

المسرحية الحديثة

Modern Drama

رمز المقرر ٧٤٠٣٤١٦

جامعة الملك فيصل

كلية الآداب – لغة انجليزية – انتساب مطور طلاب

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جوال

Office Hours:

Introductory Lecture

Lecture Elements

- Course description and objectives
- Course content
- References and teaching resources
- Grading
- Office hours

Course Description

Examining Western drama, from the middle of the nineteenth century through the Second World War, which aspired to new levels of theatrical and social realism and then experimented with piercing the boundaries of the realism it had achieved.

Studying European and British modern and avant-garde drama in the period from Ibsen to the present, including a close reading and analysis of a selection from the following playwrights and the dramatic schools they represent: Ibsen, Chekhov, Yeats, Synge, Eliot, Beckett

& Osborne.

Allowing students to cover the modern and avant-garde schools and developing their analytical and critical skills.

Course Objectives

1-The course aims at giving the panoramic view of the dramatic scene in England along with Europe and the USA.

2-It also aims at illustrating the main trends in modern drama with reference to particular representative dramatists.

3-It explores modern and avant-garde British and Western Drama and to place theatre practice within its cultural context.

4-It develops analytical and critical skills.

5- It helps students majoring in English to find opportunities in a wide spectrum of careers: media, journalism, teaching, as well as further postgraduate study to MA and Ph.D. levels.

Course Content

This course will involve 14 one-hour lectures in which we are going to focus on:

- An introduction about Modern Drama
- Modern Dramatists
- Henrik Ibsen
- George Bernard Shaw
- Oscar Wilde
- Jhon Galsworthy
- Harley Granville- barker
- Jhon Masefield
- J.M. Barrie
- An Analysis of A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen

References and Teaching Resources

Required Text(s)

- 1- J.,L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory & Practice: 1-Realism and Naturalism, Symbolism, Surrealism and the Absurd, 3-Expressionism and Epic Theatre*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983.
- 2- Adrian Page (ed.), *The Death of the Playwright? Modern British Drama &*

Prescribed texts :

Henrik Ibsen: A Doll's House

G.B. Shaw: Pygmalion

W.B. Yeats: At the Hawk's Well

J.M. Synge: Riders to the Sea

T.S. Eliot: The Family Reunion

Samuel Beckett: Endgame

Literary Theory, Macmillan 1992.

Essential References

- Abrams, M.H., *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York) 1941

Berst, Charles A., *Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama*, (University of Illinois press, USA) 1973

Esslin, Martin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, (Penguin books Ltd., Harmondsworth) 1983

Innes, Christopher, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) 1992

Nicoll, Allardyce, *British Drama*, 6th ed., (London: Harp) 1978

Rosenblood, Norman (ed.), *Shaw: Seven Critical Essays*, (University of Toronto press)

Smith Warren (ed.), *Bernard Shaw's Plays, A Norton Critical Edition*,

Taylor , John Russel, *Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama*. (Eyre Methuen Ltd., London) 1978.

Williams, Raymond , *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, (Penguin books Ltd., Harmondsworth) 1968.

Electronic Materials, Web Sites

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Useful Websites:

www.enotes.com

www.literarycriticism.com

www.googlesearch.com

www.englishliterature.com

www.aun.eun.edu.eg.com

www.academic.booklyn.cuny.edu

Grading

Mobile Office Hours

Email

Modern Drama

After the death of Shakespeare and his contemporaries drama in England suffered a decline for two centuries. Even Congreve in the seventeenth, and Sheridan and Goldsmith in the eighteenth, could not restore drama to the position it held during the Elizabethan Age. It was revived, however, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and then there appeared dramatists who have now given it a respectable place in English literature.

Two important factors were responsible for the revival of drama in 1890's. One was the influence of *Ibsen*, the great Norwegian dramatist, under which the English dramatists like *Bernard Shaw* claimed the right to discuss serious social and moral problems in a calm, sensible way. The second was the cynical atmosphere prevailing at that time, which allowed men like *Oscar Wilde* to treat the moral assumptions of the Victorian age with frivolity and make polite fun of their conventionality, prudishness or smugness. The first factor gave rise to the **Comedy of Ideas or Purpose**, while the second revived **the Comedy of Manners** or the Artificial Comedy.

Under the influence of Ibsen the serious drama in England from 1890 onward ceased to deal with themes remote in time and place. He had taught men that the real drama must deal with human emotions, with things which are near and dear to ordinary men and women. The new dramatists thus gave up the melodramatic romanticism and pseudo-classical remoteness of their predecessors, and began to treat in their plays the actual English life, first of the aristocratic class, then of the middle class and finally of the labouring class.

This treatment of actual life made the drama more and more a drama of ideas, which were, for the most part revolutionary, directed against past literary models, current social conventions and the prevailing morality of Victorian England. The new dramatists dealt mainly with the problems of labour and of youth, fighting against romantic love, capitalism and parental authority which were the characteristic features of Victorianism. The characters in their plays are constantly questioning restless and dissatisfied. Young men struggle to throw off the trammels of Victorian prejudice.

Following the example of Nora, the heroine in **Ibsen's *A Doll's House***, who leaves her dull domineering husband who seeks to crush her personality and keep her permanently in a childlike, irresponsible state, the young women in these plays join eagerly the Feminist movement and glory in a new-found liberty. Thus these dramatists introduced Nature and Life in drama, and loved to make them play their great parts on the stage.

In the new drama of ideas, action became slow and frequently interrupted. Moreover, inner conflict was substituted for outer conflict, with the result that drama became quieter than the romantic drama of the previous years. The new researches in the field of psychology helped the dramatist in the study of the 'soul', for the expression of which they had to resort to symbols.

By means of symbolism the dramatist could raise the dark and even sordid themes to artistic levels. The emphasis on the inner conflict led some of the modern dramatists to make their protagonists not men but unseen forces, thereby making wider and larger the sphere of drama.

In the field of non-serious comedy there was a revival, in the twentieth century, of the *Comedy of Manners*. The modern period, to a great

extent, is like the Augustan period, because of the return of the witty, satirical comedy which reached its climax in the hands of *Congreve* in 1700. Though this new comedy of manners is often purely fanciful and dependent for its effect upon wit, at times it becomes cynical and bitter when dealing with social problems.

Mainly it is satirical because with the advancement of civilization modern life has become artificial, and satire flourishes in a society which becomes over-civilized and loses touch with elemental conditions and primitive impulses.

The two important dramatists who took a predominant part in the revival of drama in the last decade of the nineteenth century were *George Bernard Shaw* and *Oscar Wilde*, both Irishmen. **Shaw** was the greatest practitioner of the *Comedy of Ideas*, while *Wilde* that of the new *Comedy of-Manners*.

Shaw, who was a great thinker, represented the Puritan side of the Anglo-Irish tradition. *Wilde*, on the other hand a life of luxury and frivolity, was not a deep thinker as *Shaw*; and his attitude to life was essentially a playful one .

The success of *Oscar Wilde* as a writer of artificial 'comedy or the comedy of manners was mainly due to his being a social entertainer, and it is mainly as 'entertainment' that his plays have survived. *Wilde* may be considered, therefore, as the father of the comedy of pure entertainment as *Shaw* is the father of the *Comedy of Ideas*. Other modern writers who have followed *Wilde* directly are *Somerset Maugham* and *Noel Coward*.

But the artificial comedy of the last fifty years in England does not compare well with the artificial comedy of the Restoration. The reason is that in the twentieth century there is a lot of confusion and scepticism about social values. Moreover, social manners change so rapidly in the modern time, that the comedy of manners grows out of date more rapidly than any other type of drama.

This is not the case with the comedy of ideas or social comedy.

George Bernard Shaw, the father of the comedy of ideas, was a genius. His intellectual equipment was far greater than that of any of his contemporaries. He alone had understood the greatness of **Ibsen**, and he decided that like **Ibsen's** his plays would also be the vehicles of ideas.

But unlike **Ibsen's** grim and serious temperament, **Shaw** was characterized by jest and verbal wit. He also had a genuine artistic gift for form, and he could not tolerate any clumsiness in construction. For this purpose he had studied every detail of theatrical workmanship. In each of his plays he presented a certain problem connected with modern life, and his characters discuss it thoroughly.

In order to make his ideas still more explicit he added prefaces to his plays, in which he explored the theme more fully. The main burden of his plays is that the civilized man must either develop or perish. Other modern dramatists who followed the example of **Bernard Shaw** and wrote comedies of ideas' were **Granville Barker**, **Galsworthy**, **James Birdie**, **Priestly**, **Sir James Barrie** and **John Masefield**, but none of them attained the standard reached by Shaw.

Besides the artificial comedy and the comedy of ideas, another type of drama was developed in England under the influence of the **Irish Dramatic Movement** whose originators were **Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats**. The two important dramatists belonging to this movement are **J.M. Synge and Sean O'Casey**.

There has been the revival of **Poetic Drama** in the twentieth century, whose most important practitioner was **T. S. Eliot**. Other modern dramatists who have also written poetic plays are **Christopher Fry, Stephen Philips and Stephen Spender**. Most of the poetic plays written in modern times have a religious theme, and they attempt to preach the doctrine of Christianity .

Modern Dramatists

1- Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Henrik Ibsen is considered the father of modern realistic drama. This does not mean that he started his dramatic career by a representation of real life problems. He underwent certain developments beginning with experimental plays that were indebted to the French well-made play of Scribe and to romantic and traditional patterns. This is clear **in *Lady Inger Of Ostrat (1855), Love's Comedy (1862), The Pretenders (1863)***.

With his voluntary exile to Rome, he embarked upon his second stage which produced the poetic dramas of *Brand (1866)* and *Peer Gynt (1867)*.

With his stay in Germany, the third stage started, namely, the realistic social stage which has brought him world-fame, and which has resulted in the birth of a new drama, very well **represented in *A Doll's House, Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck*** and others.

In these plays Ibsen treated social problems that reflect "his own inner needs on the one hand, and the Zeitgeist (the spirit of the age) on the other. Being in advance of the latter, he did not try to adjust himself to it, but rather to adjust it to himself, to his own demands and values.

These burning social issues were expressed in a realistic technique which is based on the abandonment of verse in favour of everyday prose, the realistic portrayal of characters to the extent of drawing on living models, the emphasis on discussion rather than external action, and the use or rather the perfection of technical devices such as the retrospective method which gives scope to the clash of ideas and narration rather than presentation of events.

Model Questions

1- After the death of Shakespeare and his contemporaries drama in England suffered a.....for two centuries.

A- success

B- flourishing

C- decline

D- progress

2- Drama was revived in the last decade of the.....

A- 16th Century.

B- 17th Century.

C- 18th Century.

D- 19th Century.

2- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

The greatest among the modern dramatist was George Bernard Shaw. He was born and brought up in Ireland, but at the age of twenty in 1876

he left Ireland for good, and went to London to make his fortune. At first he tried his hand at the novel, but he did not get any encouragement. Then he began to take part in debates of all sorts, and made his name as the greatest debater in England.

He read Karl Marx, became a Socialist, and in 1884 joined the Fabian Society which was responsible for creating the British Labour Party. He was also a voracious reader, and came under the influence of Samuel Butler whom he described as the greatest writer of the later half of the nineteenth century. Shaw was specially impressed by Butler's dissatisfaction with the Darwinian Theory of Natural Selection.

Shaw came to believe in the Force which Butler had described as 'the mysterious drive towards greater power over our circumstances and deeper understanding of Nature. Shakespeare had described it as 'divinity that shapes our ends'. Shaw termed it the Life Force.

Two other writers who provoked the critical mind of Shaw during his formative period were **Ibsen**, a Norwegian dramatist; and Friedrich **Nietzsche**, a German philosopher. Ibsen whose doctrine, 'Be Thyself,' which was very much like Nietzsche's theory of the Superman who says 'Yea to Life', gave a dramatic presentation of it by picturing in his plays the life of the middle class people with relentless realism. In his plays Ibsen had exposed sentimentality, **romanticism and hypocrisy**.

He showed men and women in society as they really are, **and** evoked the tragedy that may be inherent in ordinary, humdrum life. Working under the influence of Butler, Nietzsche and Ibsen, Shaw who up to the age of forty was mainly concerned in learning, in propagating ideas, in debating, and "persuading people to accept his views about society and morals, decided to bring the world round to his opinions through the medium of the theatre.

With that end in view he studied the stage through and through, and came out with his plays which were theatrically perfect and bubbling with his irrepressible wit. The result was that he immediately attracted attention and became the most popular and influential dramatist of his time.

Shaw wrote his plays with the deliberate purpose of propaganda. He himself said, "My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals." He prepared the minds of the audience by written prefaces to his plays which are far more convincing than the plays themselves. That is why his plays were more successful when they were produced a second or third time when the audience had read them in their published forms.

All the plays of Shaw deal with some problem concerning modern society. *In **Widower's House** he* put the blame on society, and not on the individual landlord for creating abuses of the right to property. *In **Getting Married** he* showed the unnaturalness of the home-life as at present constituted. *In **The Doctor Dilemma** he* exposed the superstition that doctors are infallible. *In **John Bull's Other Island**,* the hero talks exactly like Shaw, and the Englishman represents the worst traits in English character.

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Caesar and Cleopatra has no particular theme, and that is why it comes nearer to being a play than most of Shaw's works. In *The Apple Cart* Shaw ridiculed the working of democratic form of government and hinted that it needed a superman to set things right. It was in *St. Joan* Shaw reached the highest level of his dramatic art by dealing in a tragic manner a universal theme involving grand emotions.

3- Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)

Another dramatist who took an important part in the revival of drama in the later part of the nineteenth century was **Oscar Wilde**. It was only during the last five years of his life that he turned his attention to writing for the stage. During his lifetime his plays became very popular, and they were thought to represent a high mark in English drama. But their importance was exaggerated, because they are merely the work of a skilled craftsman. It was mainly on account of their style- graceful, polished and full of wit-that they appealed to the audience.

Oscar Wilde had the tact of discovering the passing mood of the time and expressing it gracefully. Otherwise, his plays are all superficial, and none of them adds to our knowledge or understanding of life. The situation he presents in his plays are hackneyed, and, borrowed from French plays of intrigue.

Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* are the four important comedies of Wilde. The first three plays are built on the model of the conventional social melodramas of the time. They are given sparkle and literary interest by the flashing wit of the dialogue. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, on the other hand, is built on the model of the popular farce of the time.

Wilde calls this a trivial comedy for serious people. It is successful because of its detachment from all meaning and models. In fact this play proved to Wilde that the graceful foolery of farce was the form which was best suited to the expression of his dramatic genius.

4- John Galsworthy (1867-1933)

Galsworthy was a great dramatist of modern times, who besides being a novelist of the first rank, made his mark also in the field of drama. He believed in the naturalistic technique both in the novel and drama. According to him, "Naturalistic art is like a steady lamp, held up from time to time, in whose light things will be seen for a space clearly in due proportion, freed from the mists of prejudice and partisanship."

Galsworthy desired to reproduce, both upon the stage and in his books, the natural spectacle of life, presented with detachment. Of course his delicate sympathies for the poor and unprivileged classes make his heart melt for them, and he takes sides with them.

The important plays of Galsworthy are *Strike* (1909), *Justice* (1910), *The Skin Game* (1929), and *The Silver Box*. All these plays deal with social and ethical problems. *Strike* deals with the problem

of strikes, which are not only futile but do immense harm to both the parties. *The Skin Game* presents the conflict between the old-established class. *Justice* is a severe criticism of the prison administration of that period. *The Sliver Box* deals with the old proverbs that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

5- Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946)

Granville-Barker belonged to that group of dramatist like Galsworthy who dealt with Domestic Tragedy and Problem Plays. Though he wrote a number of plays of different sorts in collaboration with other playwrights, he occupies his place in modern drama mainly as a writer of four "realistic" plays-*The Marrying of Anne Leete (1899)*, *The Voysey Inheritance (1905)*, *Waste (1907)* and *The Madras House (1910)*. Each of these plays deals with a dominant problem of social life.

The importance of Granville-Barker in the twentieth century drama lies in his fine delineation of character and realistic style. His plays seem to be excerpts of real life to a greater extent than even those of Galsworthy. The dialogue is very natural and near to ordinary conversation. The life presented in those plays is the narrow and petty life lived by the upper-middle class in England in his days.

6- John Masefield(1878- 1967)

Another dramatist belonging to the same school as Galsworthy and Granville-Barker is Masefield. He combines in himself high imagination and a sternly classical spirit; passionate enthusiasm and cold logic, fantasy and realism. Though he clings to the natural world and is a confirmed realist, he is wrapped in the spirit of mysticism. All these conflicting qualities are seen in his greatest play-*The Tragedy of Nan*, which is the best modern example of the form of domestic tragedy.

7- J.M. Barrie (1860-1937)

J.M. Barrie did not belong to any school of dramatists. The best of his work is marked by imaginative fantasy, humour and tender pathos. His most characteristic and original play is *The Admirable Crichton (1902)* a drawing-room comedy in which the family butler is the hero. **Three other plays**, *Peter Pan*, *The Golden Bird* and *The Golden Age* have the children story-book characters in them, who are brought to life by the writer's skill.

Barrie's last and most ambitious drama was *The Boy David (1936)* in which he has given a fine picture of the candid soul of boyhood. As the play deals with a story from the Bible, which is well-known, Barrie could not here effectively make use of the element of surprise; which is his strongest point in other plays.

On the whole, Barrie is a skilled technician. He discovered that in an age of affectations and pretensions, the theatre-goers needed the sincerity and innocence of childhood, and he earned his popularity by giving them what they needed.

Model Questions

1-G.b. Shaw died in.....

A- 1950

B- 1951

C- 1952

D- 1953

2-G.b. Shaw was born and brought up in.....

A- Britain

B- Ireland

C- France

D- Italy

Third Lecture A DOLL'S HOUSE

High Tragedy About Ordinary People in Everyday Prose

Ibsen's contribution to the theatre, says a critic, was threefold, and in each respect the drama owes more to him than to any other dramatist since Shakespeare. Firstly, he broke down the social barriers which had previously bounded it. He was the first man to show that high tragedy could be written about ordinary people and in ordinary everyday prose .

Before Ibsen, tragedy had concerned itself with kings and queens, princes or princesses . Ibsen showed that high tragedy did take place at least as frequently in back parlors as in castles and palaces. He was, of course, not the first dramatist to attempt this, but he was the first to write a tragedy about ordinary people that proved a tremendous success.

No Artificialities of Plot; and Creation of Complex Characters

His second great contribution was technical. He threw out the old artificialities of plot . Equally important was **his third contribution:** he developed the art of prose dialogue to a degree of refinement which has never been surpassed; not merely the different ways people talk, and the different language they use under differing circumstances, but that double-density dialogue which is his peculiar legacy, the sub-text, the meaning behind the meaning.

Ibsen's Deep Understanding of human Character and Human Relationships

But none of these technical contributions explains the continued life Of Ibsen's plays on the stage today. Ibsen's enduring greatness as a dramatist is due not to his technical innovations, but to the depth and

subtlety of his understanding of human character (especially feminine character), and, which is rarer, of human relationships.

He created a succession of male characters of a size and strength that represent a challenge to any actor-s-Brand, Peer Gynt, Oswald Alving, characters who defy shallow or clever acting but who, worthily interpreted, offer as rewarding experiences as it is possible to receive in a theatre. Yet so delicate was Ibsen's understanding of human relationships that a selfish actor can only partially succeed in these roles. Unless the relationships with the other characters are right, the performance fails.

A Doll's House- Key Facts

FULL TITLE · *A Doll's House*

AUTHOR · *Henrik Ibsen*

TYPE OF WORK · *Play*

GENRE · *Realistic, modern prose drama*

LANGUAGE · *Norwegian*

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN · *1879, Rome and Amalfi, Italy*

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION · *1879*

TONE · *Serious, intense, somber*

SETTING (TIME) · *Presumably around the late 1870s*

SETTING (PLACE) · *Norway*

PROTAGONIST · *Nora Helmer*

MAJOR CONFLICT · *Nora's struggle with Krogstad, who threatens to tell her husband about her past crime, incites Nora's journey of self-discovery and provides much of the play's dramatic suspense. Nora's primary struggle, however, is against the selfish, stifling, and oppressive attitudes of her husband, Torvald, and of the society that he represents.*

RIISING ACTION · *Nora's first conversation with Mrs. Linde; Krogstad's visit and blackmailing of Nora; Krogstad's delivery of the letter that later exposes Nora.*

CLIMAX · *Torvald reads Krogstad's letter and erupts angrily.*

FALLING ACTION · *Nora's realization that Torvald is devoted not to her but to the idea of her as someone who depends on him; her decision to abandon him to find independence.*

THEMES · *The sacrificial role of women; parental and filial obligations; the unreliability of appearances*

MOTIFS · *Nora's definition of freedom; letters*

SYMBOLS · *The Christmas tree; New Year's Day*

FORESHADOWING · *Nora's eating of macaroons against Torvald's wishes foreshadows her later rebellion against Torvald.*

The Title and Its Significance

The play has an appropriate title. The word "doll" means a woman without any will or mind of her own, a passive and subservient woman. For eight long years Nora has been a passive and obedient Wife to Helmer, always conforming to his ideas, opinions, and tastes. He has always treated her as a pet and as his property. His attitude towards her has always been possessive, as if she wholly belonged to him and had no individuality of her own.

She has always accepted that position. Thus Nora has all these years been a "doll" and she has been living in a doll's house. But at the end Nora rejects her role as Helmer's "doll-wife" and, forsaking him, goes into the world outside in order to have a first-hand experience of life to establish her own identity and to discover her own potentialities.

A Modern Tragedy

Ibsen called his play a modern tragedy, and a modern tragedy it surely is. It is a tragedy because it has a sad ending, with Nora leaving not only her home and her husband but even her children, in order to face an uncertain future. It is a tragedy because it depicts the break-up of a family and the disintegration of the domestic life of a couple. It is modern because it departs from the old style of writing tragedies.

Tragedy before Ibsen used to deal with kings, queens, princes, princesses, army generals and so on. But Ibsen's tragedy deals with middle-class characters. Besides, tragedy was previously written in verse, but here is 'a tragedy in prose, and in everyday prose at that. The play is modern also in so far as its message is concerned and so far as its technique is concerned.

The Story

A Doll's House is the story of Nora and her husband Helmer. They have been married for about nine years and have three children. Eight years ago Nora had borrowed some money from a man called Krogstad against a promissory note on which she had forged signature of her father who was supposed to be a surety for the repayment of the loan. Nora had found it absolutely necessary to obtain this loan.

Her husband had fallen critically ill and the doctors had advised her to take him away to a warm climate. Having no money and desperately anxious to save her husband's life by taking him to Italy she had raised this loan. Her husband had fully recovered. Since then Nora has regularly been paying monthly installments to Krogstad against the principal amount and the interest accruing thereon.

The Story

However, she has never told her husband about the loan, about the purpose for which the loan was taken, about the terms of the loan, and about the monthly payments she has been making. Nor has she ever had any notion that in forging her father's signature she had committed a serious criminal act. Now after eight years, Krogstad needs Nora's help to save his job in a bank of which Nora's husband has been appointed the manager. As Nora finds it impossible to help Krogstad, he reveals Nora's secret transaction with him and the fact of the forgery to her husband through a letter.

Helmer becomes furious with his wife for having been guilty of the crime of forgery. Nora is shocked by her husband's attitude. She had thought that he was capable of making any conceivable sacrifice for her sake, but she finds that he is a self-centered man. She also finds that he is incapable of living 'up to the moral principles which he has always been professing loudly and emphatically. Her love for him drops dead, and she leaves him and also her children.

A Variety of Themes in the Play

A Doll's House deals with a variety of themes. The most important theme, of course, is the liberation of the individual from the shackles and restraints of custom -and convention. More emphatically, the theme is the assertion of her rights by a wife. Nora who has remained passive and self-effacing for eight years ultimately asserts herself and becomes an individual in her own right.

Taking this aspect of the play, we can confidently affirm that A Doll's House is a feminist play, even though Ibsen denied this fact. Then there is the theme of filial duty which is embodied in the person of Mrs. Linde who sacrificed her personal happiness for the sake of her old and sick mother (and also for the sake of her two younger brothers).

The Story of a woman's Liberation from Conventional Restraints

A Doll's House, written by a Norwegian dramatist, is a play in three Acts. It was written in 1879 a time when women were completely subservient to their husbands. No matter how much a husband might love his wife, she was regarded by him in those days as his property. In other words, a husband looked upon his wife as his possession. Custom and convention demanded that she should be guided completely by her husband and should in all respects adjust herself to his ideas, views, opinions, and tastes.

The Story of a woman's Liberation from Conventional Restraints

This meant that a woman had no opportunity to develop her own mind and her own individuality. *A Doll's House* tells the story of a woman called Nora who, after having lived as a conventional kind of wife to her husband for nine years or so, ultimately decided to liberate herself from the restraints under which she had been living contentedly and without complaint.

The Story of a woman's Liberation from Conventional Restraints

In order to liberate herself, this woman took the extreme step of leaving her home, her husband, and even her three children. She went into the world outside to get a first-hand experience of life and to discover her own potentialities.

A model Question

1- Ibsen..... The social barriers which previously bounded drama.

A- settled

B- broke own

C- fixed

D- established

Fourth Lecture *"A Doll's House": The Story in Brief*

ACT ONE

Helmer's Advice to Nora to be Economical

A Doll's House largely concerns Torvald Helmer, a lawyer, and his wife Nora. They have been married for eight or nine-years, and they have three children, two boys and a girl. The play begins on a Christmas eve when Nora has just returned home after having made some purchases in connection with the Christmas festival. She has brought a Christmas tree and some Christmas presents for the children, for the Nurse, and for the maid-servant.

"A Doll's House": The Story in Brief

Helmer asks her if she has spent a lot of money. Nora replies that they can afford to be a little extravagant at this Christmas because, now that he has been appointed the manager of a bank, he would be getting a fat salary. Helmer says that he is yet to take charge of the bank as its manager and that the fat salary will start coming only three months after that.

He then urges her to continue to be economical in spending money on household needs. At the same time he gives her a little extra money for Christmas. From Helmer's manner of talking to Nora we find that he is very fond of her even though he tries to impose his own will upon her. He addresses her by such pet names as "my little skylark" and "my little squirrel".

We also find that he is a moralist; he advises his wife in a solemn manner never to borrow money and never to incur debts. He has also advised her not to eat macaroons because sweets would spoil her teeth. However, Nora loves sweets and eats them secretly.

A Visit By Mrs. Christine Linde

Christine Linde, a friend of Nora's school-days, now comes to see Nora. They have not met for many years. Nora receives her friend

cordially and, from the dialogue which now ensues‘ between them, we learn something about the past lives of both the women.

Christine had been forced by circumstances to marry a man of wealth whom she did not love. She had found it necessary to marry, him because her mother had at the time been bed-ridden and she had two younger brothers also to look after. However, her husband had died soon afterwards, and his business too had gone to pieces after his death. Christine had therefore been faced with great difficulty in maintaining herself, her mother, and her younger brothers.

But now her mother is dead and her younger brothers are grown up and can therefore look after themselves. Feeling lonely and having no purpose in life, Christine has come to this city in order to look for a job: Having been aware that Nora lives in this city, she has now come to see her in order to seek her help in getting a job. Nora *promises* to speak to her husband about Christine's need for a job.

Money Borrowed By Nora from Krogstad

Nora's own past life had not been very comfortable or happy either. Eight years ago her husband had fallen critically ill and she had been forced to borrow money, secretly and without telling her husband, in order to take him to a warm climate under medical advice.

She has regularly been paying monthly installment to her creditor, Krogstad, but in order to do so she has had to save every penny and she has been denying to herself many things that she could otherwise have been able to buy for herself. However, she has no regrets. In fact, she is proud of the fact that she had been able to save her husband's life by having borrowed money in order to take him to Italy where they had stayed for a year or so.

Helmer's Promise of a Job to Mrs. Linde

When the two women are talking to each other, the man called Krogstad comes to see Helmer and is admitted into Helmer's study. Mrs. Linde tells Nora that she had known this man many years ago when he was a solicitor's clerk in the town where she had been living. Nora tells her that this man had got married, but that he is now a widower with several children. Just then Doctor Rank, a close friend of Helmer and Nora, and a regular visitor at this house, joins the two women.

He tells them that Krogstad, the man who has just gone into Helmer's study, is morally corrupt. Doctor Rank describes Krogstad as "rotten to the core". A little later Helmer also joins this group, after having seen off Krogstad. Nora introduces her friend Mrs. Linde to her husband and asks him to arrange for a job for her.

Helmer promises to give her a job in the bank of which he would be taking charge on the New Year's day. Helmer, Doctor Rank, and Mrs. Linde then go away, and Nora is left alone.

Krogstad's Threat to Nora On the Basis of Her Act of Forgery

Nora is now playing with her children when there is a knock at the door and Krogstad comes once again, this time to meet Nora. Actually Krogstad is the man from whom Nora borrowed money eight years ago and to whom she has regularly been paying monthly instalments against that loan. Krogstad has been working for some time in the bank of which Helmer has been appointed the manager.

But with Helmer as the manager of the bank, Krogstad's job is in danger because Helmer does not have a good opinion about this man. Krogstad has already met Helmer about his job, but Helmer has not

given him a favourable reply. Krogstad now comes to seek Nora's help in this matter.

He tells Nora that she can save his job in the bank by recommending his case to her husband. But she tells him that it would not be possible for her to influence her husband and that she can therefore be of no help to him. Krogstad thereupon says that he has a weapon in his possession against her and that he will use that weapon in case she does not prevail upon her husband to let him keep his job in the bank. Krogstad then explains what he means.

He tells her that she had signed a bond in order to get the money from him on credit. It had been necessary for her to have the bond signed by somebody who could stand surety for her for the repayment of the loan. She had said that her father would stand surety for her and that she would send the bond to her father for his signature. After a few days she had given the bond to Krogstad with her father's signature. However, Krogstad had discovered a disparity in the bond.

The date on which her father was supposed to have signed the bond as surety for her was the 2nd October, but her father had died four days earlier, on the 29th September. How could a dead man have signed the document? asks Krogstad. He then says that the obvious explanation for this disparity is that she herself had signed for her father. Nora admits that she had signed for her father. Krogstad tells her that in signing for her father she had been guilty of forgery which is a criminal act.

"A Doll's House": The Story in Brief

Nora says that her father had been seriously ill at the time and that she had not thought it proper to send the document to him for his

signature. As Krogstad had demanded a surety for the loan, she had herself signed for her father. Krogstad says that she had been guilty of fraud. Nora says that she had badly needed the money because her husband was critically ill at the time and had to be taken away to a warm climate. Krogstad says that she does not seem to realize the gravity of her offence.

He then tells her that *he* himself had been guilty at one time of an act of forgery and that he had suffered heavily for having been guilty of it. He goes on to say that in the eyes of the law forgery is a serious crime. Nora says that no law can be so unjust as to ignore the motives and circumstances behind a criminal act. If her intention in forging her father's signature had been to save her husband's life with the money that she wanted as a loan, no law can punish her.

Krogstad says that the law takes no account of motives, and that a crime remains a crime no matter what the motive behind it. Krogstad then says that the choice is hers to make. Either she should prevail upon her husband to let him retain his post in the bank, or he would make a public disclosure of her crime of forgery. Krogstad then goes away.

Nora, Mentally Disturbed

Nora is now feeling much disturbed mentally. When her children come again to play with her, she sends them away because she is feeling very upset on account of the threat which Krogstad has given her. She tries to get busy with the Christmas tree which she has yet to decorate for the evening's celebration. But Krogstad's threat keeps coming to her mind and making her feel uneasy.