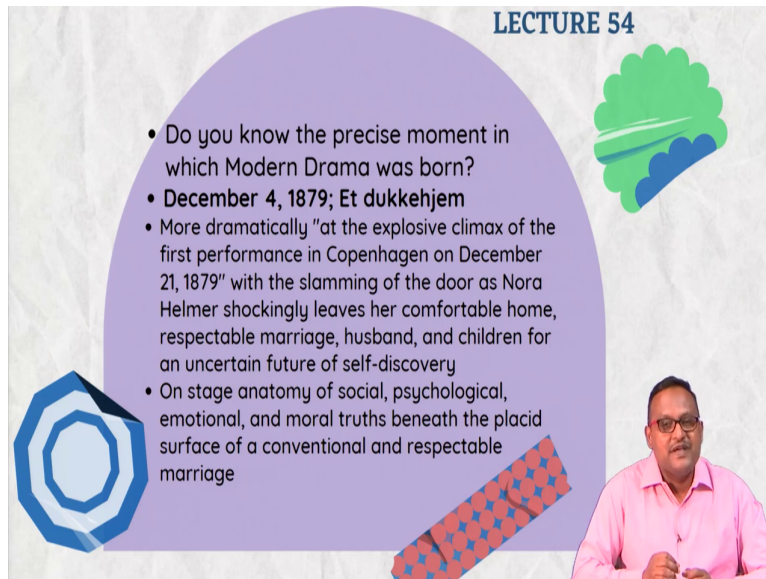


**Elements of Literature and Creative Communication**  
**Prof. H S Komalesha**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

**Lecture - 54**  
***A Doll's House***

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**LECTURE 54**

- Do you know the precise moment in which Modern Drama was born?
- **December 4, 1879; Et dukkehjem**
- More dramatically "at the explosive climax of the first performance in Copenhagen on December 21, 1879" with the slamming of the door as Nora Helmer shockingly leaves her comfortable home, respectable marriage, husband, and children for an uncertain future of self-discovery
- On stage anatomy of social, psychological, emotional, and moral truths beneath the placid surface of a conventional and respectable marriage

The slide features a purple semi-circular background for the text. To the left is a blue and white geometric octagonal pattern. To the right is a green and blue cloud-like shape. In the bottom right corner, there is a small inset video of a man in a pink shirt speaking.

Hello, welcome again to our ongoing discussion on drama and theater. Please quickly recall what we did in the previous class. We discussed modern drama and before that we discussed origins of drama, Greek origins of drama, and we went through Roman drama, Elizabethan drama and all that. So, in this class based on our understanding of that, if I can ask you a question, can any literary historian precisely pinpoint the exact moment or the place where modern drama was born?

Do you think we are up to the task? Do you think we can grab the challenge and answer that? Well, a couple of literary historians have done that and in fact, they have identified not just the exact date moment, they have also identified the place in which modern drama was born. To give you an answer to that question, modern drama was born on December 4th in the evening in the year 1879.

Where was it born? Well, it was born in one of the theaters in Copenhagen. A little more dramatically speaking, it was born towards the evening while a play was being performed in a

theater in Copenhagen; especially, when the play reached its climax, the modern drama was born. Therefore, there are two dates: December 4<sup>th</sup>, when the play was first published and for the wider audience to reach you can even call December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1879, when the modern drama was enacted. The drama in question is *Et Dukkehjem*, a Norwegian drama published by a writer who was not very well-known. Of course, even before this particular play he had written a couple of plays, but this particular play called *Et Dukkehjem* inaugurated the modern drama.

So, please remember these three things. *Et Dukkehjem*, a Norwegian play, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1879 when it was published, and December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1879 when it was staged for the first time in Copenhagen. These are very important dates and names.

Though the playwright had written several plays before this, if there was one play that catapulted him on to the world stage this was this particular play. Why, what was so significant here? Because the protagonist of the play, Nora, during the climax just slams the door behind her leaving her husband, respectable marriage, and lovely children.

And why does she leave such a beautiful house? She leaves in search of an uncertain future because she wants to discover her own self. Does it happen or did it happen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Of course, this is what the play did and for the first time the play in a very daring way performed an anatomy of social, psychological, cultural, emotional and moral truths beneath the placid surface of respectable marriage.

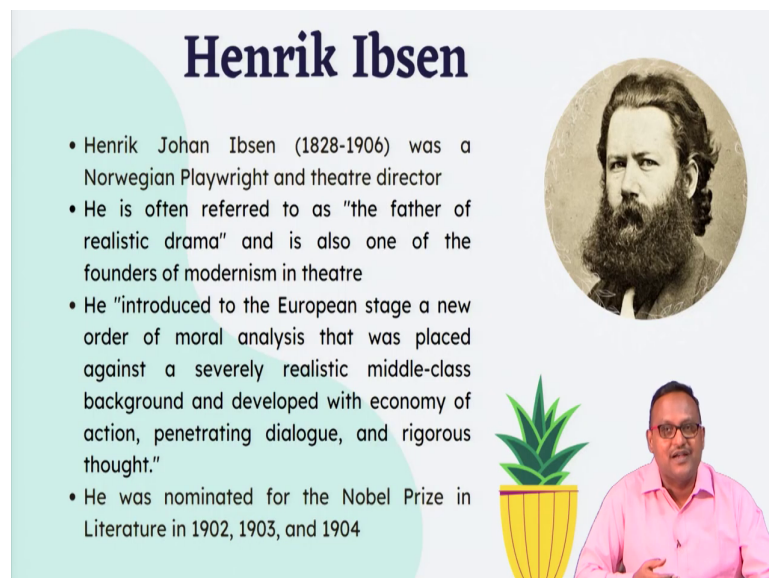
And as I said literary historians have identified three golden points when it comes to history of drama. Of course, the first time is when you have the triumvirate publishing their plays and when they were getting enacted in the ancient Greece, the classical Hellenic period that is the first golden point. The second golden point comes when Shakespeare arrives on to the stage and when his plays are being performed. And the third golden moment or watershed moment comes with Ibsen's publication of *Et Dukkehjem*. Well, it is not so strange that we are discussing a Norwegian play because this play is one of the most performed plays. After Shakespeare, Ibsen is one of the most performed playwrights.

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And probably you and I may have heard of the play in English. It is called *A Doll's House*. Especially in the 2016, this was considered one of the most performed plays. Therefore, *A Doll's House* becomes a very important play for us and Henrik Ibsen becomes an extraordinary writer.

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Let us go ahead and take a look at little bit the of context, the writer and all that. Henrik Johan Ibsen was a Norwegian playwright, we have already identified that. But he is a playwright who is perennially in a state of exile because even while in Norway, it is said that

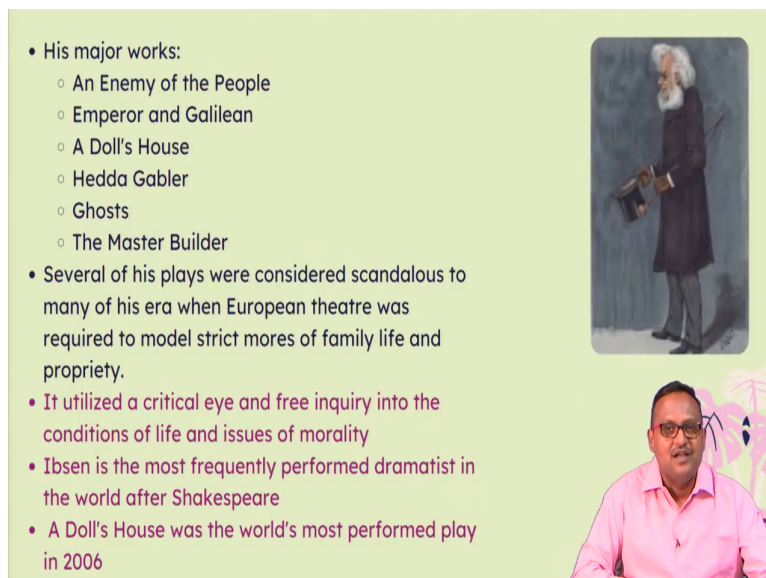
he was constantly in exile. And he was a kind of a restless soul, remember literature is born out of some kind of a creative unrest.

Therefore, he did not conform to the moral prescriptions of society; he always questioned society and wanted to create some new paths. And in fact, it said that on his deathbed the last words that he seemed to have uttered were “on the contrary” of course, in Norwegian. What a befitting epitaph for a writer who shook the entire society out of its complacency! “On the contrary”: that is the last words of the writer.



Because of his contribution, he is considered as the father of modern drama. And more than that, there is a genre of drama called ‘realistic drama’. He seemed to have inaugurated this particular type of drama. Therefore, he is rightly called ‘father of realism’. He belongs to those rare categories of writers who had extraordinary talent and potential to get Nobel but did not get it for political reasons.

So, remember, more than those writers who got Nobel, we have been busy reading those writers who had all the potential to get Nobel but could not get it or did not get it for various political reasons. And this guy too was nominated several times for Nobel, but he missed it.

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- His major works:
  - An Enemy of the People
  - Emperor and Galilean
  - A Doll's House
  - Hedda Gabler
  - Ghosts
  - The Master Builder
- Several of his plays were considered scandalous to many of his era when European theatre was required to model strict mores of family life and propriety.
- It utilized a critical eye and free inquiry into the conditions of life and issues of morality
- Ibsen is the most frequently performed dramatist in the world after Shakespeare
- A Doll's House was the world's most performed play in 2006



Well, some of his well-known works include *An Enemy of the People*. Of course, you may have read you may have watched the movie *An Enemy of the State*. This is *Enemy of the People*, more than that *A Doll's House*. In fact, if there is one play that has brought an



extraordinary name and fame to the writer, this is *A Doll's House*. But when it comes to artistic merit you have *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts* and *The Master Builder*. In terms of exquisite, dramaturgy, craftsmanship they are remarkable plays.

Well, he created lot of unrest in society, because when *A Doll's House* was first published, if there is one play that was discussed widely even in the non-theater circles, undoubtedly, it is *A Doll's House* because the ending was scandalous. Nobody even accepted the ending. In fact, one of the leading lady actors who was supposed to perform the role of Nora in Germany refused to play the role and therefore, they even wanted to change the ending. But of course, Ibsen almost protested. And it is said that during those times, especially in Norway and Italy, where he was staying and even in Germany where during social gatherings usually you send out an invite, towards the end of it was noted: "PS you are requested not to discuss *A Doll's House* when you come to the party."

So, a special mention of not to discuss *A Doll's House*. Now, you can imagine the kind of disturbance this play must have caused to the so-called comfort of society or the elite. As one of the literary critics later remarked, it almost gave a shock value to European society to such an extent that probably Europe required many decades to recover from the shock that *A Doll's House* gave. And as we have already said, Ibsen is the most performed dramatist, probably next only to Shakespeare.

And in a couple of years *A Doll's House* was the world's most performed play. So, this is I guess this should suffice to create an interest in you. And I am sure you should be really tempted to go and read the play. Please do that. Of course, these classes are no substitute for not reading it. Remember, the purpose is to pique your interest in that.

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There are a couple of interesting things that Ibsen says. "It is the very mark of the spirit of rebellion to crave for happiness in this life". Well, if you really want happiness in this life, that is the most daring act of rebellion you could be making. And now look at this: you may have read in many visiting cards or more than that greeting cards and all that: money may bring you food, but not appetite; it can buy you medicine, but not health. Well of course, money can definitely buy you acquaintances, but not true friends, something like that.

An extraordinary playwright; more than that, a writer who did not compromise on the integrity of the writer even towards the end. Well, he had to pay a lot of a heavy price for not compromising on his ideals. Of course, he was still happy with it. A great writer, a writer with great integrity, a rare breed especially these days to come by.

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Let us go ahead and take a look at *A Doll's House*. While you keep contemplating on the title, the title itself is slightly unique: *A Doll's House*. What is the doll here? What is the house? Of course, the entire title, not just the title, the entire play is replete with symbolic meaning. So, the more you take, the more layers of meanings you discover in the play. Let us go, take a quick look at the play

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### Background

- Premiered on 21st December 1879, *A Doll's House*, written by Henrik Ibsen, is one the most performed plays
- It is a three Act play and was published a month earlier than its first premiere at The Royal Theatre, Denmark
- *A Doll's House* was based on the life of Laura Kieler (maiden name Laura Smith Petersen), a good friend of Ibsen. Much that happened between Nora and Torvald happened to Laura and her husband, Victor.
- The play created a "storm of outraged controversy" due to its feminist concerns that went against the Victorian values of marriage and family values

A photograph of a handwritten manuscript page. The text is written in cursive and includes the title "Et dukkehjem" at the top, followed by "Hjemmet og livet" and "af Henrik Ibsen". The year "1879" is written at the bottom.

A small inset image of a man with glasses wearing a pink shirt, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

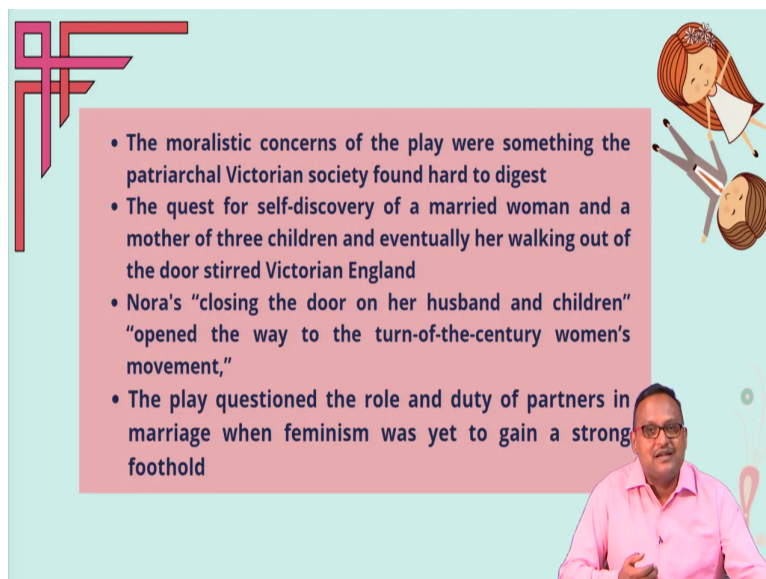
This is just a background and we identified that it was first written in Norwegian. This is the first manuscript, what you have there is a photocopy or an excerpt from the first manuscript,

probably in the writer's own handwriting. We do not know that for sure, but definitely the first appearance. And we have also identified that it premiered on 21st December in 1879 by Ibsen. And this is a play in three acts. Usually, until that point of time you saw plays with five acts, a full-fledged play with five acts.

And he also seemed to have popularized the three-act play. Well, it is said that *A Doll's House* is based on the life of a Laura Kieler, a friend of Ibsen, but we do not need to concern ourselves with that because there might be a several reasons behind the birth of a play, but any artistic piece does not stay put in the place it is born; it always grows to become universal.

It is born locally and grows to become universal. This why we read all these things, and as I said, it created a storm and outraged the modesty of the Victorian values of marriage and family. That is the reason why it went on to acquire a kind of infamy in the beginning, but later of course, extraordinary fame.

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- The moralistic concerns of the play were something the patriarchal Victorian society found hard to digest
- The quest for self-discovery of a married woman and a mother of three children and eventually her walking out of the door stirred Victorian England
- Nora's "closing the door on her husband and children" "opened the way to the turn-of-the-century women's movement,"
- The play questioned the role and duty of partners in marriage when feminism was yet to gain a strong foothold

Many critics have also identified it as probably after *Media* and *Antigone* during the classical period of Greece, if there was one play that championed the cause of women, it is undoubtedly Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. If there is one play that championed the cause of women and gave an impetus to various waves of feminism then of course, undoubtedly it is Ibsen's *Doll's House*.

Especially, this is much talked of the last scene where Nora closes the door on her husband and children. A particular critic says that she may have closed the door on her husband and children, but she opened a new door to the turn of century's women's movement. So, the door she may have closed opens a new door for feminism.

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### Major characters in the Play

- **Nora:** The central character, who is a "doll" to her husband, is childlike, romping easily with her three children
- **Torvald Helmer:** Nora's husband, a lawyer & later a bank manager
- **Doctor Rank:** A family friend of the Helmers and admirer of Nora
- **Mrs. Christine Linde:** An old friend of Nora's, widow who was once romantically involved with Nils Krogstad
- **Nils Krogstad:** a former acquaintance of Torvald's; an admirer of Nora and had lent her money; Torvald's subordinate at the bank; a "morally diseased" character who ruined his reputation and career by committing forgery

Now, let us take a quick look at major characters in the play. These are the major characters: you have Nora, the protagonist. In fact, if there is one strong female character in the history of drama probably after the Greek period, it is only in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Nora is a very well known and almost a legendary protagonist that we have in literature, drama.

Well, her husband treats her as a doll and of course, she seems to be okay with that initially, but a moment of self reckoning comes and therefore, she refuses to stay within that confine. And you have in Torvald Helmer, Nora's husband, a supporting character. But more than that, he is a very flat character. Static character or a flat character – think of our discussion on flat characters.

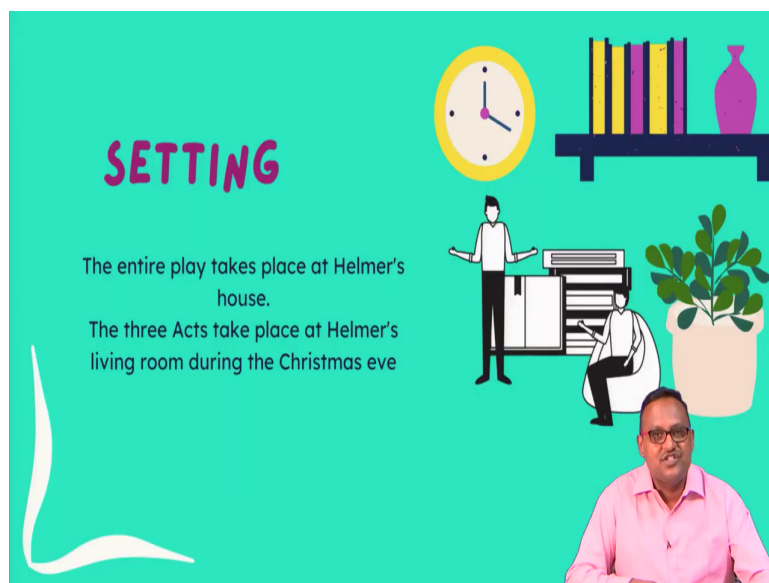
Initially, he was a lawyer but when the play begins, we hear that he has been made a bank manager and he has certain plans for the family and all that. We have Doctor Rank, a supporting character; a major character because through Doctor Rank, Ibsen explores many of his pet themes, especially genetics, the concept of platonic love and all that.

And so is mistress Christine Linde, a close friend of Nora. Of course, both Doctor Rank is a family friend. His first friend is Torvald Helmer but later he is drawn towards Nora. And Christine Linde is an old friend of Nora who is a widow, and once she is romantically also involved with the antagonist of the play Nils Krogstad. So, Nils Krogstad is an antagonist here.

He is an employee in the bank where Torvald is about to be the manager, but the play discusses him as having morally corrupt character in quotes; because later when the play ends, we know that there are more morally depraved characters than Nils Krogstad.

But for our understanding of characters, we have identified protagonist in Nora, antagonist in Nils Krogstad, Torvald Helmer a flat character, Doctor Rank and mistress Christine Linde. Christine Linde can also be a confidante character because Nora confides many things in Christine Linde

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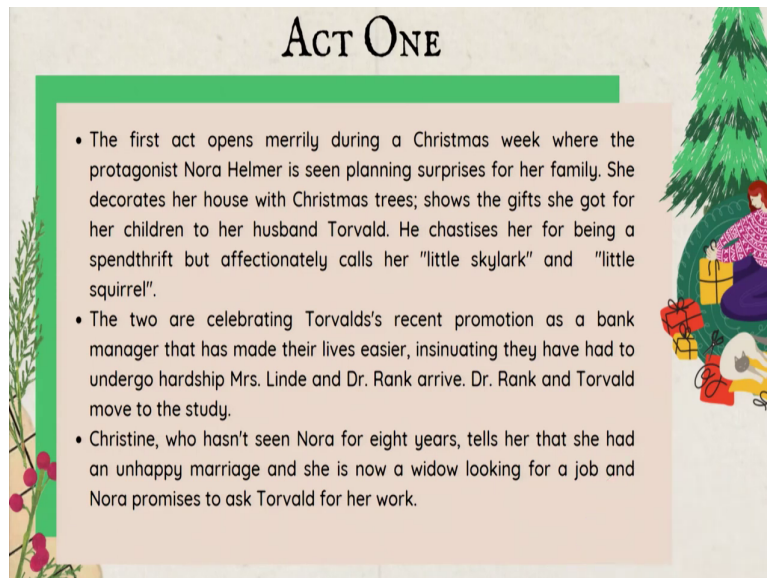


Let us go ahead and jump into the setting. This is a play that the entire play dramatic action takes place in just the house of Helmer's, especially in the drawing room or in the living room. And therefore, it maintains the three unities that we discussed in the Greek context. Unity of action, because action takes place at a particular place. Unity of time: it happens in a span of 3 days. The play is set in the backdrop of Christmas eve.

The second act begins on Christmas day, and probably third act begins on the day after Christmas. Just 3 days. And then you have unity of time, unity of action and unity of plays. Of course, the entire play is set in the living room of Helmer's. This is something that can be kept in mind.

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## ACT ONE



- The first act opens merrily during a Christmas week where the protagonist Nora Helmer is seen planning surprises for her family. She decorates her house with Christmas trees; shows the gifts she got for her children to her husband Torvald. He chastises her for being a spendthrift but affectionately calls her "little skylark" and "little squirrel".
- The two are celebrating Torvald's recent promotion as a bank manager that has made their lives easier, insinuating they have had to undergo hardship Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank arrive. Dr. Rank and Torvald move to the study.
- Christine, who hasn't seen Nora for eight years, tells her that she had an unhappy marriage and she is now a widow looking for a job and Nora promises to ask Torvald for her work.

For our general understanding, let us take a quick look at how the plot progresses from act to act. When the scene begins, which is act one, we see Nora in a very jovial state because she is decorating her house and a porter has just entered and delivered her a Christmas tree. Because the next day is Christmas, she is decorating. She has brought some gifts, but of course, she hurriedly hides those gifts so that she does not spoil the surprise for kids and her husband Helmer.

And when she is busy doing all that, her husband walks in and then looking at all the gifts that she has bought, almost in a very romantic way he chastises her. He calls her 'my little skylark', 'my little squirrel', 'my darling' and all that. So, when the play opens, the picture that you get is it must be a romantic couple.

And of course, this Christmas is also special for them because it has announced that earlier until that point of time a lot of financial crises was there in the family. Now that Torvald is about to be made the bank manager, the dark days are left behind. So, therefore, they are also celebrating Torvald's promotion as a bank manager.



So, when they are busy doing this, we are introduced to the two supporting characters Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank. They are family friends you could say, and Mrs. Linde is a confidante character and they have not met for many years right.

So, now she says that she is a widow and she has enough money, but probably in order to while away time, she needs a good job and she is also educated. Therefore, Nora promises, fine let me ask my husband if I can get you a job in his office. That is precisely what happens in Act One when it begins, and then we find Nora revealing a long-held secret.

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- Nora then reveals a secret she hides: she has borrowed money in order to finance a trip to Italy that was necessary to save Torvald's life, as he had grown ill. She has paid off the debt in installments, secretly taking jobs and saving money from her allowance from Torvald.
- Nils Krogstad, an employee at the bank, arrives and talks to Torvald in Torvald's study. The new visitor's presence makes everyone uncomfortable, especially Nora and Christine, foreshadowing some tension
- Upon Nora's plea, Torvald considers employing Christine at his bank by replacing Krogstad as the latter is morally corrupt. Torvald, Mrs. Linde, and Dr. Rank exit, and Nora plays happily with her children.
- Krogstad enters, and Nora tells the children to go to their nursemaid and not tell anyone about Krogstad's visit...

Of course, it is a confidante character it. Also, the writer employs a foreshadowing technique here. Nora confides in Mrs. Linde that she has done a blunder because earlier, about 6-7 years ago, Torvald was in very bad shape. His health deteriorated like anything and he also did not have enough money, no good job and all that. During such times without informing his husband, she has borrowed money from someone else.

And her husband so far does not know because she has been managing somehow. She is under the impression that her husband is very morally upright character who does not encourage neither to be a borrower nor be a lender. He wants to be financially independent and therefore, without informing him she is earning some money from some odd jobs and repaying the debt that she has taken 7 years ago.

And of course, Christine urges her friend to inform her husband, but she says, no this may not be the right time and all that. While they are speaking, we are introduced to the antagonist of the play Nils Krogstad. Remember, he is an employee in the same bank. What has happened there? Well, Torvald does not like Nils Krogstad. Therefore, the moment he has assumed charge he is about to fire Nils Krogstad because he thinks Krogstad is morally corrupt and even the presence of such a character in his bank might spoil the morale of his fellow employees. Therefore, he wants to dismiss him. And Nils Krogstad has come to request him not to do that, but he also has some other purpose which will be later revealed. And by then of course, what happens? Nora has requested her husband to give a job to her friend Christine and her husband also agrees.

So, that is when everything happens and while this is happening there you find Krogstad entering. He has already finished speaking with Torvald and Torvald has not agreed to retain him. And now he has come to meet Nora. Well, this is where the curiosity builds. Why has he come to meet Nora?

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- It is revealed that Nora borrowed the money from Krogstad
- He explains that he is being fired by Torvald and that Nora must convince her husband not to sack him, else he would reveal her secret. He further adds that he has evidence that Nora forged her father's signature in the bond
- Krogstad exits, and Torvald returns. Nora tries to persuade him not to fire Krogstad but fails

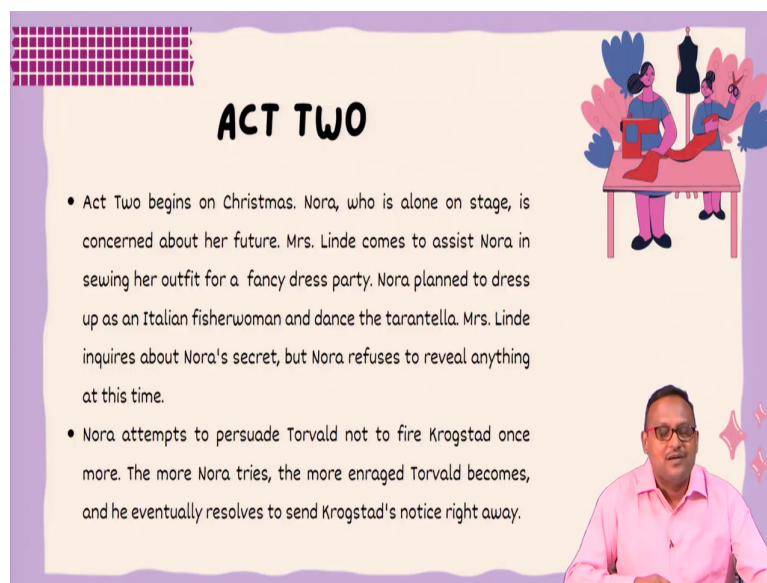
In the conversation that follows, we learn that Nora 7 years ago borrowed money from Krogstad. It was this guy that she had borrowed money and now she is about to repay the entire amount; maybe some amount is left and she is about to repay. Now, he requests her that you will have to help me retain my job because I have my kids. If your husband removes me

from the job then the kids will be thrown to the street and the entire family will be will have to come on to the street and all that.

But she cannot promise anything. That is when he blackmails her. He says that he is going to reveal a secret. What is the secret? That it is not just that Nora has borrowed money from him, as a surety (because when you are borrowing money you have to give surety right) she has forged the signature of her dying father.

Her father was about to die or had just died. She forged her father's signature to borrow money from Krogstad and Krogstad tells her that he knows that particular secret and he is going to expose the entire family. So, now, this puts some kind of tension. Of course, you can spot Freytag's various models. More of it in the next class.

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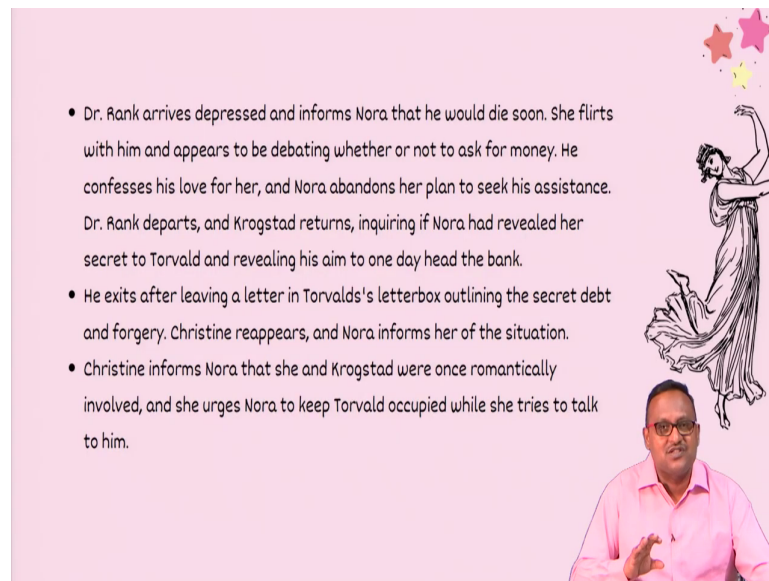
## ACT TWO

- Act Two begins on Christmas. Nora, who is alone on stage, is concerned about her future. Mrs. Linde comes to assist Nora in sewing her outfit for a fancy dress party. Nora planned to dress up as an Italian fisherwoman and dance the tarantella. Mrs. Linde inquires about Nora's secret, but Nora refuses to reveal anything at this time.
- Nora attempts to persuade Torvald not to fire Krogstad once more. The more Nora tries, the more enraged Torvald becomes, and he eventually resolves to send Krogstad's notice right away.

Well, in act two it is the Christmas day and everything is in a very happy mood. Now of course, Nora is scared because it is a happy family. She does not want Krogstad to spoil the bon homie that they share with each other.

She tries to persuade her husband not to fire him. In fact, Torvald Helmer is very much disturbed. He almost scolds her for interfering in his work. For him morality is everything.

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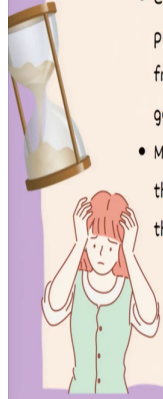
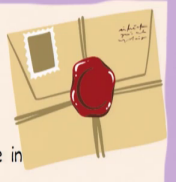


- Dr. Rank arrives depressed and informs Nora that he would die soon. She flirts with him and appears to be debating whether or not to ask for money. He confesses his love for her, and Nora abandons her plan to seek his assistance. Dr. Rank departs, and Krogstad returns, inquiring if Nora had revealed her secret to Torvald and revealing his aim to one day head the bank.
- He exits after leaving a letter in Torvald's letterbox outlining the secret debt and forgery. Christine reappears, and Nora informs her of the situation.
- Christine informs Nora that she and Krogstad were once romantically involved, and she urges Nora to keep Torvald occupied while she tries to talk to him.


He is unable to even withstand the presence of a morally corrupt character. Then you find Nora unsuccessful in persuading. And then Doctor Rank comes. An important character. That relationship is beautiful. If you want to know the subplot of between Doctor Rank and Nora, you have to read the play. So, Doctor Rank reveals that he is about to die, and Nora initially thinks of borrowing money from Rank to repay the money she owes to Krogstad. But when she hears that Rank is suffering from some kind of disease that he seems to have inherited from his father, she does not feel like asking him.

And of course, that is when Mrs. Linde or Christine comes. And when Christine learns that Nora is in great trouble, she tells Nora do not worry, I will try to help you because it seems in the past she was in a kind of romantic relationship with Krogstad. So, she says let me see what I can do. I can help Krogstad not to pressurize you or not to blackmail you.

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- Christine departs, and Nora requests Torvald's assistance in practicing the tarantella. Torvald is perplexed as she dances in a frenzied, uncontrolled manner, perplexing him as to what has gotten into her
- Mrs. Linde reappears, stating that Krogstad was not present, but that she had left him a message. Nora declares that she only has thirty-one hours to live, i.e. until Torvald reads the letter





Then what happens here? Krogstad comes and says that if she does not save his job, he is about to deliver the news to her husband that she had forged the letter and all that. Now Nora is absolutely unhappy. But she is unable to convince her husband to take him back and she is also unable to convince Krogstad not to trouble her. She does not know what to do.

In the meanwhile, when she tries to pressurize her husband, he has already dispatched a letter of dismissal and of course, Krogstad comes.

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## ACT THREE

- Act Three begins the following day. While they are at the ball, Krogstad visits Mrs. Linde at the Helmers' residence.
- It is revealed that the two of them were once in love, but that their romance ended when Mrs. Linde opted to marry a richer man in order to maintain her family.
- Mrs. Linde advises that now that both of their spouses have gone, she and Krogstad could marry so that she can care for his children and the two of them can enjoy a happy life together.
- Krogstad is ecstatic, and offers to have his letter to Torvald returned because he now regrets his previous conduct.
- Mrs. Linde, on the other hand, tells him to leave it alone, insisting that the truth must be revealed.

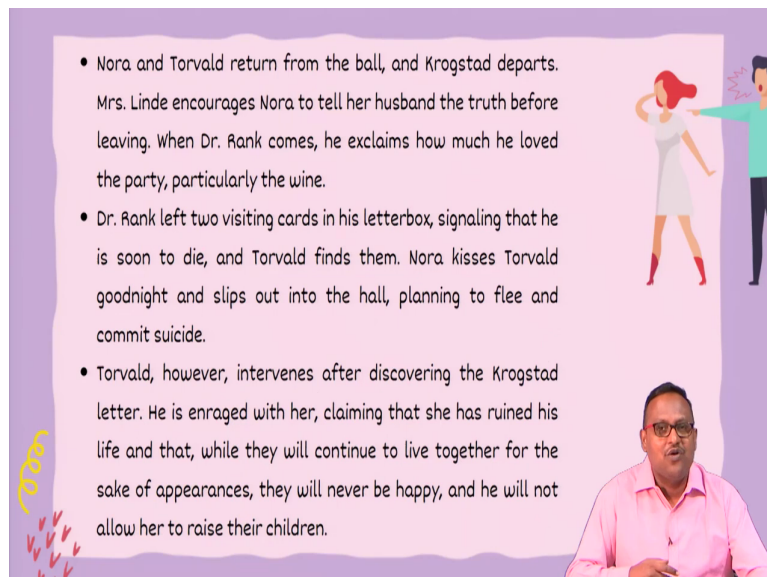



And now he drops a letter in the mailbox of Nora's husband wherein he has explained everything. Now, Act Three begins on a day after Christmas. We find Christine convincing

Krogstad that he should not do it. By then, unfortunately, Krogstad has already dropped a letter in the mail box. There is no way to retrieve that letter and Krogstad realizes the mistake and he says If it comes to that, he will go and personally request Torvald not to take it to heart. In the meanwhile, Torvald is about to open the letter, but Nora somehow convinces him not to open the letter for some time because they have a ball to attend, they have a dance party to attend and all that. So, Torvald promises her that he would open the letter a little later.

This is when Christine also tells Krogstad that now that she is a widow and now that he is a widower, they can marry each other and live a happy life, why trouble the Helmers! And that convinces Krogstad.

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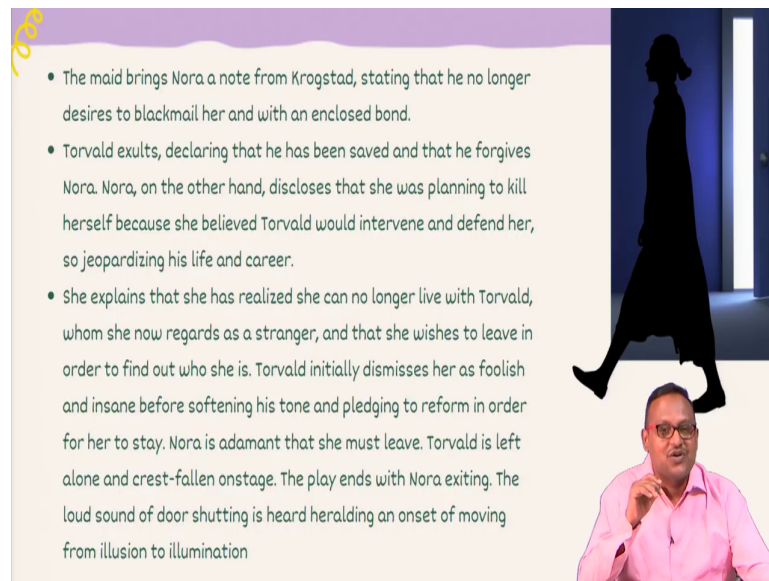
- Nora and Torvald return from the ball, and Krogstad departs. Mrs. Linde encourages Nora to tell her husband the truth before leaving. When Dr. Rank comes, he exclaims how much he loved the party, particularly the wine.
- Dr. Rank left two visiting cards in his letterbox, signaling that he is soon to die, and Torvald finds them. Nora kisses Torvald goodnight and slips out into the hall, planning to flee and commit suicide.
- Torvald, however, intervenes after discovering the Krogstad letter. He is enraged with her, claiming that she has ruined his life and that, while they will continue to live together for the sake of appearances, they will never be happy, and he will not allow her to raise their children.

Now, after the party, we learn that Torvald goes to his study and picks up the letter and now looking at the letter he is furious. He comes out and scolds Nora like anything. He says, you have almost no sense of shame, you are morally depraved, how could you even think forging your father's signature!

Well, she tries to explain to him that it was to save his own life, but he does not understand all that. So, what is otherwise an altruistic act by Nora to save the life of her husband becomes a villainous act in the eyes of her husband. So, he almost shouts at her and says she is even unfit to be his wife, unfit to be the mother to his children. She does not know what to do, she thinks of committing suicide and all that.



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- The maid brings Nora a note from Krogstad, stating that he no longer desires to blackmail her and with an enclosed bond.
- Torvald exults, declaring that he has been saved and that he forgives Nora. Nora, on the other hand, discloses that she was planning to kill herself because she believed Torvald would intervene and defend her, so jeopardizing his life and career.
- She explains that she has realized she can no longer live with Torvald, whom she now regards as a stranger, and that she wishes to leave in order to find out who she is. Torvald initially dismisses her as foolish and insane before softening his tone and pledging to reform in order for her to stay. Nora is adamant that she must leave. Torvald is left alone and crest-fallen onstage. The play ends with Nora exiting. The loud sound of door shutting is heard heralding an onset of moving from illusion to illumination

And now remember what has happened, Krogstad has delivered another letter wherein now Krogstad says that he is no longer interested in exposing Torvald and he does not mind losing the job because anyhow it is going to his would-be wife Christine. Therefore, he says he has forgiven everything. Now, the moment Torvald receives that, he says he is again happy, he says now do not worry, do not bother, Krogstad is not going to blackmail me; I am saved and when I am saved you are saved.

This is a moment of reckoning; this is a moment of awakening for Nora. In fact, until this point of time, Nora was under the impression that he is more concerned about the standards of morality, conscience and all that. But now she realizes that her husband is nothing more than a self-obsessed prick. His concern was not because for any sense of morality but because he was scared that his name would be spoiled and Krogstad would blackmail him.

Once he learns that Krogstad has forgiven him, he forgets all the issues of morality and tries to talk to Nora in the very old way: ‘my little darling’, ‘my little bird’ and all that.

That is when our protagonist has learnt that her value in the family is not because he likes her, not because of her individual work, but because it suits him. So, she is even disillusioned with his character. Until that point of time, she thought that this guy is morally upright; therefore, she has done some kind of a mistake.



Now she realizes that all that he cared was saving his skin at the expense of his wife's reputation. Therefore, when the play ends, she says that I will no longer live with you and when Torvald tries to convince her: you have kids you have responsibility, she says no, you take care of the kids. Just a while ago you shouted at me saying that I am unfit to raise my children. You may be right, but I have more than my duty as a mother and wife.

I have a duty towards myself and therefore, in order to understand myself better I am walking out of this family, I am walking out of this relationship. You can take care of the kids; the nanny can take care of the kids. Saying that she walks out of the house with a bang on the door. And therefore, the play ends with Nora exiting.

So, the loud sound of door shutting is heard heralding an onset of a journey that Nora undertakes wherein this journey takes her from illusion to illumination. That is what a critic says. This is in nutshell what happens in the play.

Of course, many debates can take place whether she was justified in leaving her husband, her family, her duties. We can pick up a critical discussion on that in the next class, alright? Please read the play and then you would understand the play all the better. We will meet in the next class.