



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

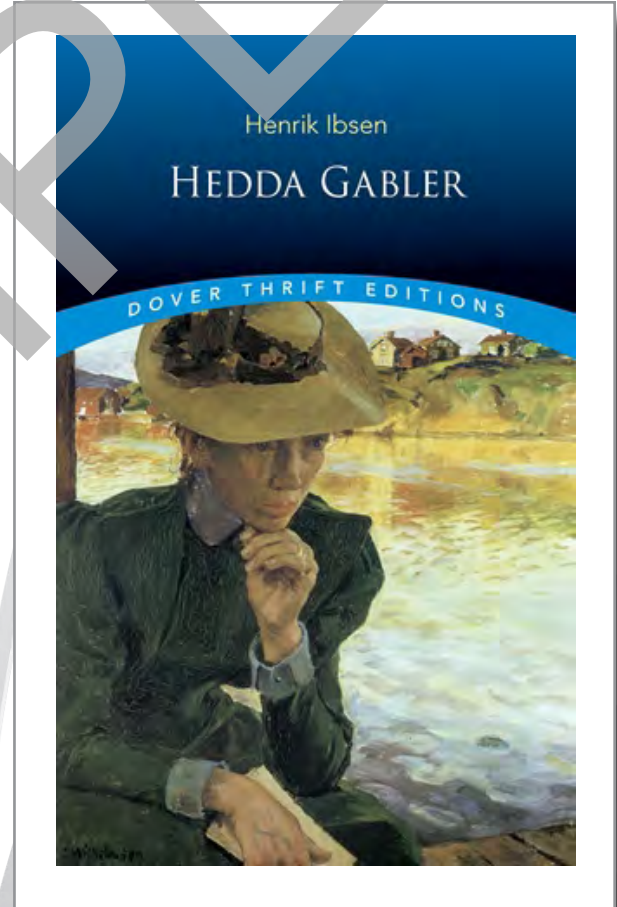
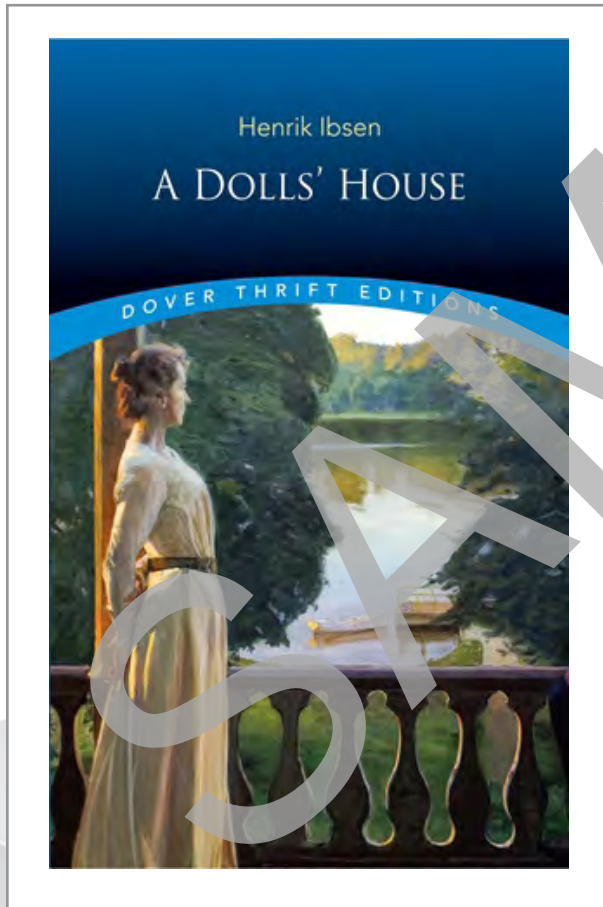
COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

A Doll's House

Henrik Ibsen

Hedda Gabler

Henrik Ibsen



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

A Doll's House

Hedda Gabler

Henrik Ibsen

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Table of Contents

Plot Summaries	3
About the Playwright.....	3
Initiating Activities	5
Vocabulary Activities.....	10
Discussion Questions, Vocabulary, Writing Ideas, Activities	
<i>A Doll's House</i>	
Act One.....	12
Act Two.....	14
Act Three	17
 <i>Hedda Gabler</i>	
Act One.....	20
Act Two.....	22
Act Three	25
Act Four.....	27
Post-Reading Questions.....	29
Post-Reading Activities	30
Assessment.....	36

Plot Summaries

A Doll's House

In this, Ibsen's best-known play, young and pretty Nora Helmer is married to Torvald, a smug bank manager who treats her patronizingly. Nora has been keeping a secret from Torvald. When her father lay dying and Torvald fell ill, she forged a financial paper to save her husband's life. Torvald learns what she has done and attacks her for threatening his status, rather than taking on the blame himself to protect her, as she had hoped. Suddenly Nora sees her husband and her marriage in a new light. To Torvald's dismay, she announces that she is leaving him and the children to find herself—and slams the door behind her.

Hedda Gabler

Considered by many to be Ibsen's finest play, this is the story of beautiful, passionate Hedda Gabler. Married to a scholar (Jörgen Tesman) whom she finds incredibly boring, Hedda decides it would be amusing to destroy her husband's rival, Ejlert Lövborg. She urges Lövborg to commit suicide and burns his masterpiece. Judge Brack, who has been taking every opportunity to see Hedda while Jörgen is away, admits he would like to be the "only cock in the yard." Brack detects Hedda's role in Lövborg's death—she gave him the pistol which accidentally discharged—and blackmails her, telling her she is now in his power. Hedda shoots herself.

About the Playwright

Henrik Johan Ibsen, the "father of modern drama," was born in Norway in 1828. His father was a successful merchant, but his career took a downturn ending in bankruptcy, and the family had to move from their lavish home to a cramped apartment. Ibsen left home at fifteen, escaping his alcoholic father and a cold, pious mother. (Not surprisingly, many of his plays feature a defeated father and "lost" mother.) Young Ibsen went to work as a druggist's apprentice and began writing satiric verses. He fathered an illegitimate child and became a medical student at the University of Oslo. (Many of his dramas also depict doctors as heroes.) He soon shifted into journalism and theater and became playwright, stage manager, and drama instructor at the Bergen National Theater. In his late 20's, he moved to Oslo and became artistic director of another theater, the Mollergate.

His first plays were mostly blank verse, drawn from Norwegian myth. Some of the

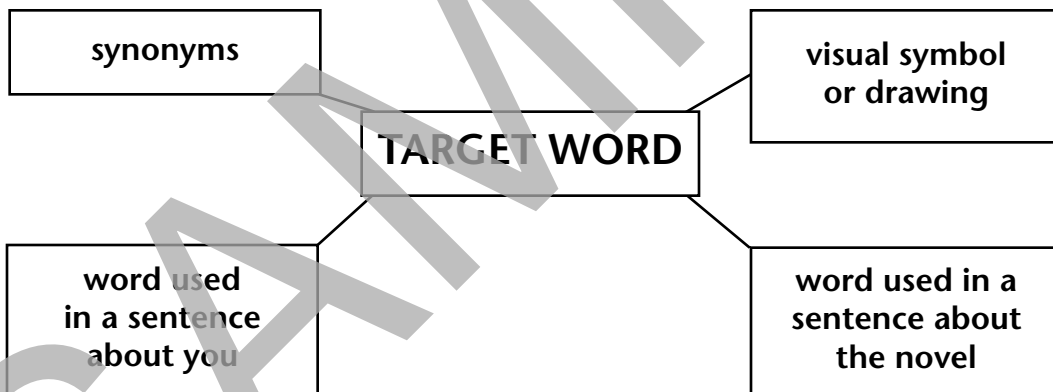
Vocabulary Activities

(See the *Novel Units Student Packet* for several reproducible vocabulary activities.)

1. Remind students that the English version of the play is a translation. Have them keep a running list of words in the play that are unfamiliar to them. Instruct them to write down what they think each word means, from its context—and why. Then they should consult a dictionary and jot down the appropriate definition.

Word	Page	What I Think It Means	Clues I Used	Dictionary Definition

2. From the vocabulary lists provided in this guide, choose selected words. Have students work individually or in a group to “map” the words, using the following graphic organizer.



3. Have students create “synonym chains” or “antonym chains” for selected vocabulary words.

For example: Add to the following synonym chains...

extravagant (2)—lavish—
 contemptuously (13)—arrogantly—
 fraudulent (28)—dishonest—
 obstinacy (41)—stubbornness—
 retribution (45)—retaliation—
 magnanimous (64)—generous—

Discussion Questions • Vocabulary

••••• Writing Ideas • Activities •••••

A Doll's House, Act One, pages 1-34

It is the day before Christmas and Nora Helmer comes home in a good mood, loaded down with packages. Her husband, Torvald, (referred to as "Helmer" in the playscript) scolds her patronizingly for spending so much money—even if he has just been made Bank Manager. Two people show up at the door: Torvald's physician, Dr. Rank, and Mrs. Linde, a widowed school friend Nora hasn't seen in ten years. Nora explains that Torvald's ill health necessitated an expensive trip to Italy three months after her father's death. Mrs. Linde describes how difficult it has been to make ends meet since her husband's death, and Nora happily agrees to ask Torvald about getting her a job. Mrs. Linde implies that Nora doesn't know what hardship is, and Nora proudly reveals her secret. Although everyone assumes that Nora's father had given her the money for the trip which saved Helmer's life, Nora actually obtained the money by forging some loan papers. She has been secretly repaying the loan out of her allowance and by doing copying. A man named Krogstad arrives to talk with Helmer about his job and Mrs. Linde says she recognizes him as a widower with several children and a reputation for doing business on the side. The nursemaid brings in Nora's three children and she is in the middle of a joyous game of hide and seek when Krogstad comes in. Nora tenses and sends the children out. Krogstad warns Nora to influence her husband against firing him. He got into a bit of trouble years ago and has been trying to win back his respectability, for his children's sakes. If her husband derails that effort by firing him, he will tell Helmer that she not only obtained a loan without his consent—but did so fraudulently. When Nora protests that she merely bypassed a formality to save her husband's life, Krogstad implies that his own reputation was destroyed by a similar situation—his attempt to save his wife's life. When Nora later tries to put in a good word for Krogstad, Helmer responds that the man is corrupt—and that such depraved parents poison their children.

Vocabulary

objets d'art 1
spendthrift 3
subdued 7
trivialities 12
impassively 17
sledge 22
domestic 26
formalities 29
dissemble 33

macaroons 1
confectioner 5
steamer 7
contemptuously 13
solicitor 17
stifled 23
incidentals 27
redeem 32

extravagant 2
preserves 5
incredulously 8
installments 15
sovereign 19
subordinate 24
security 27
impulsive 32

frivolous 2
anticlimax 6
commission 9
transactions 16
affliction 18
respectability 26
fraudulent 28
corruption 33

Discussion Questions

1. When and where is the play set? (Christmas season, tasteful middle-class home) What atmosphere is created by the opening description of the scene? (air of comfortable homeyness)
2. Did the first act raise any questions in your mind? Is there anything you would like to ask Nora?
3. How does Torvald find fault with Nora? (criticizes her spending, eating macaroons) Do you think it bothers her? Are his criticisms valid? What does she value? (her home, children, material things)
4. Who is Mrs. Linde? (a former acquaintance of Nora's) What is she like? (widowed, childless, somber) Why has she come? (She is looking for a job.) Why do you think Ibsen has included her in the story?
5. What does the audience learn about Nora's marriage from her discussion with Mrs. Linde? (Nora's husband had been ill from overwork.) How and why does Nora lie at first about where the money for the trip came from? (She tells Mrs. Linde her father paid for it.) What plan did she come up with for saving her husband? (She obtained a loan by forging papers.) Does she regret her decision? (No, she's proud.) What else could she have done?
6. What do we know about Krogstad's past? (To save his wife's life, Krogstad got mixed up in trouble that ruined his reputation.) How do we learn that? (He tells Nora, to demonstrate that the law takes no account of motives.) How is his trouble like Nora's? (Both were trying to help their sick spouses.)
7. How are Krogstad and Nora linked? (Nora borrowed money from Krogstad.) Do you have more sympathy for one than for the other?
8. Do you think Nora is a good mother? Does Helmer seem to think so? Why does he assume that Krogstad is a bad parent? (Because Krogstad has gotten into trouble, Helmer seems to believe his crime has spread like a disease to his children.)
9. Who is Dr. Rank? (Helmer's physician, Nora's confidant) Why do you think he visits every day? What are your impressions of him? Is he a sympathetic character?
10. **Prediction:** Will Krogstad expose Nora—or remain silent and keep his job?