

Respond to the following quotations and quotations from Act I.

COMPREHENSION AND EXTENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions, supporting your answers with **SPECIFIC EVIDENCE** from the text itself in every case.

1. What are your first impressions of the relationship between the Helmers? Do Nora and Torvald seem to share an equal partnership in their marriage?
2. Compare Nora to her friend Mrs. Linde. Both have had difficulties in their lives in their own ways—how has each woman's social class influenced the manner in which she responded to difficulty?
3. There is considerable discussion of finances in Act I. How do Nora and Torvald differ in their attitudes toward money?
4. At the end of Act I, Torvald makes a remark which, to us who know more of his situation than he does, carries tremendous *dramatic irony* (**when the words and/or actions of a character have a different meaning for the audience than they do for the character**). He says that an "atmosphere of lies infects the whole life of a home." What "lies" are we aware of that Nora has felt obliged to tell? How much does she recognize the implication of his statement when she adds, to herself, "Poison my home? ... That's not true. Never. Never in all the world." Although we are not aware of any lies that Torvald has told, is there any sense in which he may have "infected" his relationship with Nora?
5. Dr. Rank introduces the concept of "moral disease" which Torvald also remarks on to Nora at the end of act I. He and Torvald are both referring to Krogstad, but Mrs. Linde prepares us for another way to look at Krogstad, as a man who is "changed," a "widower... with many children." What possibility do you see that Christine and Krogstad may be able to reestablish a friendship?

IMPORTANT PASSAGES

Choose **FIVE** of the following **TEN** quotations to respond to in writing. You must relate the passage to the larger context of Act I and comment on its connection with one of the emerging themes/issues of the play (e.g. gender, identity, social class and money, morality, inheritance, disease).

1. **HELMER.** That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.
2. **HELMER.** You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things, Nora. **What "things" can you inherit? What has Nora inherited from her father?**
3. **HELMER.** It is splendid to feel that one has a perfectly safe appointment, and a big enough income. It's delightful to think of, isn't it? **What does this passage reveal about Nora and Helmer's social class?**
4. **MRS. LINDE.** It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the lookout for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken—you will hardly believe it—I was delighted not so much on your account as on

my own. How has Mrs. Linde's social class influenced her outlook on life? Why is she happy "on her account," instead of being happy for Nora and Torvald unselfishly?

5. **NORA.** You are just like the others. They all think that I am incapable of anything really serious.
6. **NORA.** I told him how much I should love to travel abroad like other young wives; I tried tears and entreaties with him; I told him that he ought to remember the condition I was in, and that he ought to be kind and indulgent to me; I even hinted that he might raise a loan. That nearly made him angry, Christine. He said I was thoughtless, and that it was his duty as my husband not to indulge me in my whims and caprices-as I believe he called them.

...

MRS. LINDE. And since then have you never told your secret to your husband?

NORA. Good Heavens, no! How could you think so? A man who has such strong opinions about these things! And besides, how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether; our beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now.

7. **NORA.** I didn't know this-what's his name-Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank.

RANK. Yes, he has some sort of appointment there. (To Mrs. LINDE.) I don't know whether you find also in your part of the world that there are certain people who go zealously sniffing about to smell out moral corruption, and, as soon as they have found some, put the person concerned into some lucrative position where they can keep their eye on him. Healthy natures are left out in the cold.

MRS. LINDE. Still I think the sick are those who most need taking care of.

RANK (shrugging his shoulders). Yes, there you are. That is the sentiment that is turning Society into a sick-house.

8. **KROGSTAD.** It is not only for the sake of the money; indeed, that weighs least with me in the matter. There is another reason- well, I may as well tell you. My position is this. I daresay you know, like everybody else, that once, many years ago, I was guilty of an indiscretion.

NORA. I think I have heard something of the kind.

KROGSTAD. The matter never came into court; but every way seemed to be closed to me after that. So I took to the business that you know of. I had to do something; and, honestly, I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must cut myself free from all that. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try and win back as much respect as I can in the town. This post in the Bank was like the first step up for me- and now your husband is going to kick me downstairs again into the mud.

9. **KROGSTAD.** The law cares nothing about motives.

NORA. Then it must be a very foolish law.

KROGSTAD. Foolish or not, it is the law by which you will be judged, if I produce this paper in court.

10. **HELMER.** Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with every one, how he has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children. And about the children- that is the most terrible part of it all, Nora.

NORA. How?

HELMER. Because such an atmosphere of lies infects and poisons the whole life of a home. Each breath the children take in such a house is full of the germs of evil. [...] It seems most commonly to be the mother's influence, though naturally a bad father's would have the same result. Every lawyer is familiar with the fact. This Krogstad, now, has been persistently poisoning his own children with lies and dissimulation; that is why I say he has lost all moral character.