

DIGITAL THEATRE+

LESSON PLAN FOR REMOTE LEARNING
ENGLISH

Young Vic © Johan Persson



A DOLL'S HOUSE

BY HENRIK IBSEN

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60 MINUTES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate choices and consequences by engaging in a range of collaborative discussions and activities
- Write an original narrative demonstrating an understanding of how to develop imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences
- Feel confident as they begin an early stage analysis of the complex characters, situations and themes within the play

To teach this lesson, you will need the following resources found in your toolkit:

- [*A Doll's House* | Digital Theatre](#)
- [On Directing: Carrie Cracknell](#)
- [On Acting: Hattie Morahan](#)
- [Act One Plot Summary: *A Doll's House* Study Guide](#)

Plus:

- Access to a copy of *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen for the whole class
- For the entire lesson – a video conference link for your chosen platform*
- For Exercise 1 – a pre-prepared Google Doc* outlining certain situations and choices (Tip: Press 'Share' to copy the link to your Doc and make sure to change the settings to 'Anyone with the link can edit'.)
- For Exercise 1 – a pre-prepared Google Sheet* for students to populate collectively
- For Exercises 4 and 5 – one email outlining pair work instructions for both exercises

**Keeping students and teachers safe during remote education is essential. Please ensure any online platform you are using to communicate or coordinate with students is suitable for their age group and check privacy settings. For further information, see the [NSPCC guidance](#).*

For further resources to help you teach *A Doll's House*, including a [full-length production](#), [Practical Guide](#) and [Study Guide](#), visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com

EXERCISE 1

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (PART 1)

- Hold a video conference on your chosen platform.
- Share the link to a pre-prepared Google Sheet with your students. The first column should list the names of all participating students'. Columns 2-9 should have each of the situations on the left below as a header.



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to get students thinking at a deeper level about choices and consequences.

SITUATIONS:

1. Your partner has gotten you into debt without telling you
2. You realise you are living a lie
3. You have fallen out of love with the person you were once deeply in love with
4. You have snuck sweets that you aren't supposed to have
5. You have no money to your name and your friend's partner just got a promotion
6. Your reputation has been destroyed by a choice you made
7. You forged someone's name to get something that you needed
8. You are harbouring a secret that no one else can find out about

CHOICES:

1. Take the blame and say it was you
2. Walk away from everything
3. Lie and say it wasn't you
4. Tell your best friend
5. Confide in someone you trust
6. Tell the truth
7. Get angry
8. Ask for a favour

- Share the list of eight choices on the right above with students. Their task is to assign a choice to each situation. They can only use each choice once and they must use all of the choices across the eight situations.
- Set a time limit for this activity. Once everybody has answered, talk about their responses. Were there situations that everybody agreed on? Or particularly divisive situations? Discuss them (or any other points of interest) and ask students to contemplate the potential consequences of their actions.

EXERCISE 2

CONTEXTUALISING THE
PLAY: DISCUSSIONESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this discussion is to provide the context in which the play was written and the source material which it is based upon.

Students will also explore connections between the play, recent history and contemporary issues in the news.

- The following video interviews will provide your students with further information on the context in which the play was written.
- Before your group call, tell students to watch the following videos: [On Directing: Carrie Cracknell](#), the chapter entitled **Facts About the Play** (47 seconds); the chapter **Ibsen's World**, from the same interview (52 seconds); and the chapter **The Play** from the video [On Acting: Hattie Morahan](#) (2 minutes 5 seconds). Ask them to take notes to use in your group discussion.
- During the video call, open a discussion on the woman's choice and the consequence. Invite them to use their notes to draw on what they heard in the videos.
- Contextualise this with the time period in which it happened (1870s). *A Doll's House* is often considered a feminist play because of Nora's defense of her individualism against the prescriptive social roles of 'wife' and 'mother'. However, Ibsen refused to be called a feminist.
- Open a brief discussion on Hattie Morahan's statement "The individual should have the right to live the life they want to." Ask your class, what current events could this relate to?
- Alternatively, instruct students to write a response to Hattie Morahan's above statement and the question that follows.

If students have more time...

Ask them to watch the short film [Nora Now](#). Directed by Carrie Cracknell, this film brings the themes of Ibsen's play to a contemporary setting. This is an additional nine minutes long.

EXERCISE 3

WOMEN IN HISTORY

- Before your video call, pre-prepare a Google Doc and share the link with your students so that they have editing rights.
- On the document, add a table with three columns. The second column header should be 'Important women in history' and the third, 'What they did to become famous'. The first column should be populated with the names of all participating students.
- On the call, give the students two minutes to think of an important woman in history (without searching online) and say what they did to become an established historical figure. Why do we remember them?
- When the time is up, invite students to look at each other's responses and think about the consequences of actions the women took.
- Then ask your class, do you think these women considered the consequences of their actions before making a choice? Or did they follow through because they knew it was the right thing to do and dealt with the consequences later?
- Alternatively, you can have students complete the activity offline. They can then write answers to the questions above in relation to one historical figure (theirs or one suggested by a classmate) to share with the rest of the group.



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to get students to think critically about choices and consequences and exploring connections between prior knowledge and current events.

EXERCISE 4

CONSEQUENCES

- Put your students into pairs and ask them to meet on a separate video chat.
- Make sure they can access [Act One Plot Summary](#) from the *A Doll's House Study Guide*.
- Each pair should read through the plot summary so they know, or are reminded of, the background of the story.
- Make sure that students also have access to the scene between Nora and Torvald at the end of Act One - beginning from Nora's line, "But, tell me, was it really something very bad that this Krogstad was guilty of?" It is during this exchange where Nora begins to realise the potential consequences of her choice.
- Tell students to take it in turns to try each of the following lines of Nora's (or the equivalent line from your version of the text):

"Isn't it possible that he was driven to it by necessity?"

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why do you only say – mother?"

In the following ways:

- With a kind of throw-away carelessness, as if it were nothing to her.
- Laden with meaning, trying to get through to him the importance of this to her.
- Her face and body freezing up with shock - her tone of voice becoming thinner and colder.

As an optional extra activity, you could ask students to write a brief response to the following questions: How does the text seem different (if at all) when it is performed in different ways? Does it change our understanding of Nora and the situations she is in at all?



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to practically explore the effects of Nora discovering the potential consequence of her choice and the tension it brings into the story.

EXERCISE 5

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (PART 2)

- Still working in the same pairs, instruct students to refer back to the situations from Exercise 1.
- Ask them to each to choose a situation, and create an outline of a monologue or scene where the main character discusses their situation, and ultimately the choice they will make and any potential consequences they may face.
- They should limit themselves to 10 minutes to create the outline.
- Students should then share their monologue or scene with their partner, and provide peer critique.
- As an optional activity, students could write stage directions and performances notes for a hypothetical performance of the monologue or scene in their outline.



ESTIMATED TIME:
20 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to create an engaging narrative which sets out a problem or situation, explores potential consequences, and creates a smooth progression of ideas.

Further activities to enhance your lessons can be found in your toolkit or in the *A Doll's House* **Practical Guide**. You can find more resources to help you teach *A Doll's House* and other texts are www.digitaltheatreplus.com.

For further resources to help you teach *A Doll's House*, including a **full-length production**, **Practical Guide** and **Study Guide**, visit **www.digitaltheatreplus.com**

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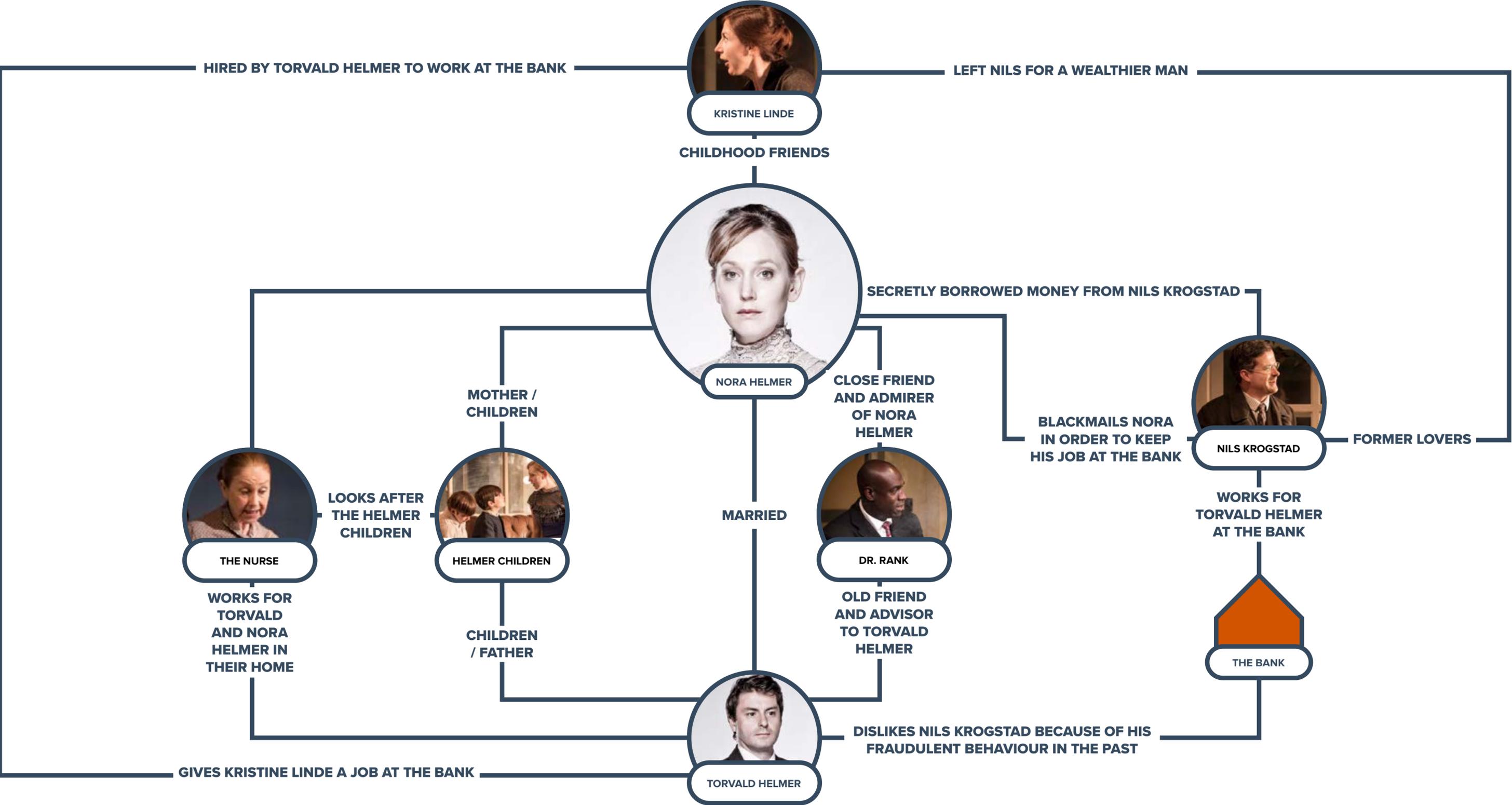
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QUESTIONS

1. List three pet names which Torvald calls Nora.

2. Describe the relationship between Nora and Mrs. Linde.

3. Why did Nora need to borrow money?

4. What is the name of the dance which Nora dances?

5. Describe the relationship between Nora and Krogstad.

6. What specific event led Nora to make the decision to leave?

7. Who said "I believe that before everything else I'm a human being"?

8. Who said "I've often wished that you could be threatened by some imminent danger so that I could risk everything I had – even my life itself – to save you"?

9. Who said "When I lost you it was as if the very ground had given way beneath my feet. Look at me now, a shipwrecked man clinging to a spar"?

10. Who said "I just had to struggle along"?

ANSWERS

1. List three pet names which Torvald calls Nora.

Answer: squirrel, skylark, sweet little songbird, little Nora

2. Describe the relationship between Nora and Mrs. Linde.

Answer: Nora and Mrs Linde were old school friends. Mrs. Linde has fallen on hard times. She arrives at the house unannounced and asks Nora if Helmer might be able to offer her some work at the bank. Nora agrees to help. Nora confesses her secret that some time ago, she borrowed a large amount of money from a moneylender. Mrs. Linde continually encourages her to tell Torvald the truth.

3. Why did Nora need to borrow money?

Answer: To pay for a trip to Italy that her husband needed to improve his health.

4. What is the name of the dance which Nora dances?

Answer: The Tarantella

5. Describe the relationship between Nora and Krogstad.

Answer: Krogstad is the man whom Nora borrowed money from for the trip to Italy. Krogstad has discovered she forged her father's name and is now blackmailing her. He threatens that unless he keeps his job at the bank –the job Nora has just arranged to be given to Mrs Linde – then he will tell Helmer everything. He goes on to explain that not only did Nora borrow money from him but she also forged her father's signature, which is a criminal offence.

6. What specific event led Nora to make the decision to leave?

Answer: After reading the first letter and discovering everything, Torvald has little concern for Nora and makes no attempt to take the blame for her, which is what she had expected. He is only concerned with the effect that this will have on his social standing.

After reading the second letter, informing Helmer and Nora that he will marry Mrs Linde and will have no need to reveal Nora's wrongdoing. Torvald is suddenly overjoyed and forgives Nora everything now that his reputation is no longer under threat.

Nora, however, in seeing that her husband cared for his honour much more than for her, has a revelation. Finding her whole marriage as a performance; she becomes set on a course of self-discovery and truth and decides to leave her husband and children to live alone.

7. Who said “I believe that before everything else I’m a human being”?

Answer: Nora Helmer

8. Who said “I’ve often wished that you could be threatened by some imminent danger so that I could risk everything I had – even my life itself – to save you.”?

Answer: Torvald Helmer

9. Who said “When I lost you it was as if the very ground had given way beneath my feet. Look at me now, a shipwrecked man clinging to a spar”?

Answer: Nils Krogstad

10. Who said “I just had to struggle along”?

Answer: Mrs. Kristine Linde

The following questions have been written to deepen and expand your students' understanding of the text. They can be used for homework or to prompt classroom discussions.

All the significant events of the play have taken place before the play opens... Torvald's new job, Nora's deal with Krogstad, the death of Mrs Linde's husband and Dr Rank's illness. This enables the play to focus on the consequences of the actions that took place.

- Do you think you would like to live Nora's life, or would you, like her, strive for freedom?
- What do you think will become of Nora after she leaves her home? How will her life be different?
- How would Nora staying for the sake of her children change the message of the play?
- Do you think Ibsen's story is still relevant in today's world?
- Can you think of any contemporary situation in which doing something for the good of someone else is against the law?
- Do you think there are countries in the world where Ibsen's story is still an accurate depiction of gender politics?