

## Essay Self-Check Guide

**Do you have:**

- **A clear, identifiable thesis?**
- **A topic sentence for each body paragraph?**
- **Specific textual evidence and support for each paragraph?**
- **An explanation of how each body paragraph helps to prove your thesis?**
- **Logical sequence of ideas between and within paragraphs?**
- **A discussion of how the ideas in this essay help to illustrate the meaning of the work as a whole (the unifying element)?**
- **A conclusion that transcends the play or novel and focuses on a contemporary equivalent?**
- **Discussion and identification of the insight and understanding that is to be gained by reading this essay?**

### **Essay Questions for “A Doll’s House”.**

- Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. In your essay choose characters from “A Doll’s House” and show how these characters’ alienation reveals the surrounding society’s assumptions and moral values of the time. Make sure to choose a strong unifying element.
- A recurring theme in literature is “the classic war between a passion and a responsibility.” For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive that may conflict with moral duty. Examine how Nora confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with her responsibilities; and, in a well-structured essay show clearly the nature of the conflict and its effect upon Nora.
- Unlike a novelist, the writer of a play does not use his own voice and only rarely uses a narrator’s voice to guide the audience’s responses to character and action. Write an essay in which you explain the techniques Ibsen uses to guide his audience’s responses to the central characters and action. You might consider the effect on the audience of things like setting and the use of comparable and contrasting characters. Support your argument with specific references to the play.
- *A Doll’s House* is full of references to dolls, puppets, and playthings. Trace these references throughout the play while summarizing Ibsen’s ideas about gender and societal roles.
- Consider the character of Torvald Helmer. Is Torvald an antagonist? A misogynist? Or could Torvald be just as much a victim of nineteenth century societal norms as Nora? Discuss.

- Many Ibsen critics argue that *A Doll's House* is not a feminist play, and is more about asserting self, regardless of gender. Yet Joan Templeton, in her afterword to the Signet Classics edition of *Ibsen: Four Major Plays Volume I*, disagrees, asserting that “Make (Nora) a man, and the play becomes not only ludicrous, but impossible.” What do you think? Is *A Doll's House* a play about feminism or humanism? Explain.
- Why are there so many references to sickness and fever in *A Doll's House*? Trace these references throughout the play. What broader concern for society might Ibsen be expressing?