HENRIK IBSEN'S
A DOLL'S HOUSE

EDUCATION PACK
Autumn Tour 2014
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This Education Pack is designed to fully support our touring production of Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, and provide you with additional Drama and cross-curricular activities to enhance your visit to the production, and to build into your existing study.

**The production is particularly suitable for:**

- Key Stage 4/5 students studying towards GCE A Level Drama and Theatre Studies or Performing Arts, BTEC Performing Arts and GCSE Drama or Performing Arts.
- University level Drama and Theatre Studies students

It is also of relevance to GCE A Level and GCSE students of English Literature, History and Sociology.

**This resource comprises 3 sections:**

**BEFORE YOUR VISIT**

This section contains background information on the play, as well as practical activities to help your students fully understand the play before their visit, by encouraging them to think about the themes, characters and social/historical content.

- **A Doll’s House Synopsis**
- **Henrik Ibsen**
- **Characters**
- **Themes**
- **Theatrical Context**
- **Historical and Social Context**

**WATCHING THE PLAY**

This section contains background information on the production and the theatre company; as well as questions and activities that students can engage with during their visit to see the production, to help maximise their understanding and enjoyment.

- **Watching the production**
- **Cast Biographies**
- **Creative Biographies**

**EVALUATION & FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES**

This section contains guidance for an evaluation session following the production, based on your students’ critical appreciation; as well as suggestions for follow-up activities.
A DOLL’S HOUSE SYNOPSIS

The play takes place in Norway in the late 19th century. The entire play is set in one location, the city apartment of Torvald and Nora Helmer, a married couple. The action of the play takes place over three days: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The main characters in the play are Nora and Torvald Helmer, Mrs Linde (Nora’s childhood friend), Doctor Rank (a family friend) and Nils Krogstad (an employee at the bank of which Torvald has recently been made Director).

The play opens on Christmas Eve. Nora returns home with a Christmas tree and presents for her three children. Her husband Torvald is at work in his study, but soon comes out into the living room to see what she’s bought. He chides Nora for being a squanderer and spending all their money; Nora responds by saying that surely they can let themselves go a little bit this year, now that he has been appointed Director of the bank and will be earning a good salary. They talk more about money; Nora says that all she wants for Christmas is money, so that she can buy herself something with it later; she also suggests that they borrow some money until Torvald receives his first pay packet, however Torvald rejects this suggestion as he doesn’t agree with borrowing money. The couple are very affectionate and playful together; Torvald calls Nora his songbird, his lark and his squirrel, and teases her about her sweet tooth.

Nora’s friend Mrs Kristine Linde arrives, who Nora hasn’t seen for ten years. She became a widow three years ago and has now arrived in the city to look for work. Nora doesn’t recognize her immediately, but soon promises to ask Torvald if there is any work for Mrs Linde in the bank. Nora confides in Mrs Linde, telling her that several years ago Torvald was dangerously ill, but that she saved his life by raising a large sum of money to pay for a rehabilitative trip to Italy. However she refuses to tell Mrs Linde where she got the money from.

Doctor Rank enters, and Nora introduces him to Mrs Linde. The three of them joke and eat some macaroons that Nora bought in town and has been hiding from Torvald (he has banned her from eating sweets as he says they will rot her teeth). Torvald returns and Nora asks him if he can find a position in the bank for Mrs Linde. He agrees to try and help her and offers to walk her down the street so she can look for some lodgings. Torvald, Mrs Linde and Doctor Rank leave the apartment.

Once they have left, Nils Krogstad, an employee at the bank, enters. He explains that the front door was left ajar and so he let himself in. It soon becomes clear that it was Krogstad who lent Nora the money she needed for the trip to Italy. Krogstad says that Torvald is planning to dismiss him from his position at the bank, and asks Nora to persuade him not to. Nora says that she has no influence over her husband, but then Krogstad attempts to blackmail her. He reveals that Nora forged her father’s signature on the IOU for the loan (as a woman cannot borrow without her husband’s consent), and threatens to make tell Torvald if he loses his job. When Torvald returns home, Nora tries to convince him not to dismiss Krogstad, but he refuses and becomes angry.

The next day, Mrs Linde returns to help Nora mend her costume for a fancy dress ball she and Torvald are going to the next night. Nora is extremely worried about the money she owes, but still won’t reveal who lent it to her. When Torvald comes home, Mrs Linde takes the sewing into the kitchen, and Nora once again tries to persuade him to let Krogstad keep his job. Torvald says that Krogstad is morally corrupt (he
was also guilty of forging a signature several years ago) and so impossible to work with. He immediately writes Krogstad’s dismissal letter and asks the maid to deliver it by hand.

Doctor Rank arrives and Nora and he talk, while Torvald works in his study. Nora flirts with Doctor Rank and is about to ask him to help her with the Krogstad situation, when suddenly Doctor Rank confesses that he is in love with her. He is dying of tuberculosis of the spine and says that he has to tell her how he feels about her before he dies. Nora is now unable to confide in him and changes the subject.

Doctor Rank goes into Torvald’s study and then Krogstad arrives. He has received the dismissal letter and has written a letter in response to Torvald, telling him all about the illegal loan and threatening to make the news public unless he is reinstated in the bank in a higher position. As he leaves he drops the letter into the letterbox through the front door. Nora then confides in Mrs Linde, who says she will go and speak to Krogstad and demand that he asks for the letter back unread. She tells Nora to distract Torvald in the meantime. Nora asks Torvald to help her to practice the Tarantella dance she is going to perform at the ball the next evening, she dances badly in order to distract him and insists that he can’t open the letterbox until after the ball the next night, which he agrees to.

The next evening, Mrs Linde meets Krogstad at the Helmers’ apartment, while the couple are at the ball upstairs. We learn that they used to be in a relationship together many years ago, which they now decide to rekindle, and Krogstad offers to retract his letter. However Mrs Linde decides that the truth must be revealed to Torvald, so instead Krogstad writes another letter apologizing to the Helmers for any upset he has caused them.

Krogstad leaves and the Helmers return home from the ball. Torvald is rather drunk, and as soon as Mrs Linde leaves he tries to seduce Nora. They are interrupted by Doctor Rank, who has also been at the ball and calls in on his way home to say goodnight to them. He reveals to Nora that he does not have long left to live and on his way out he leaves two visitor cards marked with a black cross, a signal that he will not see them again and will now shut himself in his apartment to die.

After Doctor Rank leaves, Torvald opens the letterbox. First, he finds the visiting cards from his friend Doctor Rank, and the couple are both upset by the bad news. He then finds Krogstad’s letter. Torvald is furious at Nora, he calls her a hypocrite, a liar and a criminal and says that she is not fit to look after the children. He says that she has ruined his happiness and destroyed his life. He then finds the second letter from Krogstad, in which he has apologized and returned Nora’s IOU. Torvald is overjoyed that he is now ‘saved’. He says that he has forgiven Nora, that he understands why she did what she did, and that her female helplessness now makes her twice as attractive to him.

Nora goes off to change out of her fancy dress costume and returns in her outdoor clothes. She makes Torvald sit down and explains to him that she is leaving him, as he is not the man she thought he was. She explains that she has lived in Torvald’s house as his ‘doll wife’ for eight years, and that now she wants to discover who she really is and develop as an individual. Torvald tries to persuade her stay, saying that first and foremost she is a wife and mother, reminding her of her family and religious duties. Nora replies that first and foremost she is a human being, or that as least, she should try to become one. Nora leaves the house and Torvald is left alone in the room, shouting after her. The front door slams.
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.
DR RANK

Dr Rank is Torvald’s oldest friend, who calls in on the family every day. He is a medical doctor who is now dying of tuberculosis of the spine. It is implied that this is a hereditary venereal disease, passed on to him by his father, who Nora refers to as “a terrible man who kept mistresses and so on”. This is an example of another recurring theme in the play, the sins of parents being revisited on their children. Dr Rank is unfairly paying the price for his father’s promiscuity. Unlike Torvald and Nora, Dr. Rank openly admits to the diseased nature of his life, however like Torvald, he also attempts to keep up appearances, maintaining an exterior of wellbeing right up until his last appearance in the play. His illness also serves as the physical counterpart of the supposed moral illness of Krogstad.

Dr Rank is in love with Nora. They have a close relationship - she refers to him as her “best friend” – and she appears to be more comfortable around him than she is around Torvald. The character of Dr Rank therefore also serves a contrast to the more serious, disciplinarian character of Torvald.

ANNE-MARIE

Anne-Marie is nanny to the Helmers’ three children, so has lived with the family for many years. She was also Nora’s own nanny before that, coming to work in Nora’s father’s house to bring up Nora when her mother died. She had to give up her own illegitimate child in order to take the job. Thus, she shares with Nora and Mrs. Linde the act of sacrificing her own happiness out of economic necessity.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Character Study

1. Split the students into groups and allocate each group one major character from the play.

2. Ask each group to go through the text and write down 10 significant things the character says about themselves in the play.

3. On another piece of paper ask the groups to write down 10 significant things the other characters say that about their character.

4. Ask each group to stand up and present their findings to the rest of the class, writing them on the board in two columns.

5. As a class, discuss the lists on the board and decide on 3 adjectives to describe each character.
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”.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Living in the World of Men – exploring the role of women in the 19th century

1. Split your students into pairs or groups of three.

2. In their pairs/groups ask them to think of as many examples as they can from the play, where a woman faces a difficulty that she wouldn’t have to face today. The examples can be contained in the play itself, or they can be from the world of the play that we don’t see, e.g. Nora being unable to get a bank loan, Anne-Marie having to give up her illegitimate baby, Mrs Linde breaking off her relationship with Krogstad to marry a richer man.

3. Ask each pair/group to pick one of the examples they have thought of, and to devise a short scene based around this. They should use their imaginations to flesh out the details of the scene and the other characters involved. When faced with the problem what does the woman do? How does she try and get around the problem? How do the other characters try to stop her?

4. Share the scenes with the rest of the class. Ask the students to give feedback on each other’s scenes and what they have learnt about the world of the play. How did it make them feel? Would they like to be a woman in the 19th century?
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.
PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

19th Century Theatrical Styles

1. Split your students into groups of three or four and give each group a scenario.

2. Allocate each group one of the theatrical styles of either Melodrama, Naturalism or Realism. Ask them to devise a short scene in that particular style to present to the rest of the class.

3. Share the scenes with the rest of the class. See if the rest of the class can guess which style they are performing in.

4. Then ask each group to perform the same scene in a different style. How does it change the scene? What are the main differences, particularly between Realism and Naturalism?

Betty Hennings as Nora in the original production of A Doll’s House, Copenhagen, 1879
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.

**PRACTICAL ACTIVITY**

**19th century social and historical influences on the play**

1. Split the students into three groups. Allocate each group one of the historical influences of Feminism, Personal & Political Freedom and Marriage & Family Life.

2. As a homework project, ask each group to research the historical influence they've been given and to find three examples of its influence on the characters in A Doll’s House.

3. Ask the three groups to present their findings to the rest of the class in an engaging way, combining presentation and extracts from the text.
We hope that you are looking forward to your visit to see UK Touring Theatre’s production of *A Doll’s House*.

In order to maximise your students understanding of the show we have created a number of questions which your students can think about when watching the production. Some students may find it helpful to make notes during the show, others may prefer to concentrate fully on the production and make notes afterwards.

**SET**
- Sketch the main scenic elements
- How is the Helmers’ 19th century apartment created on stage?
- What are the visual qualities of the set?
- What colours and textures are used in the set and how do these create an atmosphere?
- Does the set have any symbolic meaning to you? How does it reflect the themes of the play?

**LIGHTING**
- How does the lighting affect the impact of the scenes?
- How would you describe the quality of the lighting?

**COSTUME**
- How have costumes been used to help indicate different characters and their social positions/roles?
- What do the costumes tell us about the period the play is set in?

**PERFORMANCE**
- How would you describe the acting style?
- Identify the vocal techniques used throughout the show. i.e. pace, pitch, projection, inflection.
- How do the actors physicalise the characters?
- How does those actors playing more than one character manage to differentiate between them?

**NARRATIVE AND THEMES**
- How are the themes of the play drawn out by the company?
- What decisions has the director made in the telling of the story?

**MUSIC**
- What effect does the music used in the play have on the atmosphere created?
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

FELICITY RHYS – NORA HELMER

Trained: East 15 Acting School
Theatre includes: Miss Julie (UK Touring Theatre); Enjoy (Theatre Royal Bath / Number One Tour); A Merrily Grimm Christmas, The Street and The Ramayana (all Redbridge Drama Centre); Oliver Twist (World Tour); The Lover, The Misanthrope, The Bear, The Bald Prima Donna, Teechers, A Christmas Carol (all Sevenoaks Playhouse – Repertory Season); Motherone (Oxford Playhouse Studio); Amazing Grace The Musical (Wales Theatre Company – Clwyd Theatr Cymru / Sherman Theatre / Swansea Grand Theatre); Roleplay (English Theatre of Hamburg); A Game of One Half (Jermyn Street Theatre), Dracula (English Theatre of Copenhagen); Blind Spirit (Brewhouse Theatre Taunton); Macbeth (Courtyard Theatre).

Television and Film: Two Series of 2 Dy a Ni (ITV Wales); Pobol y Cwm (BBC); Torchwood (BBC); 9 Steps to a New Start (Those People Productions – official selection Cardiff Screen Festival).

ADAM REDMAYNE – TORVALD HELMER

Trained: London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA)
Theatre includes: Miss Julie (UK Touring Theatre); The Circle (Chichester Festival Theatre / Number One Tour); A Merrily Grimm Christmas (Redbridge Drama Centre); Henry V and As You Like It (both British Shakespeare Company); The Misanthrope, The Lover, The Proposal, Teechers (all Sevenoaks Playhouse – Repertory Season); Take Two (Upstairs at the Gatehouse); Roleplay (English Theatre of Hamburg); You Couldn’t Make it Up (Guilded Balloon Edinburgh / New End Theatre Hampstead); The Crucible, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hedda Gabler (all Dramaworks UK – International Tours); Arcadia (ICA); Romeo and Juliet (Creation Theatre Company); What’s Wrong With Angry (Wild Justice Company / Arts Theatre); The Hostage (European Tour).

Television and Film: Things to Do Before You’re 30 (Samuelson Productions); Sweet Swan of Avon (Miramar); Something is Rotten (Kinomees Productions); History’s Hardest Prison (National Geographic); Soldier Soldier and The Knock.

Other cast members TBC in July 2014.
CREATIVE BIOGRAPHIES

MICHAEL WOODWOOD – DIRECTOR

Michael is a freelance actor, writer and director who trained at LAMDA. He is currently the Artistic Director of Vital Stages, the professional theatre company of the Redbridge Drama Centre, where his directing work has included: Romeo and Juliet, A View from the Bridge, Before the City, Theseus and the Minotaur, Last Day’s of Lorraine Forest, The Singing Ringing Tree, Choice of a Lifetime, A Christmas Carol, Ramayana, A Grimm Christmas, Pinocchio and Peter Pan.

Other directing has included the national tour of Love on the Tracks (Big Olive Productions / Soho Theatre / Watermill Theatre); Macbeth (Hackney Empire); The Dumb Waiter (Baron’s Court); Mata Hari (Lilian Baylis); Extremities (Mumford, Cambridge); Hidden Voices (Oakengates Telford); Positive Lives (Arc Theatre Company); A Difference Between Friends (Swansea Grand Theatre); Unlocking the Pyramid (Lyceum, Sheffield); Victim (Shaw, London); Crossing the Line (Crucible, Sheffield).

He has worked as an associate director at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and for English Shakespeare Company Education. Most recently he has directed Twelfth Night for the GB Theatre Company that toured to the Dublin Shakespeare Festival. Michael regularly leads acting and theatre workshops in Lithuania, Czech Republic, Finland, Holland, France and the USA.

“A truly first class production filled with ingenious action, impeccable acting and inventive direction” - British Theatre Guide on Love on the Tracks.

CRIN CLAXTON – LIGHTING DESIGNER

Crin is currently Technical Manager at Stratford Circus in London. For eleven years she was the Technical Manager at the Ovalhouse Theatre, London.

Crin’s lighting designs have been seen at numerous venues across the UK and abroad, ranging from Number One venues to small and mid-scale theatres. She has a strong background in touring theatre and companies she has worked for regularly include UK Touring Theatre, Paines Plough, RIFCO, Clean Break, Snap Theatre, Spare Tyre, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Julie Macnamara and Dance Umbrella.

UK TOURING THEATRE - PRODUCER

UK Touring Theatre was founded in 2012 by actors Adam Redmayne and Felicity Rhys, who together have over 25 years experience of working in the theatre. The company is committed to developing exciting new productions of classic European plays; touring to theatres across the UK, Europe and beyond. Our first production, Strindberg’s Miss Julie, toured to 28 theatres across the UK in 2013, and was highly acclaimed by press and audiences alike.

UK Touring Theatre’s focus is on producing powerful new English language translations of classic European plays, with wide appeal for a contemporary audience, to tour nationally and internationally. We aim to produce productions for native English speakers here in the UK and English speaking audiences overseas, which are innovative and accessible yet challenging; with the focus strongly on the original text, language and themes.

We believe that a great classic play will stand the test of time, and can be adapted for a 21st century audience without obscuring the writing. We aim to develop scripts that are powerful and exciting, while still reflecting the playwrights’ original intentions.

UK Touring Theatre’s focus is on excellence and quality. Quality of text, quality of production and quality of acting. All our actors have trained at the foremost drama schools in the UK and worked extensively in the theatre in the UK and abroad.

We aim to bring the best of British theatre to venues large and small across the world.

www.uktouringtheatre.co.uk

REVIEWS FOR MISS JULIE (2013)

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ “A gripping intimate production of this challenging classic drama”
REMOTE GOAT

⭐⭐⭐⭐ THE PUBLIC REVIEWS

“Classics performed to this standard deserve a warm welcome”
THE CROYDON CITIZEN

“Intelligent, well-performed and executed… Well worth seeing”
ONE SUFFOLK

“Fast-paced … a powerful piece”
EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES
EVALUATION & FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

• Put the students into pairs and ask them to discuss their favourite moments from the production. Then share these with the rest of group.

• Ask the students to each come up with one question they would like to ask the director about the production.

• Ask the students to each write a review of the production, discussing different aspects such as set design, performance and direction.

• Allocate the students different roles; such as director, set designer or actor and ask them to describe how they would approach their own production of *A Doll’s House* in this role.

• Put the students into groups, then nominate one student as the director and the others as the actors in the play. Give each group a scene from the play to work on and encourage them to work together to come up with their own practical interpretation of the scene.

• Divide the class into two halves. One half has the responsibility for planning a ‘defence’ of Nora and her decision to leave her husband and children at the end of the play. The other half must plan a ‘prosecution’ of Nora, arguing that she should have stayed in the family home. The prosecution must be allowed to make their case first after which the defence will respond to the accusations that are made. In order to prevent this exercise from becoming a dry intellectual discussion, the groups should be invited to add as much dramatic content to their presentations as possible. They may decide to reconstruct excerpts from the play that serve their cause or even call witnesses to testify. Based on the performances of the two teams the teacher must either acquit or condemn Nora.

FURTHER INFORMATION & WORKSHOPS

UK Touring Theatre has devised a series of practical drama workshops to accompany the play, which can be held at your school or college. Workshops are run by two members of the cast, and can be booked as follows:

**Full day workshops at your school/college**
Available to book all year round

**2 hr workshops (venue based)**
Available at certain theatre venues during the tour period (September to November) prior to a performance - please contact your local theatre for availability

**For further information or to book your workshop, please contact:**
UK Touring Theatre
Tel: 020 8318 3630 / 07970 042190
E-mail: education@uktouringtheatre.co.uk
Website: www.uktouringtheatre.co.uk