

Social and Political protest AO4	
Power and powerlessness	Torvald represents an authoritative patriarchal middle class who asserts power over Nora. When Nora leaves she asserts her power
The power of respectability	Fear of reputation and how it corrupts people's values
Financial power	Money is used to assert control, power and dominance
Rebellion	Rebellion is a key feature of social and political protest. The main act of rebellion against oppression and control is clearly Nora's dramatic exit at the end of the play.
Setting	Setting represents Nora's physical, spiritual and emotional confinement and oppression. The entire play is set in the Helmer's parlour= Nora's entrapment till she finally walks out of the front door.
Social commentary	A Doll's House reflects Ibsen's concerns about women's rights, and ultimately all humans' rights, and explores how 'free' people can be oppressed by social expectation and what sacrifices might be needed to be truly free.

Themes AO5	
The individual in society	A doll's character is shaped and determined by its owner. Existentialism is the idea that a person is not born with characteristics but is shaped by the choices they make. Nora's identity is determined by social and political boundaries until she rebels against these constraints
Gender inequality	The patriarchal society perpetuates gender stereotypes and thereby inequality in the play, reflected in women's submissive, compliant and sacrificial roles. Women were enslaved by their gender roles.
Money	The power of money conditions the characters' circumstances and behaviour. It stands for pretences, false promises and the misuse of power. Torvald appears to have complete control over Nora, Mrs Linde and Krogstad.
Morality	The theme of morality relates closely to that of the individual and society, in that society defines the suffocating moral climate that A Doll's House satirizes. Nora begins to question society's morals when she realizes how it would criminalize her for forging her father's signature, an action that she believes to be morally acceptable in the circumstances, if legally reprehensible. The most heroic action of her life, her sacrifice to save her husband's life, becomes an unforgivable crime in the eyes of society and its dutiful representative, Torvald. It is not surprising that part of her journey of self-discovery at the play's end is to consist of finding out "who is right, the world or I."

Context – set in Norway in 1879; patriarchal society; in 1850's women could not hold responsibilities of household accounts, debts or bank accounts

Central to Ibsen's play are ideas to do with power and powerlessness. The play, premiered in 1879, is set in the domestic sphere but it also reflects the oppressive rules and expectations of the broader Norwegian and western society. Ibsen's target in terms of political and social protest writing is marriage, financial institutions and the role of women. Most obviously the play explores the repression of women in a society that expects them to be caring daughters, wives and mothers but which gives them little opportunity to take control of their own lives. Ibsen said he wrote the play because 'a woman cannot be herself in modern society'. The play is clearly a feminist text, yet Ibsen maintained

Characters

Nora – wife & mother; learns her character has been constructed by others; rebels to educate herself & find own identity; act of rebellion & self-assertion

Torvald –Stereotypical C19th patriarchal husband; condescending, patronising & unforgiving; lacks perception

Mrs Linde – Nora's friend; alternative representation of the sacrificial role of women in C19th Norway: marriage based on duty

Krogstad – stock villain of the piece; is redeemed by love; his forgiveness & values challenge societal expectations in contrast to Torvald

Dr Rank – represents societal moral disease and corruption as an inherited trait.

Anna-Maria reinforces sacrificial role of women, experiencing poverty & disgrace

Ibsen creates for each character a habit of speech appropriate to their class and personality.



Symbolism AO2

