

Thesis Statements Distilled into their component parts

THE WHAT	THE HOW	THE WHY	THE “SO WHAT”
The “what” is the simplest part of your thesis statement—what specific textual element(s) are you going to discuss?	The “how” relates to the author’s particular technique in working with the element(s) from the “what.” What does he/she <i>do</i> with the elements? <i>How</i> does he/she do it? (e.g. through diction, imagery, symbolism, rhyme scheme, repetition—the list is endless).	This is the point where you bring in the heavy guns. Why does the author bother doing this thing (the how) with the textual elements (the what)? What is the larger issue/theme/point at work here?	This is the step where you relate the theme/big idea in the text to the world outside the text. Why even bother writing <i>this</i> book to illustrate <i>this</i> point? What’s the wider comment on society or universal themes?
<p>Ex. 1: The tarantella, the mailbox, and Nora’s costume (as symbols)</p> <p>Ex. 2: Nora’s development throughout the play (immaturity to self-realization?)</p> <p>Ex. 3: Torvald’s limitations as a 19th century husband; Krogstad’s difficulty with social class issues, Mrs. Linde’s “inversion” of Nora’s decision</p>	<p>Ex. 1: Through the development of various symbols</p> <p>Ex. 2: Through the changes in Nora as a dynamic character</p> <p>Ex. 3: Through presenting an array of issues that do not necessarily endorse a feminist agenda</p>	<p>Ex. 1: To demonstrate the Helmers’ moral decay</p> <p>Ex. 2: To reveal Nora’s process of self-realization</p> <p>Ex. 3: To explore the journey of self-discovery for all humans, rather than just women.</p>	<p>Ex. 1: To undercut traditional conceptions of marriage.</p> <p>Ex. 2: To illustrate the idea that a woman (or person) needs to reject the confines of a restrictive marriage in order to find herself.</p> <p>Ex. 3: To illustrate the idea that individuals (not just women) need to reject social constraints in order to find self-realization.</p>

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Example 1: In *A Doll’s House*, Henrik Ibsen’s symbolic use of the tarantella, the locked mailbox, and Nora’s costume demonstrate the Helmers’ moral decay in order to undercut traditional conceptions of marriage.

Example 2: In *A Doll’s House*, Nora’s moral development throughout the play demonstrates the need for women to reject the constraints of marriage in order to achieve self-realization.

Example 3: In *A Doll’s House*, the array of social and moral issues explored through the limitations of Torvald, Krogstad, and Mrs. Linde reveal Ibsen’s endorsement of humanist, rather than simply feminist, ideals.