is he who lends the money to Nora, and attempts to blackmail her to keep his job. He is the antagonist in the play, but not necessarily a villain. Krogstad has reasonable motives for behaving as he does: he is a widower who needs to keep his job at the bank in order to provide for his children. Unlike Torvald, who seems to desire respect for selfish reasons, Krogstad desires it for his family's sake.

Like Nora, Krogstad also forged a signature once, and society has saddled him with the stigma of being a criminal and prohibited him from moving beyond his past. Dr Rank refers to him as “morally diseased” and Torvald refers to him “poisoning his children” with lies and deception. Only Mrs Linde is able to see the potential good in him, saying that she believes him to be a victim of his circumstances. She says that if they had stayed together all those years ago then he may have become a different person, and indeed it is the rekindling of their former relationship that brings about the change in his actions towards the Helmers and leads to him apologizing to them for the troubles he has caused them. Krogstad's ability to make this apology is a redeeming feature of his character, brought about by his love for Mrs Linde.

MRS KRISTINE LINDE

Kristine Linde is Nora's school friend. She is a widow who arrives in town to look for work, having heard of Torvald's new appointment at the bank. When she arrives Nora and she haven't seen each other for almost ten years. Kristine is a practical, down-to-earth woman, who married for financial security rather than love, in order that she could support her sick mother and two younger brothers. Since her husband died three years ago she has had to work to survive. Her working out of necessity provides a contrast to Nora's accounts of the pleasure she felt in working and earning money “like a man”. Her account of her life of poverty also underscores the privileged nature of the life that Nora leads.

Kristine's story is also an example of the recurring theme of self-sacrifice in the play. She sacrificed her relationship with Krogstad many years ago for the sake of her mother and brothers. She then dedicated her life towards caring for her sick mother, in contrast to Nora who did not go to visit her father when he was on his deathbed. Kristine therefore serves as a direct comparison for the character of Nora in many ways. Similarly, her relationship with Krogstad provides a point of comparison with Nora and Torvald's. As Nora and Torvald's relationship disintegrates, Kristine and Krogstad manage to rebuild theirs.

A DOLL'S HOUSE THEMES

THE SACRIFICIAL ROLE OF WOMEN

The role of women, and in particular the sacrificial role of women, is a major theme throughout the play. All three women in the play have made some kind of personal sacrifice in their lives in order to fulfill the roles which society expects of them.

Nora appears at the beginning of the play to lead a happy, fulfilled life; but as the play progresses, the personal sacrifices she has made to fulfill the expected role of 19th century wife and mother become more and more apparent. As the “doll” of the title she has sacrificed all her own opinions, thoughts and ideas and adopted Torvald's views as her own. In order to save Torvald's life she made personal sacrifices, saving every bit of money she had and working all hours of the night to repay Krogstad. And at the end of the play she sacrifices her home, family and children for the sake of her own self-discovery.

Mrs Linde sacrificed her relationship with Krogstad and her potential happiness, in order to marry a wealthy man who could support her mother and brothers. This was her responsibility as a 19th century daughter. After her husband's death she continued to make personal sacrifices for the sake of her family, taking on any work she could to support them financially.

Anne-Marie had an illegitimate child, who she was forced to give up in order to take the position as nanny to the young Nora. She sacrificed motherhood for a respectable job, which was all too common for young unmarried mothers in the 19th century.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

There is a strong sense throughout the play of the importance of parental and filial responsibility, and of the effect that the actions of parents have upon their children.

Torvald talks about a parent's immorality being passed on to the children like a disease. He says that “almost all juvenile delinquents have immoral mothers” and also speaks about Krogstad poisoning his own children with lies and immorality.

Dr Rank literally does have a disease which has been passed on to him by his father, and which is said to have been caused by his father's depravity. He talks about the unfairness of this, of the sins of the father being revisited on the son.

Nora is referred to as being like her father, having inherited a lot of his qualities. It is also of note that she never had a mother, with Anne-Marie fulfilling the maternal role in her life. While Anne-Marie was forced to give away her own child to take on the role of Nora's nanny, in contrast Nora chooses to leave her own children at the end of the play.

Mrs Linde's life, for the most part, has been dominated by her sick mother. She has fulfilled her filial responsibility by dedicating her life to care for her mother, at the expense of her own personal happiness. Her mother's illness has directly affected the life she has led and the personal decisions she has made.

MONEY AND DEBT

From the very beginning of the play money is a central theme. In the very first scene, Nora gives the porter one krone, telling him to “keep the change”, thus indicating a relaxed attitude to money and spending. The next scene with Torvald almost entirely revolves around the subjects of money, spending and borrowing, with Nora portrayed as a spendthrift.

Torvald has very strong views on borrowing and debt. He says that “a home which is shackled by loans and debt becomes a prison” (which ironically it does for Nora, who doesn’t leave the building again until the end of the play). We then learn about Nora’s debt to Krogstad, which is the central plot of the play, the incident around which all the action revolves.

Krogstad is a moneylender, and money (or lack of it) has had a major effect on his life. We learn that Mrs Linde ended her relationship with him many years ago because of his lack of financial security, choosing to marry a richer man instead. Throughout his life Krogstad has been poor, struggling to support his family, and it is this dependency on financial income that leads him to blackmail Nora in an attempt to keep his job at the bank.

Mrs Linde’s life has also been directly affected by money, or lack of it. Her late husband’s business collapsed, leaving her with nothing to live on, and since then she has had to work hard to survive.

Dr Rank is the only main character who appears to be comfortable financially, having inherited money from his late father. However, although he is financially comfortable he is terminally ill, referring to his body as being “bankrupt”.

THEATRICAL CONTEXT

REALISM AND NATURALISM

Up until the mid 19th century the predominant style of theatre in Europe was that of melodrama. This consisted of large flamboyant characters, with equally flamboyant gestures and patterns of speech. Plots were dramatic - generally either falling into the category of high comedy or high tragedy - and always entertaining. Both realism and naturalism in the theatre developed as a reaction against this.

The term 'realism' was first used in France in the 1850s to characterise plays that represented the world as it actually *was*, rather than as it *ought* to be. This was something that Ibsen was particularly concerned with. He is often referred to as 'the father of realistic drama', with his plays *The Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* being held up as prime examples of realism.

Although realism is often confused with naturalism, there are some key differences between the two. *Naturalistic* plays attempt to show a slice of life on stage *exactly* as it is. There are often moments where characters are on their own on stage, doing everyday tasks in real time as they would in real life; speech patterns may be broken up or follow a stream of consciousness just as they may do in life; there may be times when nothing seems to be happening, followed by a flurry of activity. An example of this is Strindberg's *Miss Julie*.

In contrast, *realistic* plays such as *A Doll's House* are often more crafted and structured. The characters talk in a close approximation of everyday speech, and their movements and gestures are realistic; however dramatic conventions are still used to move the plot along in a structured manner. Realism is very much a style of theatre that is actually unafraid to be a little unrealistic. Realism is now acknowledged as the beginning of modern drama, and the vast majority of modern plays, TV dramas, and films tend to be written in this style.

Theatrical naturalism was also derived from the naturalistic movement in literature, propounded by Émile Zola, which had a scientific origin with its basis in Social Darwinism and the theory of genetic evolution. A character's nature (and ultimately their destiny in the play) is largely determined by their genetic make-up and the idea of survival of the fittest is often paramount. For example, in Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, Jean and Julie engage in a psychological battle in which the 'weaker' character eventually meets her death.

Theatrical realism, on the other hand, is more concerned with the representation of un-heroic contemporary life. There are often no clear winners, as in life. For example, when Nora leaves Torvald at the end of *A Doll's House* the audience is left to make up their own mind about what will happen to the couple. Realistic drama often provokes discussion and debate rather than giving a clear outcome.

A Doll's House, along with several of Ibsen's other plays, is widely considered to be one of the prime examples of realism.

HISTORICAL & SOCIAL CONTEXT

Written by Henrik Ibsen in 1879, *A Doll's House* shocked and divided critics across Europe with its depiction of a woman struggling to survive in a man's world, and Nora's rejection of the 'ideal' family life. After the first stage production in Copenhagen in 1879, the opinions of audiences were also divided. The play caused an immediate sensation, sparking debate and controversy. So much so, that invitations to social gatherings at the time would often include the note: "*You are requested not to mention Ibsen's Doll's House!*".

FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In 1879, when Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House*, a wife was not legally permitted to borrow money without her husband's consent. On her wedding day, a woman transitioned from living under the authority of her father to under that of her husband. Ibsen based the play on the true story of a woman named Laura Kieler, who like Nora, illegally borrowed a sum of money to save her husband's life. However unlike Nora, Laura's fraud was discovered; she then had her children taken away from her and was committed to a mental asylum.

The issue of women's rights was already very prominent in Norway several years before Ibsen focused on the issue, and women had been the force behind several changes, with the women's rights organisations gaining momentum throughout the 19th century. Poverty had already forced women into the workplace early in the nineteenth century, and the Norwegian government had passed laws protecting and governing women's employment nearly five decades before Ibsen's play. By the middle of the century Norwegian women were granted the same legal protection as that provided to male children. Women were permitted inheritance rights and were to successful in petitioning for the right to a university education only three years after the first performance of *A Doll's House*. But many of the protections provided to women were aimed at the lower economic classes. Employment opportunities for women were limited to low paying domestic jobs, teaching, or clerical work. Middle class women, such as Nora, noticed few of these new advantages. It was the institution of marriage itself that restricted the freedom of middle class women.

Universal suffrage was eventually achieved in 1913, making Norway the first country in Europe to have equal voting rights for men and women.

PERSONAL & POLITICAL FREEDOM

Norway was freed from Danish control in 1814. The subsequent Treaty of Kiel presented Norway to Sweden in a 'Union of the Crowns' which lasted until 1905. Therefore at the time that *A Doll's House* was written, Norway was part of a union with Sweden. A constitution was drafted that gave Norway devolved power, and Norwegians began to discover their own cultural identity, albeit as part of the Swedish-Norwegian union. Ibsen, the composer Edvard Grieg and the artist Edvard Munch all contributed to this. It is therefore understandable that issues involving freedom—both political and personal freedom—were important in the minds of Norwegians. Ibsen always denied that he believed in women's rights, stating instead that he believed in human rights, and that the story of *A Doll's House* was about

personal freedom and independence.

Language also began to play its part in this development of a new Norwegian identity. Following the split with Denmark in 1814, a new Norwegian dialect was developed, *Landsmål* (the language of the country) which eventually developed into the *Nynorsk* which is spoken in Norway today. However until the early 20th century the official language was still *Riksmål* (the language of the town), which *A Doll's House* was written in, a dialect of Danish.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

The 19th century family was organized along traditional patriarchal lines. The patriarchal ideal was supported and reinforced by a social structure wherein women had little overt political or economic power, wherein they were economically, socially, and psychologically dependent on men and especially on the institutions of marriage and motherhood. The ideal of bourgeois respectability prevailed in the nineteenth century, but it never went unchallenged, and by the time Ibsen wrote his own challenge to it, towards the end of the century, a new era of crisis and uncertainty regarding all things conventional had already begun.

The position of women was an especially volatile issue because the patriarchal ideology underlay the entire social, political, and economic structure. If women were to have autonomy, then the whole structure of society would have to be re-imagined and the world would have to be remade. It was an apocalyptic idea that thrilled many intellectuals but terrified the ruling and middle classes, so that each move in the direction of women's suffrage, revised marriage laws and advances in women's education felt like the end of the world. The last decades of the nineteenth century had already begun to feel like the end of the world, anyway. The Western world was about to enter a period of unprecedented change; social, political, economic, cultural, and scientific revolutions. No one knew exactly what was coming, but a great many looked toward it with a mixture of hope and dread. When Nora slams the door of her doll's-house, shutting herself out of the only world she has known and stepping into a future that is unknown and therefore both promising and threatening, the sound resonates with the apocalyptic tremors of Ibsen's time.