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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



A Doll's House
Henrik Ibsen

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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Act I

1. Nora is quite happy at the prospect of Torvald's big new salary. Suppose you suddenly come into a large sum of money. Write a paragraph describing how you got the money, how you will spend it, and how it will change your life.
2. Nora's character is portrayed as a spendthrift. A spendthrift is someone who wastes money. Describe a time when you spent money unwisely. Was it worth it? If you had to do it all over again, would you make the same expenditure? Did you learn any lessons from the experience?
3. Act I takes place on Christmas Eve, and we see Nora decorating their Christmas tree. Apparently, the Helmer's tradition is to hide the tree from the children until Christmas Eve when it is completely decorated. Choose your favorite holiday and write a paragraph describing the traditions your own family observes to make it special. Try to include various elements, such as, the history, the foods that are eaten, the activities performed, and the relatives or friends who attend.
4. Nora is very happy to see her old school friend, Christine Linde, after many years. Choose a close friend of yours and make up a conversation you might have in 10 years. Consider all the events that might have happened in that 10-year period.
5. Like Nora and Christine Linde, most people will have friends they like more than other people they know. There may be numerous reasons for this: similar interests, closeness in location, social status, etc. Compose a poem about friendship focusing on *why* people are friends.

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11. In response to Dr. Rank's position on people with diseased moral character, Mrs. Linde says, "the sick are those who most need taking care of." This statement indicates that Mrs. Linde is probably a caring person. Write a short story featuring a character that performs a caring act, and the effect it has on others.
12. Nora brags to Krogstad about her influence with her husband in getting Mrs. Linde a job. How does this get Nora in trouble? List three negative results that can occur when someone brags. Describe a personal experience that involves bragging. The bragger may be you or someone else.
13. Nora is surprised to learn that forging her father's signature on the loan document would be considered a crime, even though her motives were good and she has nearly repaid the money. Pretend you are her lawyer arguing her case in court. Write the closing statement you will present to the jury defending her actions. Remember, a closing statement is a lawyer's last chance to summarize his case, and try to convince the jury that his client is not guilty.
14. Krogstad reveals to Nora that what she has done is no more or no less than what he did to ruin his reputation. Nora says, "You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life?" Do you agree that Nora acted bravely in obtaining the loan, or do you think she acted imprudently as Mrs. Linde suggests? Please explain your reason.

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46. Torvald tells Nora that her most sacred duties should be to her husband and children. Nora says her most sacred duties are to herself. What do you think your most sacred duties are? Write an essay on what you believe to be your most sacred duties and how they will change as you grow from student, to single adult, to married adult, to parent.
47. Nora feels that her father and Torvald have both done her a great disservice by treating her as a doll. She says, "You and Papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life." In a journal entry, describe the ways in which your parents affect your life. How do they restrict your behavior and shape your future? How does this differ from them just wanting to protect you?
48. Nora reminds Torvald that he said she was unfit to bring up their children. This must have been hurt Nora deeply. Torvald replies that he said it in a moment of anger. "Why do you pay any heed to that?" he asks. People often say things they don't really mean when they are angry. Describe a time when you said something in anger that you didn't really mean. What were the results? How did you feel later, after you had calmed down? What did you do to "make it right?"
49. Torvald acts selfishly upon reading Krogstad's letter. In response to her husband, Nora tells him that he neither thinks nor talks like the man she could bind herself to. We all have ideas about the type of person we want to marry and of the special qualities they should possess. Make a list of these qualities. Then, write a personal advertisement for a dating service describing the qualities you seek in a spouse and the qualities you possess.
50. Nora thought Torvald would try to protect her by taking the blame for her mistake. Torvald says that no man would sacrifice his honor for the one he loves. With whom do you agree? What would you have done if you were in Torvald's situation?

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W r a p - u p

56. Explain the significance of the title. Create a new title that is equally significant.
57. For what purpose do you think the author wrote this play? What do you think the main message is?
58. Which character in the play do you think exhibited the most “moral disease”? Why?
59. For which character do you feel the most sympathy at the end? Why? Did it change throughout the story? If so, what caused the change?
60. When this play was first produced, it was considered scandalous. Do you think it is by today's standards? Do you think the issues are still relevant? Suppose you learn that your school board is going to drop *A Doll's House* from the reading list because they believe it is no longer relevant for today's student. Write a letter to the school board to persuade them to continue allowing students to study this play.
61. Sequels are popular because readers wish to know more about the characters. For what reason do you think this play should, or should not, have a sequel?
62. Write the dialog that might take place twenty years later when Nora and Mrs. Linde run into each other on the street.
63. Write a letter to a friend telling why you liked the ending, or why not. If you didn't like the ending, include an alternate ending that you think would've been better.
64. If you had a chance to speak with the author of *A Doll's House*, what questions or comments would you make?
65. If you were to choose one character from this novel to be your husband or wife, who would it be? Explain the reason for your choice.