

# Voices Unbound



# VOICES UNBOUND

Global Narratives of Struggle and Justice

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# ABOUT THE BOOK

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*Voices Unbound: Global Narratives of Struggle and Justice* is a collection that brings together diverse stories, essays, poems, and plays from around the globe, each contributing to a dialogue on social justice. *Voices Unbound* emphasizes the liberation of voices that have been historically marginalized, silenced, or oppressed, encouraging readers to explore a wide range of perspectives and experiences. By highlighting global narratives, the title points to the universality of the struggle for justice, while also honoring the specific cultural, historical, and personal contexts of each contribution. This OER aims to provide teachers an opportunity to educate, inspire, and empower readers to engage with **social justice** issues through the power of literature.

The content was reviewed by peers using the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Open Educational Resources Initiative Evaluation Rubric and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Audit Framework.

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To work with a beloved friend and colleague, especially as she prepares to retire, is a blessing. For the years of generosity, fun, kindness, sarcasm, hard work, and commitment to this thing we both love, this one is for Kim. Thank you for working on this with me.

-Jacqui

Thank you for your kind words and for the remarkable journey we've shared in creating this OER. Working with you, a cherished friend and esteemed colleague, as I approach retirement, has indeed been a profound blessing. Your generosity, humor, and tireless dedication have not only enriched this project but have also greatly enhanced my entire career. This collaboration has been a highlight of my professional life. Thank you for being part of this adventure—it's truly been one for the books!

-Kim

To our reviewer, Amber Tidwell, who read the book with the eyes of a lover of literature. Your point of view is invaluable.

And finally, gracious thanks to the tireless OER librarian at Lemoore College, Kelsey Smith. Without her, none of this would be possible.



# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to *Voices Unbound: Global Narratives of Struggle and Justice*, an Open Educational Resource (OER), that invites readers on a literary journey spanning over four centuries of world literature. This anthology was designed to broaden horizons, challenge perceptions, and inspire a deeper understanding of the fight for social justice through the lens of diverse literary genres. This collection curates works in **realism, satire, feminism, modernism, surrealism, magical realism, and post-colonialism**, offering a vibrant tapestry of voices and stories.

*Voices Unbound* is more than just a title; it is a mission. This book liberates and amplifies voices that have historically been marginalized, silenced, or oppressed. Through a selection of poems, plays, videos, and stories, it explores the powerful narratives of individuals and communities from various parts of the world, each contributing uniquely to the global dialogue on justice and human rights. The works selected not only reflect the struggle for liberation and equality but also celebrate the resilience and creativity of the human spirit.

The chapter on realism provides stark, unadorned looks at the human condition. In the satire chapter, readers will find sharp, often humorous critiques of societal norms that provoke thought about the absurdities of the world. The feminism chapter voices the demands and dreams of gender equality, while modernism and surrealism break conventional forms and perceptions, challenging readers to see beyond the visible. Magical realism brings the enchantment of the supernatural into the very real struggles for justice, blending the mystical with the mundane in compelling narratives. Finally, the post-colonialism chapter offers critical insights into the impacts of colonial histories and the ongoing fights for cultural sovereignty and identity.

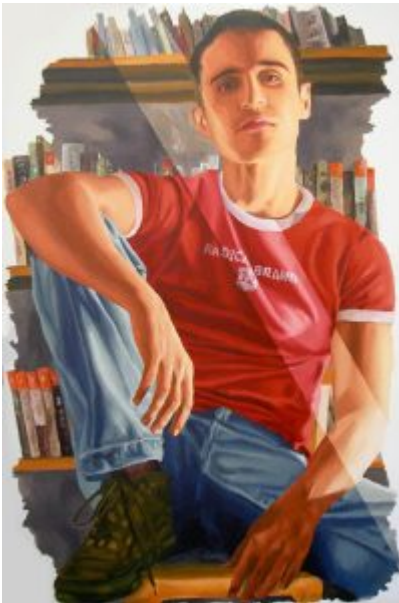


1.

# REALISM

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## Realism



“[Realistic Painting of Young Man](#)” by Raphael Perez is included on the basis of fair use as described in the [Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Open Education](#).

**Realism** emerged as a dominant literary movement in the 19th century and continued to influence world literature into the 20th century. Realism refers to a style of writing that attempts to depict life accurately, without idealizing or romanticizing. Oftentimes, the characters are more important than the action or plot. Realist literature sought to capture the everyday lives of ordinary people and depict reality as it truly was, often examining the complexities of human existence in the face of social, political, and economic changes. One of the significant contributions of realism to world literature was its exploration and interpretation of diverse perspectives linked to identity, including race, gender, faith, and ethnicity. This chapter will delve into how realist literature engaged with these issues in a global context.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/worldlit/?p=28#h5p-1>

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## Anton Chekov



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Anton Chekov is known for his exploration of the human condition with a sharp focus on psychological realism. His characters come from various social classes and backgrounds, portraying their conflicts and struggles. In terms of identity, Chekhov’s characters often grapple with questions of self-awareness, purpose, and **existential** angst. They struggle to define themselves in the face of societal pressures, personal desires, and external circumstances. Chekhov’s “The Lady with a Dog” (1899) presents a portrayal of identity that reflects the complexities and ambiguities of human experience.

### “A Lady with a Dog” by Anton Chekov

It was said that a new person had appeared on the sea-front: a lady with a little dog. Dmitri Dmitritch Gurov, who had by then been a fortnight at Yalta, and so was fairly at home there, had begun to take an interest in new arrivals. Sitting in Verney’s pavilion, he saw, walking on the sea-front, a fair-haired young lady of medium height, wearing a *béret*; a white Pomeranian dog was running behind her.

And afterwards he met her in the public gardens and in the square several times a day. She was walking alone, always wearing the same *béret*, and always with the same white dog; no one knew who she was, and every one called her simply “the lady with the dog.”

“If she is here alone without a husband or friends, it wouldn’t be amiss to make her acquaintance,” Gurov reflected.

He was under forty, but he had a daughter already twelve years old, and two sons at school. He had been married young, when he was a student in his second year, and by now his wife seemed half as old again as he.

She was a tall, erect woman with dark eyebrows, staid and dignified, and, as she said of herself, intellectual. She read a great deal, used phonetic spelling, called her husband, not Dmitri, but Dimitri, and he secretly considered her unintelligent, narrow, inelegant, was afraid of her, and did not like to be at home. He had begun being unfaithful to her long ago—had been unfaithful to her often, and, probably on that account, almost always spoke ill of women, and when they were talked about in his presence, used to call them “the lower race.”

It seemed to him that he had been so schooled by bitter experience that he might call them what he liked, and yet he could not get on for two days together without “the lower race.” In the society of men he was bored and not himself, with them he was cold and uncommunicative; but when he was in the company of women he felt free, and knew what to say to them and how to behave; and he was at ease with them even when he was silent. In his appearance, in his character, in his whole nature, there was something attractive and elusive which allured women and disposed them in his favour; he knew that, and some force seemed to draw him, too, to them.

Experience often repeated, truly bitter experience, had taught him long ago that with decent people, especially Moscow people—always slow to move and irresolute—every intimacy, which at first so agreeably diversifies life and appears a light and charming adventure, inevitably grows into a regular problem of extreme intricacy, and in the long run the situation becomes unbearable. But at every fresh meeting with an interesting woman this experience seemed to slip out of his memory, and he was eager for life, and everything seemed simple and amusing.

One evening he was dining in the gardens, and the lady in the *béret* came up slowly to take the next table. Her expression, her gait, her dress, and the way she did her hair told him that she was a lady, that she was married, that she was in Yalta for the first time and alone, and that she was dull there.... The stories told of the immorality in such places as Yalta are to a great extent untrue; he despised them, and knew that such stories were for the most part made up by persons who would themselves have been glad to sin if they had been able; but when the lady sat down at the next table three paces from him, he remembered these tales of easy conquests, of trips to the mountains, and the tempting thought of a swift, fleeting love affair, a romance with an unknown woman, whose name he did not know, suddenly took possession of him.

He beckoned coaxingly to the Pomeranian, and when the dog came up to him he shook his finger at it. The Pomeranian growled: Gurov shook his finger at it again.

The lady looked at him and at once dropped her eyes.

“He doesn’t bite,” she said, and blushed.

“May I give him a bone?” he asked; and when she nodded he asked courteously, “Have you been long in Yalta?”

“Five days.”

“And I have already dragged out a fortnight here.”

There was a brief silence.

“Time goes fast, and yet it is so dull here!” she said, not looking at him.

“That’s only the fashion to say it is dull here. A provincial will live in Belyov or Zhidra and not be dull, and when he comes here it’s ‘Oh, the dulness! Oh, the dust!’ One would think he came from Grenada.”

She laughed. Then both continued eating in silence, like strangers, but after dinner they walked side by side; and there sprang up between them the light jesting conversation of people who are free and satisfied, to whom it does not matter where they go or what they talk about. They walked and talked of the strange light on the sea: the water was of a soft warm lilac hue, and there was a golden streak from the moon upon it. They talked of how sultry it was after a hot day. Gurov told her that he came from Moscow, that he had taken his degree in Arts, but had a post in a bank; that he had trained as an opera-singer, but had given it up, that he owned two houses in Moscow.... And from her he learnt that she had grown up in Petersburg, but had lived in S—— since her marriage two years before, that she was staying another month in Yalta, and that her husband, who needed a holiday too, might perhaps come and fetch her. She was not sure whether her husband had a post in a Crown Department or under the Provincial Council—and was amused by her own ignorance. And Gurov learnt, too, that she was called Anna Sergeyevna.

Afterwards he thought about her in his room at the hotel—thought she would certainly meet him next day; it would be sure to happen. As he got into bed he thought how lately she had been a girl at school, doing lessons like his own daughter; he recalled the diffidence, the angularity, that was still manifest in her laugh and her manner of talking with a stranger. This must have been the first time in her life she had been alone in surroundings in which she was followed, looked at, and spoken to merely from a secret motive which she could hardly fail to guess. He recalled her slender, delicate neck, her lovely grey eyes.

“There’s something pathetic about her, anyway,” he thought, and fell asleep.

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A week had passed since they had made acquaintance. It was a holiday. It was sultry indoors, while in the street the wind whirled the dust round and round, and blew people’s hats off. It was a thirsty day, and Gurov often went into the pavilion, and pressed Anna Sergeyevna to have syrup and water or an ice. One did not know what to do with oneself.

In the evening when the wind had dropped a little, they went out on the groyne to see the steamer come in. There were a great many people walking about the harbour; they had gathered to welcome some one, bringing

bouquets. And two peculiarities of a well-dressed Yalta crowd were very conspicuous: the elderly ladies were dressed like young ones, and there were great numbers of generals.

Owing to the roughness of the sea, the steamer arrived late, after the sun had set, and it was a long time turning about before it reached the groyne. Anna Sergeyevna looked through her lorgnette at the steamer and the passengers as though looking for acquaintances, and when she turned to Gurov her eyes were shining. She talked a great deal and asked disconnected questions, forgetting next moment what she had asked; then she dropped her lorgnette in the crush.

The festive crowd began to disperse; it was too dark to see people's faces. The wind had completely dropped, but Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna still stood as though waiting to see some one else come from the steamer. Anna Sergeyevna was silent now, and sniffed the flowers without looking at Gurov.

"The weather is better this evening," he said. "Where shall we go now? Shall we drive somewhere?"

She made no answer.

Then he looked at her intently, and all at once put his arm round her and kissed her on the lips, and breathed in the moisture and the fragrance of the flowers; and he immediately looked round him, anxiously wondering whether any one had seen them.

"Let us go to your hotel," he said softly. And both walked quickly.

The room was close and smelt of the scent she had bought at the Japanese shop. Gurov looked at her and thought: "What different people one meets in the world!" From the past he preserved memories of careless, good-natured women, who loved cheerfully and were grateful to him for the happiness he gave them, however brief it might be; and of women like his wife who loved without any genuine feeling, with superfluous phrases, affectedly, hysterically, with an expression that suggested that it was not love nor passion, but something more significant; and of two or three others, very beautiful, cold women, on whose faces he had caught a glimpse of a rapacious expression—an obstinate desire to snatch from life more than it could give, and these were capricious, unreflecting, domineering, unintelligent women not in their first youth, and when Gurov grew cold to them their beauty excited his hatred, and the lace on their linen seemed to him like scales.

But in this case there was still the diffidence, the angularity of inexperienced youth, an awkward feeling; and there was a sense of consternation as though some one had suddenly knocked at the door. The attitude of Anna Sergeyevna—"the lady with the dog"—to what had happened was somehow peculiar, very grave, as though it were her fall—so it seemed, and it was strange and inappropriate. Her face dropped and faded, and on both sides of it her long hair hung down mournfully; she mused in a dejected attitude like "the woman who was a sinner" in an old-fashioned picture.

“It’s wrong,” she said. “You will be the first to despise me now.”

There was a water-melon on the table. Gurov cut himself a slice and began eating it without haste. There followed at least half an hour of silence.

Anna Sergeyevna was touching; there was about her the purity of a good, simple woman who had seen little of life. The solitary candle burning on the table threw a faint light on her face, yet it was clear that she was very unhappy.

“How could I despise you?” asked Gurov. “You don’t know what you are saying.”

“God forgive me,” she said, and her eyes filled with tears. “It’s awful.”

“You seem to feel you need to be forgiven.”

“Forgiven? No. I am a bad, low woman; I despise myself and don’t attempt to justify myself. It’s not my husband but myself I have deceived. And not only just now; I have been deceiving myself for a long time. My husband may be a good, honest man, but he is a flunkey! I don’t know what he does there, what his work is, but I know he is a flunkey! I was twenty when I was married to him. I have been tormented by curiosity; I wanted something better. ‘There must be a different sort of life,’ I said to myself. I wanted to live! To live, to live!... I was fired by curiosity ... you don’t understand it, but, I swear to God, I could not control myself; something happened to me: I could not be restrained. I told my husband I was ill, and came here.... And here I have been walking about as though I were dazed, like a mad creature; ... and now I have become a vulgar, contemptible woman whom any one may despise.”

Gurov felt bored already, listening to her. He was irritated by the naïve tone, by this remorse, so unexpected and inopportune; but for the tears in her eyes, he might have thought she was jesting or playing a part.

“I don’t understand,” he said softly. “What is it you want?”

She hid her face on his breast and pressed close to him.

“Believe me, believe me, I beseech you ...” she said. “I love a pure, honest life, and sin is loathsome to me. I don’t know what I am doing. Simple people say: ‘The Evil One has beguiled me.’ And I may say of myself now that the Evil One has beguiled me.”

“Hush, hush!...” he muttered.

He looked at her fixed, scared eyes, kissed her, talked softly and affectionately, and by degrees she was comforted, and her gaiety returned; they both began laughing.

Afterwards when they went out there was not a soul on the sea-front. The town with its cypresses had quite a



deathlike air, but the sea still broke noisily on the shore; a single barge was rocking on the waves, and a lantern was blinking sleepily on it.

They found a cab and drove to Oreanda.

“I found out your surname in the hall just now: it was written on the board—Von Diderits,” said Gurov. “Is your husband a German?”

“No; I believe his grandfather was a German, but he is an Orthodox Russian himself.”

At Oreanda they sat on a seat not far from the church, looked down at the sea, and were silent. Yalta was hardly visible through the morning mist; white clouds stood motionless on the mountain-tops. The leaves did not stir on the trees, grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow sound of the sea rising up from below, spoke of the peace, of the eternal sleep awaiting us. So it must have sounded when there was no Yalta, no Oreanda here; so it sounds now, and it will sound as indifferently and monotonously when we are all no more. And in this constancy, in this complete indifference to the life and death of each of us, there lies hid, perhaps, a pledge of our eternal salvation, of the unceasing movement of life upon earth, of unceasing progress towards perfection. Sitting beside a young woman who in the dawn seemed so lovely, soothed and spellbound in these magical surroundings—the sea, mountains, clouds, the open sky—Gurov thought how in reality everything is beautiful in this world when one reflects: everything except what we think or do ourselves when we forget our human dignity and the higher aims of our existence.

A man walked up to them—probably a keeper—looked at them and walked away. And this detail seemed mysterious and beautiful, too. They saw a steamer come from Theodosia, with its lights out in the glow of dawn.

“There is dew on the grass,” said Anna Sergeyevna, after a silence.

“Yes. It’s time to go home.”

They went back to the town.

Then they met every day at twelve o’clock on the sea-front, lunched and dined together, went for walks, admired the sea. She complained that she slept badly, that her heart throbbed violently; asked the same questions, troubled now by jealousy and now by the fear that he did not respect her sufficiently. And often in the square or gardens, when there was no one near them, he suddenly drew her to him and kissed her passionately. Complete idleness, these kisses in broad daylight while he looked round in dread of some one’s seeing them, the heat, the smell of the sea, and the continual passing to and fro before him of idle, well-dressed, well-fed people, made a new man of him; he told Anna Sergeyevna how beautiful she was, how fascinating. He was impatiently passionate, he would not move a step away from her, while she was often pensive and

continually urged him to confess that he did not respect her, did not love her in the least, and thought of her as nothing but a common woman. Rather late almost every evening they drove somewhere out of town, to Oreanda or to the waterfall; and the expedition was always a success, the scenery invariably impressed them as grand and beautiful.

They were expecting her husband to come, but a letter came from him, saying that there was something wrong with his eyes, and he entreated his wife to come home as quickly as possible. Anna Sergeyevna made haste to go.

“It’s a good thing I am going away,” she said to Gurov. “It’s the finger of destiny!”

She went by coach and he went with her. They were driving the whole day. When she had got into a compartment of the express, and when the second bell had rung, she said:

“Let me look at you once more ... look at you once again. That’s right.”

She did not shed tears, but was so sad that she seemed ill, and her face was quivering.

“I shall remember you ... think of you,” she said. “God be with you; be happy. Don’t remember evil against me. We are parting forever—it must be so, for we ought never to have met. Well, God be with you.”

The train moved off rapidly, its lights soon vanished from sight, and a minute later there was no sound of it, as though everything had conspired together to end as quickly as possible that sweet delirium, that madness. Left alone on the platform, and gazing into the dark distance, Gurov listened to the chirrup of the grasshoppers and the hum of the telegraph wires, feeling as though he had only just waked up. And he thought, musing, that there had been another episode or adventure in his life, and it, too, was at an end, and nothing was left of it but a memory.... He was moved, sad, and conscious of a slight remorse. This young woman whom he would never meet again had not been happy with him; he was genuinely warm and affectionate with her, but yet in his manner, his tone, and his caresses there had been a shade of light irony, the coarse condescension of a happy man who was, besides, almost twice her age. All the time she had called him kind, exceptional, lofty; obviously he had seemed to her different from what he really was, so he had unintentionally deceived her....

Here at the station was already a scent of autumn; it was a cold evening.

“It’s time for me to go north,” thought Gurov as he left the platform. “High time!”

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At home in Moscow everything was in its winter routine; the stoves were heated, and in the morning it was still dark when the children were having breakfast and getting ready for school, and the nurse would light the lamp

for a short time. The frosts had begun already. When the first snow has fallen, on the first day of sledge-driving it is pleasant to see the white earth, the white roofs, to draw soft, delicious breath, and the season brings back the days of one's youth. The old limes and birches, white with hoar-frost, have a good-natured expression; they are nearer to one's heart than cypresses and palms, and near them one doesn't want to be thinking of the sea and the mountains.

Gurov was Moscow born; he arrived in Moscow on a fine frosty day, and when he put on his fur coat and warm gloves, and walked along Petrovka, and when on Saturday evening he heard the ringing of the bells, his recent trip and the places he had seen lost all charm for him. Little by little he became absorbed in Moscow life, greedily read three newspapers a day, and declared he did not read the Moscow papers on principle! He already felt a longing to go to restaurants, clubs, dinner-parties, anniversary celebrations, and he felt flattered at entertaining distinguished lawyers and artists, and at playing cards with a professor at the doctors' club. He could already eat a whole plateful of salt fish and cabbage.

In another month, he fancied, the image of Anna Sergeyevna would be shrouded in a mist in his memory, and only from time to time would visit him in his dreams with a touching smile as others did. But more than a month passed, real winter had come, and everything was still clear in his memory as though he had parted with Anna Sergeyevna only the day before. And his memories glowed more and more vividly. When in the evening stillness he heard from his study the voices of his children, preparing their lessons, or when he listened to a song or the organ at the restaurant, or the storm howled in the chimney, suddenly everything would rise up in his memory: what had happened on the groyne, and the early morning with the mist on the mountains, and the steamer coming from Theodosia, and the kisses. He would pace a long time about his room, remembering it all and smiling; then his memories passed into dreams, and in his fancy the past was mingled with what was to come. Anna Sergeyevna did not visit him in dreams, but followed him about everywhere like a shadow and haunted him. When he shut his eyes he saw her as though she were living before him, and she seemed to him lovelier, younger, tenderer than she was; and he imagined himself finer than he had been in Yalta. In the evenings she peeped out at him from the bookcase, from the fireplace, from the corner—he heard her breathing, the caressing rustle of her dress. In the street he watched the women, looking for some one like her.

He was tormented by an intense desire to confide his memories to some one. But in his home it was impossible to talk of his love, and he had no one outside; he could not talk to his tenants nor to any one at the bank. And what had he to talk of? Had he been in love, then? Had there been anything beautiful, poetical, or edifying or simply interesting in his relations with Anna Sergeyevna? And there was nothing for him but to talk vaguely of love, of woman, and no one guessed what it meant; only his wife twitched her black eyebrows, and said:

“The part of a lady-killer does not suit you at all, Dimitri.”

One evening, coming out of the doctors' club with an official with whom he had been playing cards, he could not resist saying:

“If only you knew what a fascinating woman I made the acquaintance of in Yalta!”

The official got into his sledge and was driving away, but turned suddenly and shouted:

“Dmitri Dmitritch!”

“What?”

“You were right this evening: the sturgeon was a bit too strong!”

These words, so ordinary, for some reason moved Gurov to indignation, and struck him as degrading and unclean. What savage manners, what people! What senseless nights, what uninteresting, uneventful days! The rage for card-playing, the gluttony, the drunkenness, the continual talk always about the same thing. Useless pursuits and conversations always about the same things absorb the better part of one’s time, the better part of one’s strength, and in the end there is left a life grovelling and curtailed, worthless and trivial, and there is no escaping or getting away from it—just as though one were in a madhouse or a prison.

Gurov did not sleep all night, and was filled with indignation. And he had a headache all next day. And the next night he slept badly; he sat up in bed, thinking, or paced up and down his room. He was sick of his children, sick of the bank; he had no desire to go anywhere or to talk of anything.

In the holidays in December he prepared for a journey, and told his wife he was going to Petersburg to do something in the interests of a young friend—and he set off for S—. What for? He did not very well know himself. He wanted to see Anna Sergeyevna and to talk with her—to arrange a meeting, if possible.

He reached S— in the morning, and took the best room at the hotel, in which the floor was covered with grey army cloth, and on the table was an inkstand, grey with dust and adorned with a figure on horseback, with its hat in its hand and its head broken off. The hotel porter gave him the necessary information; Von Diderits lived in a house of his own in Old Gontcharny Street—it was not far from the hotel: he was rich and lived in good style, and had his own horses; every one in the town knew him. The porter pronounced the name “Dridirits.”

Gurov went without haste to Old Gontcharny Street and found the house. Just opposite the house stretched a long grey fence adorned with nails.

“One would run away from a fence like that,” thought Gurov, looking from the fence to the windows of the house and back again.

He considered: to-day was a holiday, and the husband would probably be at home. And in any case it would be tactless to go into the house and upset her. If he were to send her a note it might fall into her husband’s hands, and then it might ruin everything. The best thing was to trust to chance. And he kept walking up and down the

street by the fence, waiting for the chance. He saw a beggar go in at the gate and dogs fly at him; then an hour later he heard a piano, and the sounds were faint and indistinct. Probably it was Anna Sergeyevna playing. The front door suddenly opened, and an old woman came out, followed by the familiar white Pomeranian. Gurov was on the point of calling to the dog, but his heart began beating violently, and in his excitement he could not remember the dog's name.

He walked up and down, and loathed the grey fence more and more, and by now he thought irritably that Anna Sergeyevna had forgotten him, and was perhaps already amusing herself with some one else, and that that was very natural in a young woman who had nothing to look at from morning till night but that confounded fence. He went back to his hotel room and sat for a long while on the sofa, not knowing what to do, then he had dinner and a long nap.

“How stupid and worrying it is!” he thought when he woke and looked at the dark windows: it was already evening. “Here I've had a good sleep for some reason. What shall I do in the night?”

He sat on the bed, which was covered by a cheap grey blanket, such as one sees in hospitals, and he taunted himself in his vexation:

“So much for the lady with the dog ... so much for the adventure.... You're in a nice fix....”

That morning at the station a poster in large letters had caught his eye. “The Geisha” was to be performed for the first time. He thought of this and went to the theatre.

“It's quite possible she may go to the first performance,” he thought.

The theatre was full. As in all provincial theatres, there was a fog above the chandelier, the gallery was noisy and restless; in the front row the local dandies were standing up before the beginning of the performance, with their hands behind them; in the Governor's box the Governor's daughter, wearing a boa, was sitting in the front seat, while the Governor himself lurked modestly behind the curtain with only his hands visible; the orchestra was a long time tuning up; the stage curtain swayed. All the time the audience were coming in and taking their seats Gurov looked at them eagerly.

Anna Sergeyevna, too, came in. She sat down in the third row, and when Gurov looked at her his heart contracted, and he understood clearly that for him there was in the whole world no creature so near, so precious, and so important to him; she, this little woman, in no way remarkable, lost in a provincial crowd, with a vulgar lorgnette in her hand, filled his whole life now, was his sorrow and his joy, the one happiness that he now desired for himself, and to the sounds of the inferior orchestra, of the wretched provincial violins, he thought how lovely she was. He thought and dreamed.

A young man with small side-whiskers, tall and stooping, came in with Anna Sergeyevna and sat down beside

her; he bent his head at every step and seemed to be continually bowing. Most likely this was the husband whom at Yalta, in a rush of bitter feeling, she had called a flunkey. And there really was in his long figure, his side-whiskers, and the small bald patch on his head, something of the flunkey's obsequiousness; his smile was sugary, and in his buttonhole there was some badge of distinction like the number on a waiter.

During the first interval the husband went away to smoke; she remained alone in her stall. Gurov, who was sitting in the stalls, too, went up to her and said in a trembling voice, with a forced smile:

“Good-evening.”

She glanced at him and turned pale, then glanced again with horror, unable to believe her eyes, and tightly gripped the fan and the lorgnette in her hands, evidently struggling with herself not to faint. Both were silent. She was sitting, he was standing, frightened by her confusion and not venturing to sit down beside her. The violins and the flute began tuning up. He felt suddenly frightened; it seemed as though all the people in the boxes were looking at them. She got up and went quickly to the door; he followed her, and both walked senselessly along passages, and up and down stairs, and figures in legal, scholastic, and civil service uniforms, all wearing badges, flitted before their eyes. They caught glimpses of ladies, of fur coats hanging on pegs; the draughts blew on them, bringing a smell of stale tobacco. And Gurov, whose heart was beating violently, thought:

“Oh, heavens! Why are these people here and this orchestra!...”

And at that instant he recalled how when he had seen Anna Sergeyevna off at the station he had thought that everything was over and they would never meet again. But how far they were still from the end!

On the narrow, gloomy staircase over which was written “To the Amphitheatre,” she stopped.

“How you have frightened me!” she said, breathing hard, still pale and overwhelmed. “Oh, how you have frightened me! I am half dead. Why have you come? Why?”

“But do understand, Anna, do understand ...” he said hastily in a low voice. “I entreat you to understand....”

She looked at him with dread, with entreaty, with love; she looked at him intently, to keep his features more distinctly in her memory.

“I am so unhappy,” she went on, not heeding him. “I have thought of nothing but you all the time; I live only in the thought of you. And I wanted to forget, to forget you; but why, oh, why, have you come?”

On the landing above them two schoolboys were smoking and looking down, but that was nothing to Gurov; he drew Anna Sergeyevna to him, and began kissing her face, her cheeks, and her hands.

“What are you doing, what are you doing!” she cried in horror, pushing him away. “We are mad. Go away today; go away at once.... I beseech you by all that is sacred, I implore you.... There are people coming this way!”

Some one was coming up the stairs.

“You must go away,” Anna Sergeyevna went on in a whisper. “Do you hear, Dmitri Dmitritch? I will come and see you in Moscow. I have never been happy; I am miserable now, and I never, never shall be happy, never! Don’t make me suffer still more! I swear I’ll come to Moscow. But now let us part. My precious, good, dear one, we must part!”

She pressed his hand and began rapidly going downstairs, looking round at him, and from her eyes he could see that she really was unhappy. Gurov stood for a little while, listened, then, when all sound had died away, he found his coat and left the theatre.

## IV

And Anna Sergeyevna began coming to see him in Moscow. Once in two or three months she left S—, telling her husband that she was going to consult a doctor about an internal complaint—and her husband believed her, and did not believe her. In Moscow she stayed at the Slaviansky Bazaar hotel, and at once sent a man in a red cap to Gurov. Gurov went to see her, and no one in Moscow knew of it.

Once he was going to see her in this way on a winter morning (the messenger had come the evening before when he was out). With him walked his daughter, whom he wanted to take to school: it was on the way. Snow was falling in big wet flakes.

“It’s three degrees above freezing-point, and yet it is snowing,” said Gurov to his daughter. “The thaw is only on the surface of the earth; there is quite a different temperature at a greater height in the atmosphere.”

“And why are there no thunderstorms in the winter, father?”

He explained that, too. He talked, thinking all the while that he was going to see her, and no living soul knew of it, and probably never would know. He had two lives: one, open, seen and known by all who cared to know, full of relative truth and of relative falsehood, exactly like the lives of his friends and acquaintances; and another life running its course in secret. And through some strange, perhaps accidental, conjunction of circumstances, everything that was essential, of interest and of value to him, everything in which he was sincere and did not deceive himself, everything that made the kernel of his life, was hidden from other people; and all that was false in him, the sheath in which he hid himself to conceal the truth—such, for instance, as his work in the bank, his discussions at the club, his “lower race,” his presence with his wife at anniversary festivities—all that was open. And he judged of others by himself, not believing in what he saw, and always believing that every man had his

real, most interesting life under the cover of secrecy and under the cover of night. All personal life rested on secrecy, and possibly it was partly on that account that civilised man was so nervously anxious that personal privacy should be respected.

After leaving his daughter at school, Gurov went on to the Slaviansky Bazaar. He took off his fur coat below, went upstairs, and softly knocked at the door. Anna Sergeyevna, wearing his favourite grey dress, exhausted by the journey and the suspense, had been expecting him since the evening before. She was pale; she looked at him, and did not smile, and he had hardly come in when she fell on his breast. Their kiss was slow and prolonged, as though they had not met for two years.

“Well, how are you getting on there?” he asked. “What news?”

“Wait; I’ll tell you directly.... I can’t talk.”

She could not speak; she was crying. She turned away from him, and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

“Let her have her cry out. I’ll sit down and wait,” he thought, and he sat down in an arm-chair.

Then he rang and asked for tea to be brought him, and while he drank his tea she remained standing at the window with her back to him. She was crying from emotion, from the miserable consciousness that their life was so hard for them; they could only meet in secret, hiding themselves from people, like thieves! Was not their life shattered?

“Come, do stop!” he said.

It was evident to him that this love of theirs would not soon be over, that he could not see the end of it. Anna Sergeyevna grew more and more attached to him. She adored him, and it was unthinkable to say to her that it was bound to have an end some day; besides, she would not have believed it!

He went up to her and took her by the shoulders to say something affectionate and cheering, and at that moment he saw himself in the looking-glass.

His hair was already beginning to turn grey. And it seemed strange to him that he had grown so much older, so much plainer during the last few years. The shoulders on which his hands rested were warm and quivering. He felt compassion for this life, still so warm and lovely, but probably already not far from beginning to fade and wither like his own. Why did she love him so much? He always seemed to women different from what he was, and they loved in him not himself, but the man created by their imagination, whom they had been eagerly seeking all their lives; and afterwards, when they noticed their mistake, they loved him all the same. And not one of them had been happy with him. Time passed, he had made their acquaintance, got on with them, parted, but he had never once loved; it was anything you like, but not love.



And only now when his head was grey he had fallen properly, really in love—for the first time in his life.

Anna Sergeyevna and he loved each other like people very close and akin, like husband and wife, like tender friends; it seemed to them that fate itself had meant them for one another, and they could not understand why he had a wife and she a husband; and it was as though they were a pair of birds of passage, caught and forced to live in different cages. They forgave each other for what they were ashamed of in their past, they forgave everything in the present, and felt that this love of theirs had changed them both.

In moments of depression in the past he had comforted himself with any arguments that came into his mind, but now he no longer cared for arguments; he felt profound compassion, he wanted to be sincere and tender....

“Don’t cry, my darling,” he said. “You’ve had your cry; that’s enough.... Let us talk now, let us think of some plan.”

Then they spent a long while taking counsel together, talked of how to avoid the necessity for secrecy, for deception, for living in different towns and not seeing each other for long at a time. How could they be free from this intolerable bondage?

“How? How?” he asked, clutching his head. “How?”

And it seemed as though in a little while the solution would be found, and then a new and splendid life would begin; and it was clear to both of them that they had still a long, long road before them, and that the most complicated and difficult part of it was only just beginning.

“[The Lady with Dog](#)” by Anton Chekov, [Project Gutenberg](#) is in the Public Domain.

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## Amy Tan



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Amy Tan is a Chinese-American author best known for her novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), which was adapted into a 1993 film. She is also known for other novels, short story collections, children’s books, and a memoir. Much of her work explores relationships between mothers, daughters, and sisters. Tan’s mother’s history before coming to America and the immigrant experience is woven through several of the works. Tan has written several other novels, including *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005), and *The Valley of Amazement* (2013). Tan has also written two children’s books: *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), which was turned into an animated series that aired on PBS. Tan’s latest book is *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* (2024), an illustrated account of her experiences with birding and the 2016-era sociopolitical climate.

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### The Bonesetter’s Daughter

Read an excerpt from Amy Tan’s novel, [The Bonesetter’s Daughter](#).

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## Henrik Ibsen



“Portrait of Henrik Ibsen, 1863-64” by Daniel Georg Nyblin via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the public domain.

Henrik Ibsen is considered one of the pioneers of modern realism, in both literature as well as theater. His plays such as *A Doll's House* (1879), *Hedda Gabler*, and *Ghosts* challenged conventional norms and exposed underlying tensions within society. Ibsen's representation of identity is marked by his portrayal of complex, multidimensional characters who defy stereotypes and societal expectations. Some people in society, including some of Ibsen's contemporaries objected to Ibsen's venture into realism. Because Ibsen's plays addressed moral social issues on the stage, such as venereal disease, gender politics, and political corruption, many objected. However, Ibsen contended that “art need not be only the realm and privilege of the aristocracy,” and his protagonists often rebelled against the constraints of their roles.

### *A Doll's House*

#### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Torvald Helmer.

Nora, his wife.

Doctor Rank.

Mrs. Linde.

Nils Krogstad.

Helmer's three young children.

Anne, their nurse.

A Housemaid.

A Porter.

*(The action takes place in Helmer's house.)*

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## A DOLL'S HOUSE

### ACT I

(SCENE.—*A room furnished comfortably and tastefully, but not extravagantly. At the back, a door to the right leads to the entrance-hall, another to the left leads to Helmer's study. Between the doors stands a piano. In the middle of the left-hand wall is a door, and beyond it a window. Near the window are a round table, armchairs and a small sofa. In the right-hand wall, at the farther end, another door; and on the same side, nearer the footlights, a stove, two easy chairs and a rocking-chair; between the stove and the door, a small table. Engravings on the wall; a cabinet with china and other small objects; a small book-case with well-bound books. The floors are carpeted, and a fire burns in the stove. It is winter.*)

*A bell rings in the hall; shortly afterwards the door is heard to open. Enter NORA, humming a tune and in high spirits. She is in out-door dress and carries a number of parcels; these she lays on the table to the right. She leaves the outer door open after her, and through it is seen a PORTER who is carrying a Christmas Tree and a basket, which he gives to the MAID who has opened the door.)*

*Nora.* Hide the Christmas Tree carefully, Helen. Be sure the children do not see it till this evening, when it is dressed. *(To the PORTER, taking out her purse.)* How much?

*Porter.* Sixpence.

*Nora.* There is a shilling. No, keep the change. *(The PORTER thanks her, and goes out. NORA shuts the door. She is laughing to herself, as she takes off her hat and coat. She takes a packet of macaroons from her pocket and eats one or two; then goes cautiously to her husband's door and listens.)* Yes, he is in. *(Still humming, she goes to the table on the right.)*

*Helmer (calls out from his room).* Is that my little lark twittering out there?

*Nora (busy opening some of the parcels).* Yes, it is!

*Helmer.* Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

*Nora.* Yes!

*Helmer.* When did my squirrel come home?

*Nora.* Just now. (*Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.*) Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

*Helmer.* Don't disturb me. (*A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.*) Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

*Nora.* Yes, but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economize.

*Helmer.* Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly.

*Nora.* Yes, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money.

*Helmer.* Yes, after the New Year; but then it will be a whole quarter before the salary is due.

*Nora.* Pooh! we can borrow till then.

*Helmer.* Nora! (*Goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*) The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty pounds today, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

*Nora* (*putting her hands over his mouth*). Oh! don't say such horrid things.

*Helmer.* Still, suppose that happened,—what then?

*Nora.* If that were to happen, I don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not.

*Helmer.* Yes, but what about the people who had lent it?

*Nora.* They? Who would bother about them? I should not know who they were.

*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.

*Nora* (*moving towards the stove*). As you please, Torvald.

*Helmer* (*following her*). Come, come, my little skylark must not droop her wings. What is this! Is my little squirrel out of temper? (*Taking out his purse.*) Nora, what do you think I have got here?

*Nora (turning round quickly).* Money!

*Helmer.* There you are. (*Gives her some money.*) Do you think I don't know what a lot is wanted for housekeeping at Christmas-time?

*Nora (counting).* Ten shillings—a pound—two pounds! Thank you, thank you, Torvald; that will keep me going for a long time.

*Helmer.* Indeed it must.

*Nora.* Yes, yes, it will. But come here and let me show you what I have bought. And ah so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a sword; and a horse and a trumpet for Bob; and a doll and dolly's bedstead for Emmy.—they are very plain, but anyway she will soon break them in pieces. And here are dress-lengths and handkerchiefs for the maids; old Anne ought really to have something better.

*Helmer.* And what is in this parcel?

*Nora (crying out).* No, no! you mustn't see that till this evening.

*Helmer.* Very well. But now tell me, you extravagant little person, what would you like for yourself?

*Nora.* For myself? Oh, I am sure I don't want anything.

*Helmer.* Yes, but you must. Tell me something reasonable that you would particularly like to have.

*Nora.* No, I really can't think of anything—unless, Torvald—

*Helmer.* Well?

*Nora (playing with his coat buttons, and without raising her eyes to his).* If you really want to give me something, you might—you might—

*Helmer.* Well, out with it!

*Nora (speaking quickly).* You might give me money, Torvald. Only just as much as you can afford; and then one of these days I will buy something with it.

*Helmer.* But, Nora—

*Nora.* Oh, do! dear Torvald; please, please do! Then I will wrap it up in beautiful gilt paper and hang it on the Christmas Tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

*Helmer.* What are little people called that are always wasting money?

*Nora.* Spendthrifts—I know. Let us do as you suggest, Torvald, and then I shall have time to think what I am most in want of. That is a very sensible plan, isn't it?

*Helmer (smiling).* Indeed it is—that is to say, if you were really to save out of the money I give you, and then really buy something for yourself. But if you spend it all on the housekeeping and any number of unnecessary things, then I merely have to pay up again.

*Nora.* Oh but, Torvald—

*Helmer.* You can't deny it, my dear, little Nora. (*Puts his arm round her waist.*) It's a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

*Nora.* It's a shame to say that. I do really save all I can.

*Helmer (laughing).* That's very true,—all you can. But you can't save anything!

*Nora (smiling quietly and happily).* You haven't any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald.

*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.

*Nora.* Ah, I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

*Helmer.* And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you are, my sweet little skylark. But, do you know, it strikes me that you are looking rather—what shall I say—rather uneasy today?

*Nora.* Do I?

*Helmer.* You do, really. Look straight at me.

*Nora (looks at him).* Well?

*Helmer (wagging his finger at her).* Hasn't Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town today?

*Nora.* No; what makes you think that?

*Helmer.* Hasn't she paid a visit to the confectioner's?

*Nora.* No, I assure you, Torvald—

*Helmer.* Not been nibbling sweets?

*Nora.* No, certainly not.

*Helmer.* Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

*Nora.* No, Torvald, I assure you really—

*Helmer.* There, there, of course I was only joking.

*Nora (going to the table on the right).* I should not think of going against your wishes.

*Helmer.* No, I am sure of that; besides, you gave me your word—(*Going up to her.*) Keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, my darling. They will all be revealed tonight when the Christmas Tree is lit, no doubt.

*Nora.* Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

*Helmer.* No. But there is no need; as a matter of course he will come to dinner with us. However, I will ask him when he comes in this morning. I have ordered some good wine. Nora, you can't think how I am looking forward to this evening.

*Nora.* So am I! And how the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

*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?

*Nora.* It's wonderful!

*Helmer.* Do you remember last Christmas? For a full three weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till long after midnight, making ornaments for the Christmas Tree and all the other fine things that were to be a surprise to us. It was the dullest three weeks I ever spent!

*Nora.* I didn't find it dull.

*Helmer (smiling).* But there was precious little result, Nora.

*Nora.* Oh, you shouldn't tease me about that again. How could I help the cat's going in and tearing everything to pieces?

*Helmer.* Of course you couldn't, poor little girl. You had the best of intentions to please us all, and that's the main thing. But it is a good thing that our hard times are over.

*Nora.* Yes, it is really wonderful.



*Helmer.* This time I needn't sit here and be dull all alone, and you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands—

*Nora (clapping her hands).* No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so! (*Taking his arm.*) Now I will tell you how I have been thinking we ought to arrange things, Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over—(*A bell rings in the hall.*) There's the bell. (*She tidies the room a little.*) There's someone at the door. What a nuisance!

*Helmer.* If it is a caller, remember I am not at home.

*Maid (in the doorway).* A lady to see you, ma'am,—a stranger.

*Nora.* Ask her to come in.

*Maid (to HELMER).* The doctor came at the same time, sir.

*Helmer.* Did he go straight into my room?

*Maid.* Yes, sir.

(HELMER goes into his room. The MAID ushers in MRS. LINDE, who is in traveling dress, and shuts the door.)

*Mrs Linde (in a dejected and timid voice).* How do you do, Nora?

*Nora (doubtfully).* How do you do—

*Mrs. Linde.* You don't recognize me, I suppose.

*Nora* No, I don't know—yes, to be sure, I seem to—(*Suddenly.*) Yes! Christine! Is it really you?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, it is I.

*Nora.* Christine! To think of my not recognising you! And yet how could I—(*In a gentle voice.*) How you have altered, Christine!

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, I have indeed. In nine, ten long years—

*Nora.* Is it so long since we met? I suppose it is. The last eight years have been a happy time for me, I can tell you. And so now you have come into the town, and have taken this long journey in winter—that was plucky of you.

*Mrs. Linde.* I arrived by steamer this morning.

*Nora.* To have some fun at Christmas-time, of course. How delightful! We will have such fun together! But take off your things. You are not cold, I hope. (*Helps her.*) Now we will sit down by the stove, and be cosy. No, take this arm-chair; I will sit here in the rocking-chair. (*Takes her hands.*) Now you look like your old self again; it was only the first moment—You are a little paler, Christine, and perhaps a little thinner.

*Mrs. Linde.* And much, much older, Nora.

*Nora.* Perhaps a little older; very, very little; certainly not much. (*Stops suddenly and speaks seriously.*) What a thoughtless creature I am, chattering away like this. My poor, dear Christine, do forgive me.

*Mrs. Linde.* What do you mean, Nora?

*Nora (gently).* Poor Christine, you are a widow.

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes; it is three years ago now.

*Nora.* Yes, I knew; I saw it in the papers. I assure you, Christine, I meant ever so often to write to you at the time, but I always put it off and something always prevented me.

*Mrs. Linde.* I quite understand, dear.

*Nora.* It was very bad of me, Christine. Poor thing, how you must have suffered. And he left you nothing?

*Mrs. Linde.* No.

*Nora.* And no children?

*Mrs. Linde.* No.

*Nora.* Nothing at all, then?

*Mrs. Linde.* Not even any sorrow or grief to live upon.

*Nora (looking incredulously at her).* But, Christine, is that possible?

*Mrs. Linde (smiles sadly and strokes her hair).* It sometimes happens, Nora.

*Nora.* So you are quite alone. How dreadfully sad that must be. I have three lovely children. You can't see them just now, for they are out with their nurse. But now you must tell me all about it.

*Mrs. Linde.* No, no; I want to hear about you.

*Nora.* No, you must begin. I mustn't be selfish today; today I must only think of your affairs. But there is one thing I must tell you. Do you know we have just had a great piece of good luck?

*Mrs. Linde.* No, what is it?

*Nora.* Just fancy, my husband has been made manager of the Bank!

*Mrs. Linde.* Your husband? What good luck!

*Nora.* Yes tremendous! A barrister's profession is such an uncertain thing, especially if he won't undertake unsavoury cases; and naturally Torvald has never been willing to do that, and I quite agree with him. You may imagine how pleased we are! He is to take up his work in the Bank at the New Year, and then he will have a big salary and lots of commissions. For the future we can live quite differently—we can do just as we like. I feel so relieved and so happy, Christine! It will be splendid to have heaps of money and not need to have any anxiety, won't it?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, anyhow I think it would be delightful to have what one needs.

*Nora.* No, not only what one needs, but heaps and heaps of money.

*Mrs. Linde (smiling).* Nora, Nora, haven't you learnt sense yet? In our schooldays you were a great spendthrift.

*Nora (laughing).* Yes, that is what Torvald says now. (*Wags her finger at her.*) But "Nora, Nora" is not so silly as you think. We have not been in a position for me to waste money. We have both had to work.

*Mrs. Linde.* You too?

*Nora.* Yes; odds and ends, needlework, crochet-work, embroidery, and that kind of thing. (*Dropping her voice.*) And other things as well. You know Torvald left his office when we were married? There was no prospect of promotion there, and he had to try and earn more than before. But during the first year he overworked himself dreadfully. You see, he had to make money every way he could, and he worked early and late; but he couldn't stand it, and fell dreadfully ill, and the doctors said it was necessary for him to go south.

*Mrs. Linde.* You spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

*Nora.* Yes. It was no easy matter to get away, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar was born; but naturally we had to go. It was a wonderfully beautiful journey, and it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a tremendous lot of money, Christine.

*Mrs. Linde.* So I should think.

*Nora.* It cost about two hundred and fifty pounds. That's a lot, isn't it?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, and in emergencies like that it is lucky to have the money.

*Nora.* I ought to tell you that we had it from papa.

*Mrs. Linde.* Oh, I see. It was just about that time that he died, wasn't it?

*Nora.* Yes; and, just think of it, I couldn't go and nurse him. I was expecting little Ivar's birth every day and I had my poor sick Torvald to look after. My dear, kind father—I never saw him again, Christine. That was the saddest time I have known since our marriage.

*Mrs. Linde.* I know how fond you were of him. And then you went off to Italy?

*Nora.* Yes; you see we had money then, and the doctors insisted on our going, so we started a month later.

*Mrs. Linde.* And your husband came back quite well?

*Nora.* As sound as a bell!

*Mrs. Linde.* But—the doctor?

*Nora.* What doctor?

*Mrs. Linde.* I thought your maid said the gentleman who arrived here just as I did, was the doctor?

*Nora.* Yes, that was Doctor Rank, but he doesn't come here professionally. He is our greatest friend, and comes in at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour's illness since then, and our children are strong and healthy and so am I. (*Jumps up and claps her hands.*) Christine! Christine! it's good to be alive and happy!—But how horrid of me; I am talking of nothing but my own affairs. (*Sits on a stool near her, and rests her arms on her knees.*) You mustn't be angry with me. Tell me, is it really true that you did not love your husband? Why did you marry him?

*Mrs. Linde.* My mother was alive then, and was bedridden and helpless, and I had to provide for my two younger brothers; so I did not think I was justified in refusing his offer.

*Nora.* No, perhaps you were quite right. He was rich at that time, then?

*Mrs. Linde.* I believe he was quite well off. But his business was a precarious one; and, when he died, it all went to pieces and there was nothing left.

*Nora.* And then?—

*Mrs. Linde.* Well, I had to turn my hand to anything I could find—first a small shop, then a small school, and so on. The last three years have seemed like one long working-day, with no rest. Now it is at an end, Nora. My

poor mother needs me no more, for she is gone; and the boys do not need me either; they have got situations and can shift for themselves.

*Nora.* What a relief you must feel it—

*Mrs. Linde.* No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for any more. (*Gets up restlessly.*) That is why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work—office work of some kind—

*Nora.* But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

*Mrs. Linde (walking to the window).* I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

*Nora (rising).* Oh, don't be angry with me.

*Mrs. Linde (going up to her).* 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 look-out 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.

*Nora.* How do you mean?—Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Torvald could get you something to do.

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

*Nora.* He must, Christine. Just leave it to me; I will broach the subject very cleverly—I will think of something that will please him very much. It will make me so happy to be of some use to you.

*Mrs. Linde.* How kind you are, Nora, to be so anxious to help me! It is doubly kind in you, for you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life.

*Nora.* I—? I know so little of them?

*Mrs. Linde (smiling).* My dear! Small household cares and that sort of thing!—You are a child, Nora.

*Nora (tosses her head and crosses the stage).* You ought not to be so superior.

*Mrs. Linde.* No?

*Nora.* You are just like all the others. They all think that I am incapable of anything really serious—

*Mrs. Linde.* Come, come—

*Nora.*—that I have gone through nothing in this world of cares.

*Mrs. Linde.* But, my dear Nora, you have just told me all your troubles.

*Nora.* Pooh!—those were trifles. (*Lowering her voice.*) I have not told you the important thing.

*Mrs. Linde.* The important thing? What do you mean?

*Nora.* You look down upon me altogether, Christine—but you ought not to. You are proud, aren't you, of having-worked so hard and so long for your mother?

*Mrs. Linde.* Indeed, I don't look down on any one. But it is true that I am both proud and glad to think that I was privileged to make the end of my mother's life almost free from care.

*Nora.* And you are proud to think of what you have done for your brothers.

*Mrs. Linde.* I think I have the right to be.

*Nora.* I think so, too. But now, listen to this; I too have something to be proud and glad of.

*Mrs. Linde.* I have no doubt you have. But what do you refer to?

*Nora.* Speak low. Suppose Torvald were to hear! He mustn't on any account—no one in the world must know, Christine, except you.

*Mrs. Linde.* But what is it?

*Nora.* Come here. (*Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.*) Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

*Mrs. Linde.* "Saved"? How?

*Nora.* I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would never have recovered if he had not gone there—

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds.

*Nora (smiling).* Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but—

*Mrs. Linde.* But.—

*Nora.* Papa didn't give us a shilling. It was I who procured the money.

*Mrs. Linde.* You? All that large sum?

*Nora.* Two hundred and fifty pounds. What do you think of that?

*Mrs. Linde.* But, Nora, how could you possibly do it? Did you win a prize in the Lottery?

*Nora (contemptuously).* In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.

*Mrs. Linde.* But where did you get it from, then?

*Nora (humming and smiling with an air of mystery).* Hm, hu! Aha!

*Mrs. Linde.* Because you couldn't have borrowed it.

*Nora.* Couldn't I? Why not?

*Mrs. Linde.* No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent.

*Nora (tossing her head).* Oh, if it is a wife who has any head for business—a wife who has the wit to be a little bit clever—

*Mrs. Linde.* I don't understand it at all, Nora.

*Nora.* There is no need you should. I never said I had borrowed the money. I may have got it some other way. (*Lies back on the sofa.*) Perhaps I got it from some other admirer. When anyone is as attractive as I am—

*Mrs. Linde.* You are a mad creature.

*Nora.* Now, you know you're full of curiosity, Christine.

*Mrs. Linde.* Listen to me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little bit imprudent?

*Nora (sits up straight).* Is it imprudent to save your husband's life?

*Mrs. Linde.* It seems to me imprudent, without his knowledge, to—

*Nora.* But it was absolutely necessary that he should not know! My goodness, can't you understand that? It was necessary he should have no idea what a dangerous condition he was in. It was to me that the doctors came and said that his life was in danger, and that the only thing to save him was to live in the south. Do you suppose I didn't try, first of all, to get what I wanted as if it were for myself? 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. Very well, I thought, you must be saved—and that was how I came to devise a way out of the difficulty—

*Mrs. Linde.* And did your husband never get to know from your father that the money had not come from him?

*Nora.* No, never. Papa died just at that time. I had meant to let him into the secret and beg him never to reveal it. But he was so ill then—alas, there never was any need to tell him.

*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.

*Mrs. Linde.* Do you mean never to tell him about it?

*Nora (meditatively, and with a half smile.)* Yes—some day, perhaps, after many years, when I am no longer as nice-looking as I am now. Don't laugh at me! I mean, of course, when Torvald is no longer as devoted to me as he is now; when my dancing and dressing-up and reciting have palled on him; then it may be a good thing to have something in reserve—*(Breaking off.)* What nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you think of my great secret, Christine? Do you still think I am of no use? I can tell you, too, that this affair has caused me a lot of worry. It has been by no means easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. I may tell you that there is something that is called, in business, quarterly interest, and another thing called payment in instalments, and it is always so dreadfully difficult to manage them. I have had to save a little here and there, where I could, you understand. I have not been able to put aside much from my housekeeping money, for Torvald must have a good table. I couldn't let my children be shabbily dressed; I have felt obliged to use up all he gave me for them, the sweet little darlings!

*Mrs. Linde.* So it has all had to come out of your own necessities of life, poor Nora?

*Nora.* Of course. Besides, I was the one responsible for it. Whenever Torvald has given me money for new dresses and such things, I have never spent more than half of it; I have always bought the simplest and cheapest things. Thank Heaven, any clothes look well on me, and so Torvald has never noticed it. But it was often very hard on me, Christine—because it is delightful to be really well dressed, isn't it?

*Mrs. Linde.* Quite so.

*Nora.* Well, then I have found other ways of earning money. Last winter I was lucky enough to get a lot of copying to do; so I locked myself up and sat writing every evening until quite late at night. Many a time I was desperately tired; but all the same it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man.



*Mrs. Linde.* How much have you been able to pay off in that way?

*Nora.* I can't tell you exactly. You see, it is very difficult to keep an account of a business matter of that kind. I only know that I have paid every penny that I could scrape together. Many a time I was at my wits' end. (*Smiles.*) Then I used to sit here and imagine that a rich old gentleman had fallen in love with me—

*Mrs. Linde.* What! Who was it?

*Nora.* Be quiet!—that he had died; and that when his will was opened it contained, written in big letters, the instruction: "The lovely Mrs. Nora Helmer is to have all I possess paid over to her at once in cash."

*Mrs. Linde.* But, my dear Nora—who could the man be?

*Nora.* Good gracious, can't you understand? There was no old gentleman at all; it was only something that I used to sit here and imagine, when I couldn't think of any way of procuring money. But it's all the same now; the tiresome old person can stay where he is, as far as I am concerned; I don't care about him or his will either, for I am free from care now. (*Jumps up.*) My goodness, it's delightful to think of, Christine! Free from care! To be able to be free from care, quite free from care; to be able to play and romp with the children; to be able to keep the house beautifully and have everything just as Torvald likes it! And, think of it, soon the spring will come and the big blue sky! Perhaps we shall be able to take a little trip—perhaps I shall see the sea again! Oh, it's a wonderful thing to be alive and be happy. (*A bell is heard in the hall.*)

*Mrs. Linde (rising).* There is the bell; perhaps I had better go.

*Nora.* No, don't go; no one will come in here; it is sure to be for Torvald.

*Servant (at the hall door).* Excuse me, ma'am—there is a gentleman to see the master, and as the doctor is with him—

*Nora.* Who is it?

*Krogstad (at the door).* It is I, Mrs. Helmer. (*Mrs. LINDE starts, trembles, and turns to the window.*)

*Nora (takes a step towards him, and speaks in a strained low voice).* You? What is it? What do you want to see my husband about?

*Krogstad.* Bank business—in a way. I have a small post in the Bank, and I hear your husband is to be our chief now—

*Nora.* Then it is—

*Krogstad.* Nothing but dry business matters, Mrs. Helmers; absolutely nothing else.

*Nora.* Be so good as to go into the study then. (*She bows indifferently to him and shuts the door into the hall; then comes back and makes up the fire in the stove.*)

*Mrs. Linde.* Nora—who was that man?

*Nora.* A lawyer, of the name of Krogstad.

*Mrs. Linde.* Then it really was he.

*Nora.* Do you know the man?

*Mrs. Linde.* I used to—many years ago. At one time he was a solicitor's clerk in our town.

*Nora.* Yes, he was.

*Mrs. Linde.* He is greatly altered.

*Nora.* He made a very unhappy marriage.

*Mrs. Linde.* He is a widower now, isn't he?

*Nora.* With several children. There now, it is burning up. (*Shuts the door of the stove and moves the rocking-chair aside.*)

*Mrs. Linde.* They say he carries on various kinds of business.

*Nora.* Really! Perhaps he does; I don't know anything about it. But don't let us think of business; it is so tiresome.

*Doctor Rank* (*comes out of HELMER'S study. Before he shuts the door he calls to him*). No, my dear fellow, I won't disturb you; I would rather go in to your wife for a little while. (*Shuts the door and sees Mrs. LINDE.*) I beg your pardon; I am afraid I am disturbing you too.

*Nora.* No, not at all. (*Introducing him.*) Doctor Rank, Mrs. Linde.

*Rank.* I have often heard Mrs. Linde's name mentioned here. I think I passed you on the stairs when I arrived, Mrs. Linde?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, I go up very slowly; I can't manage stairs well.

*Rank.* Ah! some slight internal weakness?

*Mrs. Linde.* No, the fact is I have been overworking myself.

*Rank.* Nothing more than that? Then I suppose you have come to town to amuse yourself with our entertainments?

*Mrs. Linde.* I have come to look for work.

*Rank.* Is that a good cure for overwork?

*Mrs. Linde.* One must live, Doctor Rank.

*Rank.* Yes, the general opinion seems to be that it is necessary.

*Nora.* Look here, Doctor Rank—you know you want to live.

*Rank.* Certainly. However wretched I may feel, I want to prolong the agony as long as possible. All my patients are like that. And so are those who are morally diseased; one of them, and a bad case, too, is at this very moment with Helmer—

*Mrs. Linde (sadly).* Ah!

*Nora.* Whom do you mean?

*Rank.* A lawyer of the name of Krogstad, a fellow you don't know at all. He suffers from a diseased moral character, Mrs. Helmer; but even he began talking of its being highly important that he should live.

*Nora.* Did he? What did he want to speak to Torvald about?

*Rank.* I have no idea; I only heard that it was something about the Bank.

*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 snuffing 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.

(*NORA, who has been absorbed in her thoughts, breaks out into smothered laughter and claps her hands.*)

*Rank.* Why do you laugh at that? Have you any notion what Society really is?

*Nora.* What do I care about tiresome Society? I am laughing at something quite different, something extremely amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the people who are employed in the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

*Rank.* Is that what you find so extremely amusing?

*Nora (smiling and humming).* That's my affair! (*Walking about the room.*) It's perfectly glorious to think that we have—that Torvald has so much power over so many people. (*Takes the packet from her pocket.*) Doctor Rank, what do you say to a macaroon?

*Rank.* What, macaroons? I thought they were forbidden here.

*Nora.* Yes, but these are some Christine gave me.

*Mrs. Linde.* What! I?—

*Nora.* Oh, well, don't be alarmed! You couldn't know that Torvald had forbidden them. I must tell you that he is afraid they will spoil my teeth. But, bah!—once in a way—That's so, isn't it, Doctor Rank? By your leave! (*Puts a macaroon into his mouth.*) You must have one too, Christine. And I shall have one, just a little one—or at most two. (*Walking about.*) I am tremendously happy. There is just one thing in the world now that I should dearly love to do.

*Rank.* Well, what is that?

*Nora.* It's something I should dearly love to say, if Torvald could hear me.

*Rank.* Well, why can't you say it?

*Nora.* No, I daren't; it's so shocking.

*Mrs. Linde.* Shocking?

*Rank.* Well, I should not advise you to say it. Still, with us you might. What is it you would so much like to say if Torvald could hear you?

*Nora.* I should just love to say—Well, I'm damned!

*Rank.* Are you mad?

*Mrs. Linde.* Nora, dear—!

*Rank.* Say it, here he is!

*Nora (hiding the packet).* Hush! Hush! Hush! (*HELMER comes out of his room, with his coat over his arm and his hat in his hand.*)

*Nora.* Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

*Helmer.* Yes, he has just gone.

*Nora.* Let me introduce you—this is Christine, who has come to town.

*Helmer.* Christine—? Excuse me, but I don't know—

*Nora.* Mrs. Linde, dear; Christine Linde.

*Helmer.* Of course. A school friend of my wife's, I presume?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, we have known each other since then.

*Nora.* And just think, she has taken a long journey in order to see you.

*Helmer.* What do you mean?

*Mrs. Linde.* No, really, I—

*Nora.* Christine is tremendously clever at book-keeping, and she is frightfully anxious to work under some clever man, so as to perfect herself—

*Helmer.* Very sensible, Mrs. Linde.

*Nora.* And when she heard you had been appointed manager of the Bank—the news was telegraphed, you know—she traveled here as quick as she could, Torvald, I am sure you will be able to do something for Christine, for my sake, won't you?

*Helmer.* Well, it is not altogether impossible. I presume you are a widow, Mrs. Linde?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes.

*Helmer.* And have had some experience of bookkeeping?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, a fair amount.

*Helmer.* Ah! well it's very likely I may be able to find something for you—

*Nora (clapping her hands).* What did I tell you? What did I tell you?

*Helmer.* You have just come at a fortunate moment, Mrs. Linde.

*Mrs. Linde.* How am I to thank you?

*Helmer.* There is no need. (*Puts on his coat.*) But today you must excuse me—

*Rank.* Wait a minute; I will come with you. (*Brings his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.*)

*Nora.* Don't be long away, Torvald dear.

*Helmer.* About an hour, not more.

*Nora.* Are you going too, Christine?

*Mrs. Linde* (*putting on her cloak*). Yes, I must go and look for a room.

*Helmer.* Oh, well then, we can walk down the street together.

*Nora* (*helping her*). What a pity it is we are so short of space here; I am afraid it is impossible for us—

*Mrs. Linde.* Please don't think of it! Good-bye, Nora dear, and many thanks.

*Nora.* Good-bye for the present. Of course you will come back this evening. And you too, Dr. Rank. What do you say? If you are well enough? Oh, you must be! Wrap yourself up well. (*They go to the door all talking together. Children's voices are heard on the staircase.*)

*Nora.* There they are. There they are! (*She runs to open the door. The NURSE comes in with the children.*) Come in! Come in! (*Stoops and kisses them.*) Oh, you sweet blessings! Look at them, Christine! Aren't they darlings?

*Rank.* Don't let us stand here in the draught.

*Helmer.* Come along, Mrs. Linde; the place will only be bearable for a mother now!

(*RANK, HELMER, and MRS. LINDE go downstairs. The NURSE comes forward with the children; NORA shuts the hall door.*)

*Nora.* How fresh and well you look! Such red cheeks!—like apples and roses. (*The children all talk at once while she speaks to them.*) Have you had great fun? That's splendid! What, you pulled both Emmy and Bob along on the sledge?—both at once?—that *was* good. You are a clever boy, Ivar. Let me take her for a little, Anne. My sweet little baby doll! (*Takes the baby from the MAID and dances it up and down.*) Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What! Have you been snow-balling? I wish I had been there too! No, no, I will take their things off, Anne; please let me do it, it is such fun. Go in now, you look half frozen. There is some hot coffee for you on the stove.

*(The NURSE goes into the room on the left. Nora takes off the children's things and throws them about, while they all talk to her at once.)*

*Nora.* Really! Did a big dog run after you? But it didn't bite you? No, dogs don't bite nice little dolly children. You mustn't look at the parcels, Ivar. What are they? Ah, I daresay you would like to know. No, no—it's something nasty! Come, let us have a game. What shall we play at? Hide and Seek? Yes, we'll play Hide and Seek. Bob shall hide first. Must I hide? Very well, I'll hide first. *(She and the children laugh and shout, and romp in and out of the room; at last Nora hides under the table the children rush in and look for her, but do not see her; they hear her smothered laughter run to the table, lift up the cloth and find her. Shouts of laughter. She crawls forward and pretends to frighten them. Fresh laughter. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the hall door, but none of them has noticed it. The door is half opened, and KROGSTAD appears. He waits a little; the game goes on.)*

*Krogstad.* Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer.

*Nora (with a stifled cry, turns round and gets up on to her knees).* Ah! what do you want?

*Krogstad.* Excuse me, the outer door was ajar; I suppose someone forgot to shut it.

*Nora (rising).* My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

*Krogstad.* I know that.

*Nora.* What do you want here, then?

*Krogstad.* A word with you.

*Nora.* With me?—*(To the children, gently.)* Go in to nurse. What? No, the strange man won't do mother any harm. When he has gone we will have another game. *(She takes the children into the room on the left, and shuts the door after them.)* You want to speak to me?

*Krogstad.* Yes, I do.

*Nora.* Today? It is not the first of the month yet.

*Krogstad.* No, it is Christmas Eve, and it will depend on yourself what sort of a Christmas you will spend.

*Nora.* What do you want? Today it is absolutely impossible for me—

*Krogstad.* We won't talk about that till later on. This is something different. I presume you can give me a moment?

*Nora.* Yes—yes, I can—although—

*Krogstad.* Good. I was in Olsen's Restaurant and saw your husband going down the street—

*Nora.* Yes?

*Krogstad.* With a lady.

*Nora.* What then?

*Krogstad.* May I make so bold as to ask if it was a Mrs. Linde?

*Nora.* It was.

*Krogstad.* Just arrived in town?

*Nora.* Yes, today.

*Krogstad.* She is a great friend of yours, isn't she?

*Nora:* She is. But I don't see—

*Krogstad.* I knew her too, once upon a time.

*Nora.* I am aware of that.

*Krogstad.* Are you? So you know all about it; I thought as much. Then I can ask you, without beating about the bush—is Mrs. Linde to have an appointment in the Bank?

*Nora.* What right have you to question me, Mr. Krogstad?—You, one of my husband's subordinates! But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linde *is* to have an appointment. And it was I who pleaded her cause, Mr. Krogstad, let me tell you that.

*Krogstad.* I was right in what I thought, then.

*Nora (walking up and down the stage).* Sometimes one has a tiny little bit of influence, I should hope. Because one is a woman, it does not necessarily follow that—. When anyone is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they should really be careful to avoid offending anyone who—who—

*Krogstad.* Who has influence?

*Nora.* Exactly.

*Krogstad (changing his tone).* Mrs. Helmer, you will be so good as to use your influence on my behalf.



*Nora.* What? What do you mean?

*Krogstad.* You will be so kind as to see that I am allowed to keep my subordinate position in the Bank.

*Nora.* What do you mean by that? Who proposes to take your post away from you?

*Krogstad.* Oh, there is no necessity to keep up the pretence of ignorance. I can quite understand that your friend is not very anxious to expose herself to the chance of rubbing shoulders with me; and I quite understand, too, whom I have to thank for being turned off.

*Nora.* But I assure you—

*Krogstad.* Very likely; but, to come to the point, the time has come when I should advise you to use your influence to prevent that.

*Nora.* But, Mr. Krogstad, I *have* no influence.

*Krogstad.* Haven't you? I thought you said yourself just now—

*Nora.* Naturally I did not mean you to put that construction on it. I! What should make you think I have any influence of that kind with my husband?

*Krogstad.* Oh, I have known your husband from our student days. I don't suppose he is any more unassailable than other husbands.

*Nora.* If you speak slightly of my husband, I shall turn you out of the house.

*Krogstad.* You are bold, Mrs. Helmer.

*Nora.* I am not afraid of you any longer, As soon as the New Year comes, I shall in a very short time be free of the whole thing.

*Krogstad (controlling himself).* Listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If necessary, I am prepared to fight for my small post in the Bank as if I were fighting for my life.

*Nora.* So it seems.

*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, 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.

*Nora.* But you must believe me, Mr. Krogstad; it is not in my power to help you at all.

*Krogstad.* Then it is because you haven't the will; but I have means to compel you.

*Nora.* You don't mean that you will tell my husband that I owe you money?

*Krogstad.* Hm!—suppose I were to tell him?

*Nora.* It would be perfectly infamous of you. (*Sobbing.*) To think of his learning my secret, which has been my joy and pride, in such an ugly, clumsy way—that he should learn it from you! And it would put me in a horribly disagreeable position—

*Krogstad.* Only disagreeable?

*Nora (impetuously).* Well, do it, then!—and it will be the worse for you. My husband will see for himself what a blackguard you are, and you certainly won't keep your post then.

*Krogstad.* I asked you if it was only a disagreeable scene at home that you were afraid of?

*Nora.* If my husband does get to know of it, of course he will at once pay you what is still owing, and we shall have nothing more to do with you.

*Krogstad (coming a step nearer).* Listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. Either you have a very bad memory or you know very little of business. I shall be obliged to remind you of a few details.

*Nora.* What do you mean?

*Krogstad.* When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow two hundred and fifty pounds.

*Nora.* I didn't know any one else to go to.

*Krogstad.* I promised to get you that amount—

*Nora.* Yes, and you did so.

*Krogstad.* I promised to get you that amount, on certain conditions. Your mind was so taken up with your husband's illness, and you were so anxious to get the money for your journey, that you seem to have paid no

attention to the conditions of our bargain. Therefore it will not be amiss if I remind you of them. Now, I promised to get the money on the security of a bond which I drew up.

*Nora.* Yes, and which I signed.

*Krogstad.* Good. But below your signature there were a few lines constituting your father a surety for the money; those lines your father should have signed.

*Nora.* Should? He did sign them.

*Krogstad.* I had left the date blank; that is to say your father should himself have inserted the date on which he signed the paper. Do you remember that?

*Nora.* Yes, I think I remember—

*Krogstad.* Then I gave you the bond to send by post to your father. Is that not so?

*Nora.* Yes.

*Krogstad.* And you naturally did so at once, because five or six days afterwards you brought me the bond with your father's signature. And then I gave you the money.

*Nora.* Well, haven't I been paying it off regularly?

*Krogstad.* Fairly so, yes. But—to come back to the matter in hand—that must have been a very trying time for you, Mrs. Helmer?

*Nora.* It was, indeed.

*Krogstad.* Your father was very ill, wasn't he?

*Nora.* He was very near his end.

*Krogstad.* And died soon afterwards?

*Nora.* Yes.

*Krogstad.* Tell me, Mrs. Helmer, can you by any chance remember what day your father died?—on what day of the month, I mean.

*Nora.* Papa died on the 29th of September.

*Krogstad.* That is correct; I have ascertained it for myself. And, as that is so, there is a discrepancy (*taking a paper from his pocket*) which I cannot account for.

*Nora.* What discrepancy? I don't know—

*Krogstad.* The discrepancy consists, Mrs. Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

*Nora.* What do you mean? I don't understand—

*Krogstad.* Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? (*NORA is silent.*) Can you explain it to me? (*NORA is still silent.*) It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and *that* is genuine, I suppose, Mrs. Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

*Nora (after a short pause, throws her head up and looks defiantly at him).* No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

*Krogstad.* Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

*Nora.* In what way? You shall have your money soon.

*Krogstad.* Let me ask you a question; why did you not send the paper to your father?

*Nora.* It was impossible; papa was so ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him what the money was to be used for; and when he was so ill himself I couldn't tell him that my husband's life was in danger—it was impossible.

*Krogstad.* It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

*Nora.* No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I couldn't give that up.

*Krogstad.* But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

*Nora.* I couldn't take that into account; I didn't trouble myself about you at all. I couldn't bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in.

*Krogstad.* Mrs. Helmer, you evidently do not realise clearly what it is that you have been guilty of. But I can

assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

*Nora.* You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life.

*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.

*Nora.* I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws—you who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

*Krogstad.* Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time, you shall lose yours with me. (*He bows, and goes out through the hall.*)

*Nora* (*appears buried in thought for a short time, then tosses her head*). Nonsense! Trying to frighten me like that!—I am not so silly as he thinks. (*Begins to busy herself putting the children's things in order.*) And yet—? No, it's impossible! I did it for love's sake.

*The Children* (*in the doorway on the left.*) Mother, the stranger man has gone out through the gate.

*Nora.* Yes, dears, I know. But, don't tell anyone about the stranger man. Do you hear? Not even papa.

*Children.* No, mother; but will you come and play again?

*Nora.* No no,—not now.

*Children.* But, mother, you promised us.

*Nora.* Yes, but I can't now. Run away in; I have such a lot to do. Run away in, sweet little darlings. (*She gets them into the room by degrees and shuts the door on them; then sits down on the sofa, takes up a piece of needlework and sews a few stitches, but soon stops.*) No! (*Throws down the work, gets up, goes to the hall door and calls out.*) Helen, bring the Tree in. (*Goes to the table on the left, opens a drawer, and stops again.*) No, no! it is quite impossible!

*Maid* (*coming in with the Tree*). Where shall I put it, ma'am?

*Nora.* Here, in the middle of the floor.

*Maid.* Shall I get you anything else?

*Nora.* No, thank you. I have all I want.

[*Exit MAID*]

*Nora (begins dressing the tree).* A candle here—and flowers here—. The horrible man! It's all nonsense—there's nothing wrong. The Tree shall be splendid! I will do everything I can think of to please you, Torvald!—I will sing for you, dance for you—(*HELMER comes in with some papers under his arm.*) Oh! are you back already?

*Helmer.* Yes. Has anyone been here?

*Nora.* Here? No.

*Helmer.* That is strange. I saw Krogstad going out of the gate.

*Nora.* Did you? Oh yes, I forgot Krogstad was here for a moment.

*Helmer.* Nora, I can see from your manner that he has been here begging you to say a good word for him.

*Nora.* Yes.

*Helmer.* And you were to appear to do it of your own accord; you were to conceal from me the fact of his having been here; didn't he beg that of you too?

*Nora.* Yes, Torvald, but—

*Helmer.* Nora, Nora, and you would be a party to that sort of thing? To have any talk with a man like that, and give him any sort of promise? And to tell me a lie into the bargain?

*Nora.* A lie—?

*Helmer.* Didn't you tell me no one had been here? (*Shakes his finger at her.*) My little song-bird must never do that again. A song-bird must have a clean beak to chirp with—no false notes! (*Puts his arm round her waist.*) That is so, isn't it? Yes, I am sure it is. (*Lets her go.*) We will say no more about it. (*Sits down by the stove.*) How warm and snug it is here! (*Turns over his papers.*)

*Nora (after a short pause, during which she busies herself with the Christmas Tree).* Torvald!

*Helmer.* Yes.

*Nora:* I am looking forward tremendously to the fancy dress ball at the Stensborgs' the day after tomorrow.

*Helmer.* And I am tremendously curious to see what you are going to surprise me with.

*Nora.* It was very silly of me to want to do that.

*Helmer.* What do you mean?

*Nora.* I can't hit upon anything that will do; everything I think of seems so silly and insignificant.

*Helmer.* Does my little Nora acknowledge that at last?

*Nora (standing behind his chair with her arms on the back of it).* Are you very busy, Torvald?

*Helmer.* Well—

*Nora.* What are all those papers?

*Helmer.* Bank business.

*Nora.* Already?

*Helmer.* I have got authority from the retiring manager to undertake the necessary changes in the staff and in the rearrangement of the work; and I must make use of the Christmas week for that, so as to have everything in order for the new year.

*Nora.* Then that was why this poor Krogstad—

*Helmer.* Hm!

*Nora (leans against the back of his chair and strokes his hair).* If you hadn't been so busy I should have asked you a tremendously big favour, Torvald.

*Helmer.* What is that? Tell me.

*Nora.* There is no one has such good taste as you. And I do so want to look nice at the fancy-dress ball. Torvald, couldn't you take me in hand and decide what I shall go as, and what sort of a dress I shall wear?

*Helmer.* Aha! so my obstinate little woman is obliged to get someone to come to her rescue?

*Nora.* Yes, Torvald, I can't get along a bit without your help.

*Helmer.* Very well, I will think it over, we shall manage to hit upon something.

*Nora.* That is nice of you. (*Goes to the Christmas Tree. A short pause.*) How pretty the red flowers look—. But, tell me, was it really something very bad that this Krogstad was guilty of?

*Helmer.* He forged someone's name. Have you any idea what that means?

*Nora.* Isn't it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

*Helmer.* Yes; or, as in so many cases, by imprudence. I am not so heartless as to condemn a man altogether because of a single false step of that kind.

*Nora.* No you wouldn't, would you, Torvald?

*Helmer.* Many a man has been able to retrieve his character, if he has openly confessed his fault and taken his punishment.

*Nora.* Punishment—?

*Helmer.* But Krogstad did nothing of that sort; he got himself out of it by a cunning trick, and that is why he has gone under altogether.

*Nora.* But do you think it would—?

*Helmer.* Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with everyone, 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.

*Nora (coming nearer him).* Are you sure of that?

*Helmer.* My dear, I have often seen it in the course of my life as a lawyer. Almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother.

*Nora.* Why do you only say—mother?

*Helmer.* 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. (*Holds out his hands to her.*) That is why my sweet little Nora must promise me not to plead his cause. Give me your hand on it. Come, come, what is this? Give me your hand. There now, that's settled. I assure you it would be quite impossible for me to work with him; I literally feel physically ill when I am in the company of such people.



*Nora (takes her hand out of his and goes to the opposite side of the Christmas Tree).* How hot it is in here; and I have such a lot to do.

*Helmer (getting up and putting his papers in order).* Yes, and I must try and read through some of these before dinner; and I must think about your costume, too. And it is just possible I may have something ready in gold paper to hang up on the Tree. (*Puts his hand on her head.*) My precious little singing-bird! (*He goes into his room and shuts the door after him.*)

*Nora (after a pause, whispers).* No, no—it isn't true. It's impossible; it must be impossible.

(*The NURSE opens the door on the left.*)

*Nurse.* The little ones are begging so hard to be allowed to come in to mamma.

*Nora.* No, no, no! Don't let them come in to me! You stay with them, Anne.

*Nurse.* Very well, ma'am. (*Shuts the door.*)

*Nora (pale with terror).* Deprave my little children? Poison my home? (*A short pause. Then she tosses her head.*) It's not true. It can't possibly be true.

## ACT II

(THE SAME SCENE—*The Christmas Tree is in the corner by the piano, stripped of its ornaments and with burnt-down candle-ends on its disbevelled branches. NORA'S cloak and hat are lying on the sofa. She is alone in the room, walking about uneasily. She stops by the sofa and takes up her cloak.*)

*Nora (drops the cloak).* Someone is coming now! (*Goes to the door and listens.*) No—it is no one. Of course, no one will come today, Christmas Day—nor tomorrow either. But, perhaps—(*opens the door and looks out.*) No, nothing in the letter-box; it is quite empty. (*Comes forward.*) What rubbish! of course he can't be in earnest about it. Such a thing couldn't happen; it is impossible—I have three little children.

(*Enter the NURSE from the room on the left, carrying a big cardboard box.*)

*Nurse.* At last I have found the box with the fancy dress.

*Nora.* Thanks; put it on the table.

*Nurse (doing so).* But it is very much in want of mending.

*Nora.* I should like to tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

*Nurse.* What an idea! It can easily be put in order—just a little patience.

*Nora.* Yes, I will go and get Mrs. Linde to come and help me with it.

*Nurse.* What, out again? In this horrible weather? You will catch cold, ma'am, and make yourself ill.

*Nora.* Well, worse than that might happen. How are the children?

*Nurse.* The poor little souls are playing with their Christmas presents, but—

*Nora.* Do they ask much for me?

*Nurse.* You see, they are so accustomed to have their mamma with them.

*Nora.* Yes, but, nurse, I shall not be able to be so much with them now as I was before.

*Nurse.* Oh well, young children easily get accustomed to anything.

*Nora.* Do you think so? Do you think they would forget their mother if she went away altogether?

*Nurse.* Good heavens!—went away altogether?

*Nora.* Nurse, I want you to tell me something I have often wondered about—how could you have the heart to put your own child out among strangers?

*Nurse.* I was obliged to, if I wanted to be little Nora's nurse.

*Nora.* Yes, but how could you be willing to do it?

*Nurse.* What, when I was going to get such a good place by it? A poor girl who has got into trouble should be glad to. Besides, that wicked man didn't do a single thing for me.

*Nora.* But I suppose your daughter has quite forgotten you.

*Nurse.* No, indeed she hasn't. She wrote to me when she was confirmed, and when she was married.

*Nora* (*putting her arms round her neck*). Dear old Anne, you were a good mother to me when I was little.

*Nurse.* Little Nora, poor dear, had no other mother but me.

*Nora.* And if my little ones had no other mother, I am sure you would—What nonsense I am talking! (*Opens the box.*) Go in to them. Now I must—. You will see tomorrow how charming I shall look.

*Nurse.* I am sure there will be no one at the ball so charming as you, ma'am. (*Goes into the room on the left.*)

*Nora* (*begins to unpack the box, but soon pushes it away from her*). If only I dared go out. If only no one would come. If only I could be sure nothing would happen here in the meantime. Stuff and nonsense! No one will come. Only I mustn't think about it. I will brush my muff. What lovely, lovely gloves! Out of my thoughts, out of my thoughts! One, two, three, four, five, six—(*Screams.*) Ah! there is someone coming—. (*Makes a movement towards the door, but stands irresolute.*)

(*Enter MRS. LINDE from the hall, where she has taken off her cloak and hat.*)

*Nora.* Oh, it's you, Christine. There is no one else out there, is there? How good of you to come!

*Mrs. Linde.* I heard you were up asking for me.

*Nora.* Yes, I was passing by. As a matter of fact, it is something you could help me with. Let us sit down here on the sofa. Look here. Tomorrow evening there is to be a fancy-dress ball at the Stenborgs', who live above us; and Torvald wants me to go as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the Tarantella that I learnt at Capri.

*Mrs. Linde.* I see; you are going to keep up the character.

*Nora.* Yes, Torvald wants me to. Look, here is the dress; Torvald had it made for me there, but now it is all so torn, and I haven't any idea—

*Mrs. Linde.* We will easily put that right. It is only some of the trimming come unsewn here and there. Needle and thread? Now then, that's all we want.

*Nora.* It is nice of you.

*Mrs. Linde* (*sewing*). So you are going to be dressed up tomorrow, Nora. I will tell you what—I shall come in for a moment and see you in your fine feathers. But I have completely forgotten to thank you for a delightful evening yesterday.

*Nora* (*gets up, and crosses the stage*). Well I don't think yesterday was as pleasant as usual. You ought to have come to town a little earlier, Christine. Certainly Torvald does understand how to make a house dainty and attractive.

*Mrs. Linde.* And so do you, it seems to me; you are not your father's daughter for nothing. But tell me, is Doctor Rank always as depressed as he was yesterday?

*Nora.* No; yesterday it was very noticeable. I must tell you that he suffers from a *very* dangerous disease. He has consumption of the spine, poor creature. His father was a horrible man who committed all sorts of excesses; and that is why his son was sickly from childhood, do you understand?

*Mrs. Linde (dropping her sewing).* But, my dearest Nora, how do you know anything about such things?

*Nora (walking about).* Pooh! When you have three children, you get visits now and then from—from married women, who know something of medical matters, and they talk about one thing and another.

*Mrs. Linde (goes on sewing. A short silence).* Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

*Nora.* Every day regularly. He is Torvald's most intimate friend, and a great friend of mine too. He is just like one of the family.

*Mrs. Linde.* But tell me this—is he perfectly sincere? I mean, isn't he the kind of a man that is very anxious to make himself agreeable?

*Nora.* Not in the least. What makes you think that?

*Mrs. Linde.* When you introduced him to me yesterday, he declared he had often heard my name mentioned in this house; but afterwards I noticed that your husband hadn't the slightest idea who I was. So how could Doctor Rank—?

*Nora.* That is quite right, Christine. Torvald is so absurdly fond of me that he wants me absolutely to himself, as he says. At first he used to seem almost jealous if I mentioned any of the dear folk at home, so naturally I gave up doing so. But I often talk about such things with Doctor Rank, because he likes hearing about them.

*Mrs. Linde.* Listen to me, Nora. You are still very like a child in many ways, and I am older than you in many ways and have a little more experience. Let me tell you this—you ought to make an end of it with Doctor Rank.

*Nora.* What ought I to make an end of?

*Mrs. Linde.* Of two things, I think. Yesterday you talked some nonsense about a rich admirer who was to leave you money—

*Nora.* An admirer who doesn't exist, unfortunately! But what then?

*Mrs. Linde.* Is Doctor Rank a man of means?

*Nora.* Yes, he is.

*Mrs. Linde.* And has no one to provide for?

*Nora.* No, no one; but—

*Mrs. Linde.* And comes here every day?

*Nora.* Yes, I told you so.

*Mrs. Linde.* But how can this well-bred man be so tactless?

*Nora.* I don't understand you at all.

*Mrs. Linde.* Don't prevaricate, Nora. Do you suppose I don't guess who lent you the two hundred and fifty pounds.

*Nora.* Are you out of your senses? How can you think of such a thing! A friend of ours, who comes here every day! Do you realise what a horribly painful position that would be?

*Mrs. Linde.* Then it really isn't he?

*Nora.* No, certainly not. It would never have entered into my head for a moment. Besides, he had no money to lend then; he came into his money afterwards.

*Mrs. Linde.* Well, I think that was lucky for you, my dear Nora.

*Nora.* No, it would never have come into my head to ask Doctor Rank. Although I am quite sure that if I had asked him—

*Mrs. Linde.* But of course you won't.

*Nora.* Of course not. I have no reason to think it could possibly be necessary. But I am quite sure that if I told Doctor Rank—

*Mrs. Linde.* Behind your husband's back?

*Nora.* I must make an end of it with the other one, and that will be behind his back too. I *must* make an end of it with him.

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, that is what I told you yesterday, but—

*Nora (walking up and down).* A man can put a thing like that straight much easier than a woman—

*Mrs. Linde.* One's husband, yes.

*Nora.* Nonsense! (*Standing still.*) When you pay off a debt you get your bond back, don't you?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, as a matter of course.

*Nora.* And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it up—the nasty, dirty paper!

*Mrs. Linde (looks hard at her, lays down her sewing and gets up slowly).* Nora, you are concealing something from me.

*Nora.* Do I look as if I were?

*Mrs. Linde.* Something has happened to you since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?

*Nora (going nearer to her).* Christine! (*Listens.*) Hush! there's Torvald come home. Do you mind going in to the children for the present? Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking going on. Let Anne help you.

*Mrs. Linde (gathering some of the things together).* Certainly—but I am not going away from here till we have had it out with one another. (*She goes into the room, on the left, as Helmer comes in from, the hall.*)

*Nora (going up to HELMAR).* I have wanted you so much, Torvald dear.

*Helmer.* Was that the dressmaker?

*Nora.* No, it was Christine; she is helping me to put my dress in order. You will see I shall look quite smart.

*Helmer.* Wasn't that a happy thought of mine, now?

*Nora.* Splendid! But don't you think it is nice of me, too, to do as you wish?

*Helmer.* Nice?—because you do as your husband wishes? Well, well, you little rogue, I am sure you did not mean it in that way. But I am not going to disturb you; you will want to be trying on your dress, I expect.

*Nora.* I suppose you are going to work.

*Helmer.* Yes. (*Shows her a bundle of papers.*) Look at that. I have just been into the bank. (*Turns to go into his room.*)

*Nora.* Torvald.

*Helmer.* Yes.

*Nora.* If your little squirrel were to ask you for something very, very prettily—?

*Helmer.* What then?

*Nora.* Would you do it?

*Helmer.* I should like to hear what it is, first.

*Nora.* Your squirrel would run about and do all her tricks if you would be nice, and do what she wants.

*Helmer.* Speak plainly.

*Nora.* Your skylark would chirp about in every room, with her song rising and falling—

*Helmer.* Well, my skylark does that anyhow.

*Nora.* I would play the fairy and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

*Helmer.* Nora—you surely don't mean that request you made of me this morning?

*Nora (going near him).* Yes, Torvald, I beg you so earnestly—

*Helmer.* Have you really the courage to open up that question again?

*Nora.* Yes, dear, you *must* do as I ask; you *must* let Krogstad keep his post in the bank.

*Helmer.* My dear Nora, it is his post that I have arranged Mrs. Linde shall have.

*Nora.* Yes, you have been awfully kind about that; but you could just as well dismiss some other clerk instead of Krogstad.

*Helmer.* This is simply incredible obstinacy! Because you chose to give him a thoughtless promise that you would speak for him, I am expected to—

*Nora.* That isn't the reason, Torvald. It is for your own sake. This fellow writes in the most scurrilous newspapers; you have told me so yourself. He can do you an unspeakable amount of harm. I am frightened to death of him—

*Helmer.* Ah, I understand; it is recollections of the past that scare you.

*Nora.* What do you mean?

*Helmer.* Naturally you are thinking of your father.

*Nora.* Yes—yes, of course. Just recall to your mind what these malicious creatures wrote in the papers about papa, and how horribly they slandered him. I believe they would have procured his dismissal if the Department had not sent you over to inquire into it, and if you had not been so kindly disposed and helpful to him.

*Helmer.* My little Nora, there is an important difference between your father and me. Your father's reputation as a public official was not above suspicion. Mine is, and I hope it will continue to be so, as long as I hold my office.

*Nora.* You never can tell what mischief these men may contrive. We ought to be so well off, so snug and happy

here in our peaceful home, and have no cares—you and I and the children, Torvald! That is why I beg you so earnestly—

*Helmer.* And it is just by interceding for him that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the Bank that I mean to dismiss Krogstad. Is it to get about now that the new manager has changed his mind at his wife's bidding—

*Nora.* And what if it did?

*Helmer.* Of course!—if only this obstinate little person can get her way! Do you suppose I am going to make myself ridiculous before my whole staff, to let people think that I am a man to be swayed by all sorts of outside influence? I should very soon feel the consequences of it, I can tell you. And besides, there is one thing that makes it quite impossible for me to have Krogstad in the bank as long as I am manager.

*Nora.* Whatever is that?

*Helmer.* His moral failings I might perhaps have overlooked, if necessary—

*Nora.* Yes, you could—couldn't you?

*Helmer.* And, I hear he is a good worker, too. But I knew him when we were boys. It was one of those rash friendships that so often prove an incubus in after life. I may as well tell you plainly, we were once on very intimate terms with one another. But this tactless fellow lays no restraint upon himself when other people are present. On the contrary, he thinks it gives him the right to adopt a familiar tone with me, and every minute it is "I say, Helmer, old fellow!" and that sort of thing. I assure you it is extremely painful to me. He would make my position in the bank intolerable.

*Nora.* Torvald, I don't believe you mean that.

*Helmer.* Don't you? Why not?

*Nora.* Because it is such a narrow-minded way of looking at things.

*Helmer.* What are you saying? Narrow-minded? Do you think I am narrow-minded?

*Nora.* No, just the opposite, dear—and it is exactly for that reason.

*Helmer.* It's the same thing. You say my point of view is narrow-minded, so I must be so, too. Narrow-minded! Very well—I must put an end to this. (*Goes to the ball door and calls.*) Helen!

*Nora.* What are you going to do?



*Helmer (looking among his papers).* Settle it. (*Enter MAID.*) Look here; take this letter and go downstairs with it at once. Find a messenger and tell him to deliver it, and be quick. The address is on it, and here is the money.

*Maid.* Very well, sir. (*Exit with the letter.*)

*Helmer (putting his papers together).* Now, then, little Miss Obstinate.

*Nora (breathlessly).* Torvald—what was that letter?

*Helmer.* Krogstad's dismissal.

*Nora.* Call her back, Torvald! There is still time. Oh Torvald, call her back! Do it for my sake—for your own sake, for the children's sake! Do you hear me, Torvald? Call her back! You don't know what that letter can bring upon us.

*Helmer.* It's too late.

*Nora.* Yes, it's too late.

*Helmer.* My dear Nora, I can forgive the anxiety you are in, although really it is an insult to me. It is, indeed. Isn't it an insult to think that I should be afraid of a starving quill-driver's vengeance? But I forgive you, nevertheless, because it is such eloquent witness to your great love for me. (*Takes her in his arms.*) And that is as it should be, my own darling Nora. Come what will, you may be sure I shall have both courage and strength if they be needed. You will see I am man enough to take everything upon myself.

*Nora (in a horror-stricken voice).* What do you mean by that?

*Helmer.* Everything I say—

*Nora (recovering herself).* You will never have to do that.

*Helmer.* That's right. Well, we will share it, Nora, as man and wife should. That is how it shall be. (*Caressing her.*) Are you content now? There! There!—not these frightened dove's eyes! The whole thing is only the wildest fancy!—Now, you must go and play through the Tarantella and practice with your tambourine. I shall go into the inner office and shut the door, and I shall hear nothing; you can make as much noise as you please. (*Turns back at the door.*) And when Rank comes, tell him where he will find me. (*Nods to her, takes his papers and goes into his room, and shuts the door after him.*)

*Nora (bewildered with anxiety, stands as if rooted to the spot, and whispers).* He was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything.—No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it. (*The door-bell rings.*) Doctor Rank! Anything rather than that—anything, whatever

it is! (*She puts her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. RANK is standing without, hanging up his coat. During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark.*)

*Nora.* Good-day, Doctor Rank. I knew your ring. But you mustn't go into Torvald now; I think he is busy with something.

*Rank.* And you?

*Nora (brings him in and shuts the door after him).* Oh, you know very well I always have time for you.

*Rank.* Thank you. I shall make use of as much of it as I can.

*Nora.* What do you mean by that? As much of it as you can.

*Rank.* Well, does that alarm you?

*Nora.* It was such a strange way of putting it. Is anything likely to happen?

*Rank.* Nothing but what I have long been prepared for. But I certainly didn't expect it to happen so soon.

*Nora (gripping him by the arm).* What have you found out? Doctor Rank, you must tell me.

*Rank (sitting down by the stove).* It is all up with me. And it can't be helped.

*Nora (with a sigh of relief).* Is it about yourself?

*Rank.* Who else? It is no use lying to one's self. I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. Lately I have been taking stock of my internal economy. Bankrupt! Probably within a month I shall lie rotting in the church-yard.

*Nora.* What an ugly thing to say!

*Rank.* The thing itself is cursedly ugly, and the worst of it is that I shall have to face so much more that is ugly before that. I shall only make one more examination of myself; when I have done that, I shall know pretty certainly when it will be that the horrors of dissolution will begin. There is something I want to tell you. Helmer's refined nature gives him an unconquerable disgust of everything that is ugly; I won't have him in my sick-room.

*Nora.* Oh, but, Doctor Rank—

*Rank.* I won't have him there. Not on any account. I bar my door to him. As soon as I am quite certain that the worst has come, I shall send you my card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the loathsome end has begun.

*Nora.* You are quite absurd to-day. And I wanted you so much to be in a really good humour.

*Rank.* With death stalking beside me?—To have to pay this penalty for another man's sin! Is there any justice in that? And in every single family, in one way or another, some such inexorable retribution is being exacted—

*Nora (putting her hands over her ears).* Rubbish! Do talk of something cheerful.

*Rank.* Oh, it's a mere laughing matter, the whole thing. My poor innocent spine has to suffer for my father's youthful amusements.

*Nora (sitting at the table on the left).* I suppose you mean that he was too partial to asparagus and pate de foie gras, don't you?

*Rank.* Yes, and to truffles.

*Nora.* Truffles, yes. And oysters too, I suppose?

*Rank.* Oysters, of course, that goes without saying.

*Nora.* And heaps of port and champagne. It is sad that all these nice things should take their revenge on our bones.

*Rank.* Especially that they should revenge themselves on the unlucky bones of those who have not had the satisfaction of enjoying them.

*Nora.* Yes, that's the saddest part of it all.

*Rank (with a searching look at her).* Hm!—

*Nora (after a short pause).* Why did you smile?

*Rand.* No, it was you that laughed.

*Nora.* No, it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank!

*Rank (rising).* You are a greater rascal than I thought.

*Nora.* I am in a silly mood today.

*Rank.* So it seems.

*Nora (putting her hands on his shoulders).* Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn't take you away from Torvald and me.

*Rank.* It is a loss you would easily recover from. Those who are gone are soon forgotten.

*Nora (looking at him anxiously).* Do you believe that?

*Rank.* People form new ties, and then—

*Nora.* Who will form new ties?

*Rank.* Both you and Helmer, when I am gone. You yourself are already on the high road to it, I think. What did that Mrs. Linde want here last night?

*Nora.* Oho!—you don't mean to say you are jealous of poor Christine?

*Rank.* Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I am done for, this woman will—

*Nora.* Hush! don't speak so loud. She is in that room.

*Rank.* To-day again. There, you see.

*Nora.* She has only come to sew my dress for me. Bless my soul, how unreasonable you are! (*Sits down on the sofa.*) Be nice now, Doctor Rank, and to-morrow you will see how beautifully I shall dance, and you can imagine I am doing it all for you—and for Torvald too, of course. (*Takes various things out of the box.*) Doctor Rank, come and sit down here, and I will show you something.

*Rank (sitting down).* What is it?

*Nora.* Just look at those.

*Rank.* Silk stockings.

*Nora.* Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? It is so dark here now, but to-morrow—. No, no, no! you must only look at the feet. Oh, well, you may have leave to look at the legs too.

*Rank.* Hm!—

*Nora.* Why are you looking so critical? Don't you think they will fit me?

*Rank.* I have no means of forming an opinion about that.

*Nora (looks at him for a moment).* For shame! (*Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.*) That's to punish you. (*Folds them up again.*)

*Rank.* And what other nice things am I to be allowed to see?

*Nora.* Not a single thing more, for being so naughty. (*She looks among the things, humming to herself.*)

*Rank (after a short silence).* When I am sitting here, talking to you as intimately as this, I cannot imagine for a moment what would have become of me if I had never come into this house.

*Nora (smiling).* I believe you do feel thoroughly at home with us.

*Rank (in a lower voice, looking straight in front of him).* And to be obliged to leave it all—

*Nora.* Nonsense, you are not going to leave it.

*Rank (as before).* And not be able to leave behind one the slightest token of one's gratitude, scarcely even a fleeting regret—nothing but an empty place which the first comer can fill as well as any other.

*Nora.* And if I asked you now for a—? No!

*Rank.* For what?

*Nora.* For a big proof of your friendship—

*Rank.* Yes, yes.

*Nora.* I mean a tremendously big favour—

*Rank.* Would you really make me so happy for once?

*Nora.* Ah, but you don't know what it is yet.

*Rank.* No—but tell me.

*Nora.* I really can't, Doctor Rank. It is something out of all reason; it means advice, and help, and a favour—

*Rank.* The bigger a thing it is the better. I can't conceive what it is you mean. Do tell me. Haven't I your confidence?

*Nora.* More than anyone else. I know you are my truest and best friend, and so I will tell you what it is. Well, Doctor Rank, it is something you must help me to prevent. You know how devotedly, how inexpressibly deeply Torvald loves me; he would never for a moment hesitate to give his life for me.

*Rank (leaning toward her).* Nora—do you think he is the only one—?

*Nora (with a slight start).* The only one—?

*Rank.* The only one who would gladly give his life for your sake.

*Nora (sadly).* Is that it?

*Rank.* I was determined you should know it before I went away, and there will never be a better opportunity than this. Now you know it, Nora. And now you know, too, that you can trust me as you would trust no one else.

*Nora (rises deliberately and quietly).* Let me pass.

*Rank (makes room for her to pass him, but sits still).* Nora!

*Nora (at the hall door).* Helen, bring in the lamp. (*Goes over to the stove.*) Dear Doctor Rank, that was really horrid of you.

*Rank.* To have loved you as much as anyone else does? Was that horrid?

*Nora.* No, but to go and tell me so. There was really no need—

*Rank.* What do you mean? Did you know—? (*MAID enters with lamp, puts it down on the table, and goes out.*)

*Nora—Mrs. Helmer—*tell me, had you any idea of this?

*Nora.* Oh, how do I know whether I had or whether I hadn't. I really can't tell you—To think you could be so clumsy, Doctor Rank! We were getting on so nicely.

*Rank.* Well, at all events you know now that you can command me, body and soul. So won't you speak out?

*Nora (looking at him).* After what happened?

*Rank.* I beg you to let me know what it is.

*Nora.* I can't tell you anything now.

*Rank.* Yes, yes. You mustn't punish me in that way. Let me have permission to do for you whatever a man may do.

*Nora.* You can do nothing for me now. Besides, I really don't need any help at all. You will find that the whole thing is merely fancy on my part. It really is so—of course it is! (*Sits down in the rocking-chair, and looks at him with a smile.*) You are a nice sort of man, Doctor Rank!—don't you feel ashamed of yourself, now the lamp has come?

*Rank.* Not a bit. But perhaps I had better go—forever?

*Nora.* No, indeed, you shall not. Of course you must come here just as before. You know very well Torvald can't do without you.

*Rank.* Yes, but you?

*Nora.* Oh, I am always tremendously pleased when you come.

*Rank.* It is just that, that put me on the wrong track. You are a riddle to me. I have often thought that you would almost as soon be in my company as in Helmer's.

*Nora.* Yes—you see there are some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions.

*Rank.* Yes, there is something in that.

*Nora.* When I was at home, of course I loved papa best. But I always thought it tremendous fun if I could steal down into the maids' room, because they never moralized at all, and talked to each other about such entertaining things.

*Rank.* I see—it is their place I have taken.

*Nora (jumping-up and going to him).* Oh, dear, nice Doctor Rank, I never meant that at all. But surely you can understand that being with Torvald is a little like being with papa—*(Enter MAID from the hall.)*

*Maid.* If you please, ma'am. *(Whispers and hands her a card.)*

*Nora (glancing at the card).* Oh! *(Puts it in her pocket.)*

*Rank.* Is there anything wrong?

*Nora.* No, no, not in the least. It is only something—It is my new dress—

*Rank.* What? Your dress is lying there.

*Nora.* Oh, yes, that one; but this is another. I ordered it. Torvald mustn't know about it—

*Rank.* Oho! Then that was the great secret.

*Nora.* Of course. Just go in to him; he is sitting in the inner room. Keep him as long as—

*Rank.* Make your mind easy; I won't let him escape. *(Goes into HELMER'S room.)*

*Nora (to the MAID).* And he is standing waiting in the kitchen?

*Maid.* Yes; he came up the back stairs.

*Nora.* But didn't you tell him no one was in?

*Maid.* Yes, but it was no good.

*Nora.* He won't go away?

*Maid.* No; he says he won't until he has seen you, ma'am.

*Nora.* Well, let him come in—but quietly. Helen, you mustn't say anything about it to any one. It is a surprise for my husband.

*Maid.* Yes, ma'am, I quite understand. (*Exit.*)

*Nora.* This dreadful thing is going to happen. It will happen in spite of me! No, no, no, it can't happen—it shan't happen! (*She bolts the door of HELMER'S room. The MAID opens the hall door for KROGSTAD and shuts it after him. He is wearing a fur coat, high boots and a fur cap.*)

*Nora (advancing towards him).* Speak low—my husband is at home.

*Krogstad.* No matter about that.

*Nora.* What do you want of me?

*Krogstad.* An explanation of something.

*Nora.* Make haste then. What is it?

*Krogstad.* You know, I suppose, that I have got my dismissal.

*Nora.* I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought as hard as I could on your side, but it was no good.

*Krogstad.* Does your husband love you so little, then? He knows what I can expose you to, and yet he ventures—

*Nora.* How can you suppose that he has any knowledge of the sort?

*Krogstad.* I didn't suppose so at all. It would not be the least like our dear Torvald Helmer to show so much courage—

*Nora.* Mr. Krogstad, a little respect for my husband, please.

*Krogstad.* Certainly—all the respect he deserves. But since you have kept the matter so carefully to yourself, I make bold to suppose that you have a little clearer idea than you had yesterday, of what it actually is that you have done?



*Nora.* More than you could ever teach me.

*Krogstad.* Yes, such a bad lawyer as I am.

*Nora.* What is it you want of me?

*Krogstad.* Only to see how you were, Mrs. Helmer. I have been thinking about you all day long. A mere cashier—a quill-driver, a—well, a man like me—even he has a little of what is called feeling, you know.

*Nora.* Show it, then; think of my little children.

*Krogstad.* Have you and your husband thought of mine? But never mind about that. I only wanted to tell you that you need not take this matter too seriously. In the first place there will be no accusation made on my part.

*Nora.* No, of course not; I was sure of that.

*Krogstad.* The whole thing can be arranged amicably; there is no reason why anyone should know anything about it. It will remain a secret between us three.

*Nora.* My husband must never get to know anything about it.

*Krogstad.* How will you be able to prevent it? Am I to understand that you can pay the balance that is owing?

*Nora.* No, not just at present.

*Krogstad.* Or perhaps that you have some expedient for raising the money soon?

*Nora.* No expedient that I mean to make use of.

*Krogstad.* Well, in any case, it would have been of no use to you now. If you stood there with ever so much money in your hand, I would never part with your bond.

*Nora.* Tell me what purpose you mean to put it to.

*Krogstad.* I shall only preserve it—keep it in my possession. No one who is not concerned in the matter shall have the slightest hint of it. So that if the thought of it has driven you to any desperate resolution—

*Nora.* It has.

*Krogstad.* If you had it in your mind to run away from your home—

*Nora.* I had.

*Krogstad.* Or even something worse—

*Nora.* How could you know that?

*Krogstad.* Give up the idea.

*Nora.* How did you know I had thought of *that*?

*Krogstad.* Most of us think of that at first. I did, too—but I hadn't the courage.

*Nora (faintly).* No more had I.

*Krogstad (in a tone of relief).* No, that's it, isn't it—you hadn't the courage either?

*Nora.* No, I haven't—I haven't.

*Krogstad.* Besides, it would have been a great piece of folly. Once the first storm at home is over—. I have a letter for your husband in my pocket.

*Nora.* Telling him everything?

*Krogstad.* In as lenient a manner as I possibly could.

*Nora (quickly).* He mustn't get the letter. Tear it up. I will find some means of getting money.

*Krogstad.* Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer, but I think I told you just how—

*Nora.* I am not speaking of what I owe you. Tell me what sum you are asking my husband for, and I will get the money.

*Krogstad.* I am not asking your husband for a penny.

*Nora.* What do you want, then?

*Krogstad.* I will tell you. I want to rehabilitate myself, Mrs. Helmer; I want to get on; and in that your husband must help me. For the last year and a half I have not had a hand in anything dishonourable, and all that time I have been struggling in most restricted circumstances. I was content to work my way up step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not going to be satisfied with merely being taken into favour again. I want to get on, I tell you. I want to get into the Bank again, in a higher position. Your husband must make a place for me—

*Nora.* That he will never do!

*Krogstad.* He will; I know him; he dare not protest. And as soon as I am in there again with him, then you will see! Within a year I shall be the manager's right hand. It will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who manages the Bank.

*Nora.* That's a thing you will never see!

*Krogstad.* Do you mean that you will—?

*Nora.* I have courage enough for it now.

*Krogstad.* Oh, you can't frighten me. A fine, spoiled lady like you—

*Nora.* You will see, you will see.

*Krogstad.* Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, coal-black water? And then, in the spring, to float up to the surface, all horrible and unrecognizable, with your hair fallen out—

*Nora.* You can't frighten me.

*Krogstad.* Nor you me. People don't do such things, Mrs. Helmer. Besides, what use would it be? I should have him completely in my power all the same.

*Nora.* Afterwards? When I am no longer—

*Krogstad.* Have you forgot that it is I who have the keeping of your reputation? (*Nora stands speechlessly looking at him.*) Well, now, I have warned you. Do not do anything foolish. When Helmer has had my letter, I shall expect a message from him. And be sure you remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me into such ways as this again. I will never forgive him for that. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer. (*Exit through the hall.*)

*Nora* (*goes to the hall door, opens it slightly and listens*). He is going. He is not putting the letter in the box. Oh, no, no, that's impossible! (*Opens the door by degrees.*) What is that? He is standing outside. He is not going downstairs. Is he hesitating? Can he—? (*A letter drops into the box; then KROGSTAD'S footsteps are heard, till they die away as he goes downstairs. NORA utters a stifled cry, and runs across the room to the table by the sofa. A short pause.*)

*Nora.* In the letter-box. (*Steals across to the hall-door.*) There it lies—Torvald, Torvald, there is no hope for us now!

(*MRS. LINDE comes in from the room on the left, carrying the dress.*)

*Mrs. Linde.* There, I can't see anything more to mend now. Would you like to try it on—?

*Nora* (*in a hoarse whisper*). Christine, come here.

*Mrs. Linde* (*throwing the dress down on the sofa*). What is the matter with you? You look so agitated!

*Nora.* Come here. Do you see that letter? There, look—you can see it through the glass in the letter-box.

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, I see it.

*Nora.* That letter is from Krogstad.

*Mrs. Linde.* Nora—it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

*Nora.* Yes, and now Torvald will know all about it.

*Mrs. Linde.* Believe me, Nora, that's the best thing for both of you.

*Nora.* You don't know all. I forged a name.

*Mrs. Linde.* Good heavens—!

*Nora.* I only want to say this to you, Christine—you must be my witness.

*Mrs. Linde.* Your witness! What do you mean? What am I to—?

*Nora.* If I should go out of my mind—and it might easily happen—

*Mrs. Linde.* Nora!

*Nora.* Or if anything else should happen to me—anything, for instance, that might prevent my being here—

*Mrs. Linde.* Nora! Nora! you are quite out of your mind.

*Nora.* And if it should happen that there were someone who wanted to take all the responsibility, all the blame, you understand—

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, yes—but how can you suppose—?

*Nora.* Then you must be my witness, that it is not true, Christine. I am not out of my mind at all; I am in my right senses now, and I tell you no one else has known anything about it; I and I alone, did the whole thing. Remember that.

*Mrs. Linde.* I will, indeed. But I don't understand all this.

*Nora.* How should you understand it? A wonderful thing is going to happen.

*Mrs. Linde.* A wonderful thing?

*Nora.* Yes, a wonderful thing!—But it is so terrible, Christine; it *mustn't* happen, not for all the world.

*Mrs. Linde.* I will go at once and see Krogstad.

*Nora.* Don't go to him; he will do you some harm.

*Mrs. Linde.* There was a time when he would gladly do anything for my sake.

*Nora.* He?

*Mrs. Linde.* Where does he live?

*Nora.* How should I know—? Yes (*feeling in her pocket*) here is his card. But the letter, the letter—!

*Helmer (calls from his room, knocking at the door).* Nora.

*Nora (cries out anxiously).* Oh, what's that? What do you want?

*Helmer.* Don't be so frightened. We are not coming in; you have locked the door. Are you trying on your dress?

*Nora.* Yes, that's it. I look so nice, Torvald.

*Mrs. Linde (who has read the card)* I see he lives at the corner here.

*Nora.* Yes, but it's no use. It is hopeless. The letter is lying there in the box.

*Mrs. Linde.* And your husband keeps the key?

*Nora.* Yes, always.

*Mrs. Linde.* Krogstad must ask for his letter back unread, he must find some pretence—

*Nora.* But it is just at this time that Torvald generally—

*Mrs. Linde.* You must delay him. Go in to him in the meantime. I will come back as soon as I can. (*She goes out hurriedly through the hall door.*)

*Nora (goes to HELMER'S door, opens it and peeps in).* Torvald!

*Helmer (from the inner room).* Well? May I venture at last to come into my own room again? Come along, Rank, now you will see—(*Halting in the doorway.*) But what is this?

*Nora.* What is what, dear?

*Helmer.* Rank led me to expect a splendid transformation.

*Rank (in the doorway).* I understood so, but evidently I was mistaken.

*Nora.* Yes, nobody is to have the chance of admiring me in my dress until to-morrow.

*Helmer.* But, my dear Nora, you look so worn out. Have you been practising too much?

*Nora.* No, I have not practised at all.

*Helmer.* But you will need to—

*Nora.* Yes, indeed I shall, Torvald. But I can't get on a bit without you to help me; I have absolutely forgotten the whole thing.

*Helmer.* Oh, we will soon work it up again.

*Nora.* Yes, help me, Torvald. Promise that you will! I am so nervous about it—all the people—. You must give yourself up to me entirely this evening. Not the tiniest bit of business—you mustn't even take a pen in your hand. Will you promise, Torvald dear?

*Helmer.* I promise. This evening I will be wholly and absolutely at your service, you helpless little mortal. Ah, by the way, first of all I will just—(*Goes toward the hall-door.*)

*Nora.* What are you going to do there?

*Helmer.* Only see if any letters have come.

*Nora.* No, no! don't do that, Torvald!

*Helmer.* Why not?

*Nora.* Torvald, please don't. There is nothing there.

*Helmer.* Well, let me look. (*Turns to go to the letter-box. NORA, at the piano, plays the first bars of the Tarantella. HELMER stops in the doorway.*) Aha!

*Nora.* I can't dance to-morrow if I don't practise with you.

*Helmer (going up to her).* Are you really so afraid of it, dear?

*Nora.* Yes, so dreadfully afraid of it. Let me practise at once; there is time now, before we go to dinner. Sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; criticise me, and correct me as you play.

*Helmer.* With great pleasure, if you wish me to. (*Sits down at the piano.*)

*Nora (takes out of the box a tambourine and a long variegated shawl. She hastily drapes the shawl round her. Then she springs to the front of the stage and calls out).* Now play for me! I am going to dance!

*(HELMER plays and NORA dances. RANK stands by the piano behind HELMER, and looks on.)*

*Helmer (as he plays).* Slower, slower!

*Nora.* I can't do it any other way.

*Helmer.* Not so violently, Nora!

*Nora.* This is the way.

*Helmer (stops playing).* No, no—that is not a bit right.

*Nora (laughing and swinging the tambourine).* Didn't I tell you so?

*Rank.* Let me play for her.

*Helmer (getting up).* Yes, do. I can correct her better then.

*(RANK sits down at the piano and plays. Nora dances more and more wildly. HELMER has taken up a position beside the stove, and during her dance gives her frequent instructions. She does not seem to hear him; her hair comes down and falls over her shoulders; she pays no attention to it, but goes on dancing. Enter MRS. LINDE.)*

*Mrs. Linde (standing as if spell-bound in the doorway).* Oh!—

*Nora (as she dances).* Such fun, Christine!

*Helmer.* My dear darling Nora, you are dancing as if your life depended on it.

*Nora.* So it does.

*Helmer.* Stop, Rank; this is sheer madness. Stop, I tell you. *(RANK stops playing, and, NORA suddenly stands still. HELMER goes up to her.)* I could never have believed it. You have forgotten everything I taught you.

*Nora (throwing away the tambourine).* There, you see.

*Helmer.* You will want a lot of coaching.

*Nora.* Yes, you see how much I need it. You must coach me up to the last minute. Promise me that, Torvald!

*Helmer.* You can depend on me.

*Nora.* You must not think of anything but me, either to-day or to-morrow; you mustn't open a single letter—not even open the letter-box—

*Helmer.* Ah, you are still afraid of that fellow—

*Nora.* Yes, indeed I am.

*Helmer.* Nora, I can tell from your looks that there is a letter from him lying there.

*Nora.* I don't know; I think there is; but you must not read anything of that kind now. Nothing horrid must come between us till this is all over.

*Rank (whispers to HELMER).* You mustn't contradict her.

*Helmer (taking her in his arms).* The child shall have her way. But to-morrow night, after you have danced—

*Nora.* Then you will be free. (*The MAID appears in the doorway to the right.*)

*Maid.* Dinner is served, ma'am.

*Nora.* We will have champagne, Helen.

*Maid.* Very good, ma'am.

*Helmer.* Hullo!—are we going to have a banquet? (*Exit.*)

*Nora.* Yes, a champagne banquet till the small hours. (*Calls out.*) And a few macaroons, Helen—lots, just for once!

*Helmer.* Come, come, don't be so wild and nervous. Be my own little skylark, as you used.

*Nora.* Yes, dear, I will. But go in now and you too, Doctor Rank. Christine, you must, help me to do up my hair.

*Rank (whispers to HELMER as they go out).* I suppose there is nothing—she is not expecting anything?

*Helmer.* Far from it, my dear fellow; it is simply nothing more than this childish nervousness I was telling you of. (*They go into the right-hand room.*)

*Nora.* Well!

*Mrs. Linde.* Gone out of town.

*Nora.* I could tell from your face.



*Mrs. Linde.* He is coming home tomorrow evening. I wrote a note for him.

*Nora.* You should have let it alone; you must prevent nothing. After all, it is splendid to be waiting for a wonderful thing to happen.

*Mrs. Linde.* What is it that you are waiting for?

*Nora.* Oh, you wouldn't understand. Go in to them. I will come in a moment. (MRS. LINDE goes into the dining-room. NORA stands still for a little while, as if to compose herself. Then she looks at her watch.) Five o'clock. Seven hours till midnight; and then four-and-twenty hours till the next midnight. Then the Tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

*Helmer (from the doorway on the right).* Where's my little skylark?

*Nora (going to him with her arms out-stretched).* Here she is!

## ACT III

(THE SAME SCENE—The table has been placed in the middle of the stage, with chairs around it. A lamp is burning on the table. The door into the hall stands open. Dance music is heard in the room above. MRS. LINDE is sitting at the table idly turning over the leaves of a book; she tries to read, but does not seem able to collect her thoughts. Every now and then she listens intently for a sound at the outer door.)

*Mrs. Linde (looking at her watch).* Not yet—and the time is nearly up. If only he does not—. (Listens again.) Ah, there he is. (Goes into the hall and opens the outer door carefully. Light footsteps are heard on the stairs. She whispers.) Come in. There is no one here.

*Krogstad (in the doorway).* I found a note from you at home. What does this mean?

*Mrs. Linde.* It is absolutely necessary that I should have a talk with you.

*Krogstad.* Really? And is it absolutely necessary that it should be here?

*Mrs. Linde.* It is impossible where I live; there is no private entrance to my rooms. Come in; we are quite alone. The maid is asleep, and the Helmers are at the dance upstairs.

*Krogstad (coming into the room).* Are the Helmers really at a dance tonight?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, why not?

*Krogstad.* Certainly—why not?

*Mrs. Linde.* Now, Nils, let us have a talk.

*Krogstad.* Can we two have anything to talk about?

*Mrs. Linde.* We have a great deal to talk about.

*Krogstad.* I shouldn't have thought so.

*Mrs. Linde.* No, you have never properly understood me.

*Krogstad.* Was there anything else to understand except what was obvious to all the world—a heartless woman jilts a man when a more lucrative chance turns up.

*Mrs. Linde.* Do you believe I am as absolutely heartless as all that? And do you believe that I did it with a light heart?

*Krogstad.* Didn't you?

*Mrs. Linde.* Nils, did you really think that?

*Krogstad.* If it were as you say, why did you write to me as you did at the time?

*Mrs. Linde.* I could do nothing else. As I had to break with you, it was my duty also to put an end to all that you felt for me.

*Krogstad (wringing his hands).* So that was it. And all this—only for the sake of money.

*Mrs. Linde.* You must not forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils; your prospects seemed hopeless then.

*Krogstad.* That may be so, but you had no right to throw me over for any one else's sake.

*Mrs. Linde.* Indeed I don't know. Many a time did I ask myself if I had a right to do it.

*Krogstad (more gently).* When I lost you, it was as if all the solid ground went from under my feet. Look at me now—I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a bit of wreckage.

*Mrs. Linde.* But help may be near.

*Krogstad.* It was near; but then you came and stood in my way.

*Mrs. Linde.* Unintentionally, Nils. It was only today that I learnt it was your place I was going to take in the bank.

*Krogstad.* I believe you, if you say so. But now that you know it, are you not going to give it up to me?

*Mrs. Linde.* No, because that would not benefit you in the least.

*Krogstad.* Oh, benefit, benefit—I would have done it whether or no.

*Mrs. Linde.* I have learnt to act prudently. Life, and hard, bitter necessity have taught me that.

*Krogstad.* And life has taught me not to believe in fine speeches.

*Mrs. Linde.* Then life has taught you something very reasonable. But deeds you must believe in?

*Krogstad.* What do you mean by that?

*Mrs. Linde.* You said you were like a shipwrecked man clinging to some wreckage.

*Krogstad.* I had good reason to say so.

*Mrs. Linde.* Well, I am like a shipwrecked woman clinging to some wreckage—no one to mourn for, no one to care for.

*Krogstad.* It was your own choice.

*Mrs. Linde.* There was no other choice, then.

*Krogstad.* Well, what now?

*Mrs. Linde.* Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could join forces?

*Krogstad.* What are you saying?

*Mrs. Linde.* Two on the same piece of wreckage would stand a better chance than each on their own.

*Krogstad.* Christine!

*Mrs. Linde.* What do you suppose brought me to town?

*Krogstad.* Do you mean that you gave me a thought?

*Mrs. Linde.* I could not endure life without work. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked, and it has been my greatest and only pleasure. But now I am quite alone in the world—my life is so dreadfully

empty and I feel so forsaken. There is not the least pleasure in working for one's self. Nils, give me someone and something to work for.

*Krogstad.* I don't trust that. It is nothing but a woman's overstrained sense of generosity that prompts you to make such an offer of your self.

*Mrs. Linde.* Have you ever noticed anything of the sort in me?

*Krogstad.* Could you really do it? Tell me—do you know all about my past life?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes.

*Krogstad.* And do you know what they think of me here?

*Mrs. Linde.* You seemed to me to imply that with me you might have been quite another man.

*Krogstad.* I am certain of it.

*Mrs. Linde.* Is it too late now?

*Krogstad.* Christine, are you saying this deliberately? Yes, I am sure you are. I see it in your face. Have you really the courage, then—?

*Mrs. Linde.* I want to be a mother to someone, and your children need a mother. We two need each other. Nils, I have faith in your real character—I can dare anything together with you.

*Krogstad (grasps her hands).* Thanks, thanks, Christine! Now I shall find a way to clear myself in the eyes of the world. Ah, but I forgot—

*Mrs. Linde (listening).* Hush! The Tarantella! Go, go!

*Krogstad.* Why? What is it?

*Mrs. Linde.* Do you hear them up there? When that is over, we may expect them back.

*Krogstad.* Yes, yes—I will go. But it is all no use. Of course you are not aware what steps I have taken in the matter of the Helmers.

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, I know all about that.

*Krogstad.* And in spite of that have you the courage to—?

*Mrs. Linde.* I understand very well to what lengths a man like you might be driven by despair.

*Krogstad.* If I could only undo what I have done!

*Mrs. Linde.* You cannot. Your letter is lying in the letter-box now.

*Krogstad.* Are you sure of that?

*Mrs. Linde.* Quite sure, but—

*Krogstad (with a searching look at her).* Is that what it all means?—that you want to save your friend at any cost? Tell me frankly. Is that it?

*Mrs. Linde.* Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for another's sake, doesn't do it a second time.

*Krogstad.* I will ask for my letter back.

*Mrs. Linde.* No, no.

*Krogstad.* Yes, of course I will. I will wait here till Helmer comes; I will tell him he must give me my letter back—that it only concerns my dismissal—that he is not to read it—

*Mrs. Linde.* No, Nils, you must not recall your letter.

*Krogstad.* But, tell me, wasn't it for that very purpose that you asked me to meet you here?

*Mrs. Linde.* In my first moment of fright, it was. But twenty-four hours have elapsed since then, and in that time I have witnessed incredible things in this house. Helmer must know all about it. This unhappy secret must be enclosed; they must have a complete understanding between them, which is impossible with all this concealment and falsehood going on.

*Krogstad.* Very well, if you will take the responsibility. But there is one thing I can do in any case, and I shall do it at once.

*Mrs. Linde (listening).* You must be quick and go! The dance is over; we are not safe a moment longer.

*Krogstad.* I will wait for you below.

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, do. You must see me back to my door.

*Krogstad.* I have never had such an amazing piece of good fortune in my life! (*Goes out through the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.*)

*Mrs. Linde (tidying up the room and laying her hat and cloak ready).* What a difference! What a difference! Someone to work for and live for—a home to bring comfort into. That I will do, indeed. I wish they would

be quick and come. (*Listens.*) Ah, there they are now. I must put on my things. (*Takes up her hat and cloak. HELMER'S and NORA'S voices are heard outside; a key is turned, and HELMER brings NORA almost by force into the hall. She is in an Italian costume with a large black shawl round her; he is in evening dress, and a black domino which is flying open.*)

*Nora* (*hanging back in the doorway, and struggling with him*). No, no, no!—don't take me in. I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early.

*Helmer*. But, my dearest Nora—

*Nora*. Please, Torvald dear—please, *please*—only an hour more.

*Helmer*. Not a single minute, my sweet Nora. You know that was our agreement. Come along into the room; you are catching cold standing there. (*He brings her gently into the room, in spite of her resistance.*)

*Mrs. Linde*. Good evening.

*Nora*. Christine!

*Helmer*. You here, so late, Mrs. Linde?

*Mrs. Linde*. Yes, you must excuse me; I was so anxious to see Nora in her dress.

*Nora*. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

*Mrs. Linde*. Yes, unfortunately I came too late, you had already gone upstairs; and I thought I couldn't go away again without having seen you.

*Helmer* (*taking off NORA'S shawl*). Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn't she charming, Mrs. Linde?

*Mrs. Linde*. Yes, indeed she is.

*Helmer*. Doesn't she look remarkably pretty? Everyone thought so at the dance. But she is terribly self-willed, this sweet little person. What are we to do with her? You will hardly believe that I had almost to bring her away by force.

*Nora*. Torvald, you will repent not having let me stay, even if it were only for half an hour.

*Helmer*. Listen to her, Mrs. Linde! She had danced her Tarantella, and it had been a tremendous success, as it deserved—although possibly the performance was a trifle too realistic—little more so, I mean, than was strictly compatible with the limitations of art. But never mind about that! The chief thing is, she had made

a success—she had made a tremendous success. Do you think I was going to let her remain there after that, and spoil the effect? No, indeed! I took my charming little Capri maiden—my capricious little Capri maiden, I should say—on my arm; took one quick turn round the room; a curtsy on either side, and, as they say in novels, the beautiful apparition disappeared. An exit ought always to be effective, Mrs. Linde; but that is what I cannot make Nora understand. Pooh! this room is hot. (*Throws his domino on a chair, and opens the door of his room.*) Hullo! it's all dark in here. Oh, of course—excuse me—. (*He goes in, and lights some candles.*)

*Nora (in a hurried and breathless whisper).* Well?

*Mrs. Linde. (in a low voice).* I have had a talk with him.

*Nora.* Yes, and—

*Mrs. Linde.* Nora, you must tell your husband all about it.

*Nora (in an expressionless voice).* I knew it.

*Mrs. Linde.* You have nothing to be afraid of as far as Krogstad is concerned; but you must tell him.

*Nora.* I won't tell him.

*Mrs. Linde.* Then the letter will.

*Nora.* Thank you, Christine. Now I know what I must do. Hush—!

*Helmer (coming in again).* Well, Mrs. Linde, have you admired her?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, and now I will say good-night.

*Helmer.* What, already? Is this yours, this knitting?

*Mrs. Linde (taking it).* Yes, thank you, I had very nearly forgotten it.

*Helmer.* So you knit?

*Mrs. Linde.* Of course.

*Helmer.* Do you know, you ought to embroider?

*Mrs. Linde.* Really? Why?

*Helmer.* Yes, it's far more becoming. Let me show you. You hold the embroidery thus in your left hand, and use the needle with the right—like this—with a long, easy sweep. Do you see?

*Mrs. Linde.* Yes, perhaps—

*Helmer.* But in the case of knitting—that can never be anything but ungraceful; look here—the arms close together, the knitting-needles going up and down—it has a sort of Chinese effect—. That was really excellent champagne they gave us.

*Mrs. Linde.* Well,—good-night, Nora, and don't be self-willed any more.

*Helmer.* That's right, Mrs. Linde.

*Mrs. Linde.* Good-night, Mr. Helmer.

*Helmer (accompanying her to the door).* Good-night, good-night. I hope you will get home all right. I should be very happy to—but you haven't any great distance to go. Good-night, good-night. (*She goes out; he shuts the door after her and comes in again.*) Ah!—at last we have got rid of her. She is a frightful bore, that woman.

*Nora.* Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

*Helmer.* No, not in the least.

*Nora.* Nor sleepy?

*Helmer.* Not a bit. On the contrary, I feel extraordinarily lively. And you?—you really look both tired and sleepy.

*Nora.* Yes, I am very tired. I want to go to sleep at once.

*Helmer.* There, you see it was quite right of me not to let you stay there any longer.

*Nora.* Everything you do is quite right, Torvald.

*Helmer (kissing her on the forehead).* Now my little skylark is speaking reasonably. Did you notice what good spirits Rank was in this evening?

*Nora.* Really? Was he? I didn't speak to him at all.

*Helmer.* And I very little, but I have not for a long time seen him in such good form. (*Looks for a while at her and then goes nearer to her.*) It is delightful to be at home by ourselves again, to be all alone with you—you fascinating, charming little darling!

*Nora.* Don't look at me like that, Torvald.

*Helmer.* Why shouldn't I look at my dearest treasure?—at all the beauty that is mine, all my very own?



*Nora (going to the other side of the table).* You mustn't say things like that to me tonight.

*Helmer (following her).* You have still got the Tarantella in your blood, I see. And it makes you more captivating than ever. Listen—the guests are beginning to go now. (*In a lower voice.*) Nora—soon the whole house will be quiet.

*Nora.* Yes, I hope so.

*Helmer.* Yes, my own darling Nora. Do you know, when I am out at a party with you like this, why I speak so little to you, keep away from you, and only send a stolen glance in your direction now and then?—do you know why I do that? It is because I make believe to myself that we are secretly in love, and you are my secretly promised bride, and that no one suspects there is anything between us.

*Nora.* Yes, yes—I know very well your thoughts are with me all the time.

*Helmer.* And when we are leaving, and I am putting the shawl over your beautiful young shoulders—on your lovely neck—then I imagine that you are my young bride and that we have just come from the wedding, and I am bringing you for the first time into our home—to be alone with you for the first time—quite alone with my shy little darling! All this evening I have longed for nothing but you. When I watched the seductive figures of the Tarantella, my blood was on fire; I could endure it no longer, and that was why I brought you down so early—

*Nora.* Go away, Torvald! You must let me go. I won't—

*Helmer.* What's that? You're joking, my little Nora! You won't—you won't? Am I not your husband—? (*A knock is heard at the outer door.*)

*Nora (starting).* Did you hear—?

*Helmer (going into the hall).* Who is it?

*Rank (outside).* It is I. May I come in for a moment?

*Helmer (in a fretful whisper).* Oh, what does he want now? (*Aloud.*) Wait a minute? (*Unlocks the door.*) Come, that's kind of you not to pass by our door.

*Rank.* I thought I heard your voice, and felt as if I should like to look in. (*With a swift glance round.*) Ah, yes!—these dear familiar rooms. You are very happy and cosy in here, you two.

*Helmer.* It seems to me that you looked after yourself pretty well upstairs too.

*Rank.* Excellently. Why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't one enjoy everything in this world?—at any rate as much as one can, and as long as one can. The wine was capital—

*Helmer.* Especially the champagne.

*Rank.* So you noticed that too? It is almost incredible how much I managed to put away!

*Nora.* Torvald drank a great deal of champagne tonight, too.

*Rank.* Did he?

*Nora.* Yes, and he is always in such good spirits afterwards.

*Rank.* Well, why should one not enjoy a merry evening after a well-spent day?

*Helmer.* Well spent? I am afraid I can't take credit for that.

*Rank (clapping him on the back).* But I can, you know!

*Nora.* Doctor Rank, you must have been occupied with some scientific investigation today.

*Rank.* Exactly.

*Helmer.* Just listen!—little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

*Nora.* And may I congratulate you on the result?

*Rank.* Indeed you may.

*Nora.* Was it favourable, then.

*Rank.* The best possible, for both doctor and patient—certainty.

*Nora (quickly and searchingly).* Certainty?

*Rank.* Absolute certainty. So wasn't I entitled to make a merry evening of it after that?

*Nora.* Yes, you certainly were, Doctor Rank.

*Helmer.* I think so too, so long as you don't have to pay for it in the morning.

*Rank.* Oh well, one can't have anything in this life without paying for it.

*Nora.* Doctor Rank—are you fond of fancy-dress balls?

*Rank.* Yes, if there is a fine lot of pretty costumes.

*Nora.* Tell me—what shall we two wear at the next?

*Helmer.* Little featherbrain!—are you thinking of the next already?

*Rank.* We two? Yes, I can tell you. You shall go as a good fairy—

*Helmer.* Yes, but what do you suggest as an appropriate costume for that?

*Rank.* Let your wife go dressed just as she is in every-day life.

*Helmer.* That was really very prettily turned. But can't you tell us what you will be?

*Rank.* Yes, my dear friend, I have quite made up my mind about that.

*Helmer.* Well?

*Rank.* At the next fancy-dress ball I shall be invisible.

*Helmer.* That's a good joke!

*Rank.* There is a big black hat—have you never heard of hats that make you invisible? If you put one on, no one can see you.

*Helmer (suppressing a smile).* Yes, you are quite right.

*Rank.* But I am clean forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar—one of the dark Havanas.

*Helmer.* With the greatest pleasure. (*Offers him his case.*)

*Rank (takes a cigar and cuts off the end).* Thanks.

*Nora (striking a match).* Let me give you a light.

*Rank.* Thank you. (*She holds the match for him to light his cigar.*) And now good-bye!

*Helmer.* Good-bye, good-bye, dear old man!

*Nora.* Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

*Rank.* Thank you for that wish.

*Nora.* Wish me the same.

*Rank.* You? Well, if you want me to sleep well! And thanks for the light. (*He nods to them both and goes out.*)

*Helmer (in a subdued voice).* He has drunk more than he ought.

*Nora (absently).* Maybe. (*HELMER takes a bunch of keys out of his pocket and goes into the hall.*) Torvald! what are you going to do there?

*Helmer.* Empty the letter-box; it is quite full; there will be no room to put the newspaper in to-morrow morning.

*Nora.* Are you going to work to-night?

*Helmer.* You know quite well I'm not. What is this? Some one has been at the lock.

*Nora.* At the lock?

*Helmer.* Yes, someone has. What can it mean? I should never have thought the maid—. Here is a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours.

*Nora (quickly).* Then it must have been the children—

*Helmer.* Then you must get them out of those ways. There, at last I have got it open. (*Takes out the contents of the letter-box, and calls to the kitchen.*) Helen!—Helen, put out the light over the front door. (*Goes back into the room and shuts the door into the hall. He holds out his hand full of letters.*) Look at that—look what a heap of them there are. (*Turning them over.*) What on earth is that?

*Nora (at the window).* The letter—No! Torvald, no!

*Helmer.* Two cards—of Rank's.

*Nora.* Of Doctor Rank's?

*Helmer (looking at them).* Doctor Rank. They were on the top. He must have put them in when he went out.

*Nora.* Is there anything written on them?

*Helmer.* There is a black cross over the name. Look there—what an uncomfortable idea! It looks as if he were announcing his own death.

*Nora.* It is just what he is doing.

*Helmer.* What? Do you know anything about it? Has he said anything to you?

*Nora.* Yes. He told me that when the cards came it would be his leave-taking from us. He means to shut himself up and die.

*Helmer.* My poor old friend. Certainly I knew we should not have him very long with us. But so soon! And so he hides himself away like a wounded animal.

*Nora.* If it has to happen, it is best it should be without a word—don't you think so, Torvald?

*Helmer (walking up and down).* He has so grown into our lives. I can't think of him as having gone out of them. He, with his sufferings and his loneliness, was like a cloudy background to our sunlit happiness. Well, perhaps it is best so. For him, anyway. *(Standing still.)* And perhaps for us too, Nora. We two are thrown quite upon each other now. *(Puts his arms around her.)* My darling wife, I don't feel as if I could hold you tight enough. Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake.

*Nora (disengages herself, and says firmly and decidedly).* Now you must read your letters, Torvald.

*Helmer.* No, no; not tonight. I want to be with you, my darling wife.

*Nora.* With the thought of your friend's death—

*Helmer.* You are right, it has affected us both. Something ugly has come between us—the thought of the horrors of death. We must try and rid our minds of that. Until then—we will each go to our own room.

*Nora (hanging on his neck).* Good-night, Torvald—Good-night!

*Helmer (kissing her on the forehead).* Good-night, my little singing-bird. Sleep sound, Nora. Now I will read my letters through. *(He takes his letters and goes into his room, shutting the door after him.)*

*Nora (gropes distractedly about, seizes HELMER'S domino, throws it round her, while she says in quick, hoarse, spasmodic whispers).* Never to see him again. Never! Never! *(Puts her shawl over her head.)* Never to see my children again either—never again. Never! Never!—Ah! the icy, black water—the unfathomable depths—If only it were over! He has got it now—now he is reading it. Good-bye, Torvald and my children! *(She is about to rush out through the hall, when HELMER opens his door hurriedly and stands with an open letter in his hand.)*

*Helmer.* Nora!

*Nora.* Ah!—

*Helmer.* What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

*Nora.* Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me get out!

*Helmer (holding her back).* Where are you going?

*Nora (trying to get free).* You shan't save me, Torvald!

*Helmer (reeling).* True? Is this true, that I read here? Horrible! No, no—it is impossible that it can be true.

*Nora.* It is true. I have loved you above everything else in the world.

*Helmer.* Oh, don't let us have any silly excuses.

*Nora (taking a step towards him).* Torvald—!

*Helmer.* Miserable creature—what have you done?

*Nora.* Let me go. You shall not suffer for my sake. You shall not take it upon yourself.

*Helmer.* No tragedy airs, please. (*Locks the hall door.*) Here you shall stay and give me an explanation. Do you understand what you have done? Answer me? Do you understand what you have done?

*Nora (looks steadily at him and says with a growing look of coldness in her face).* Yes, now I am beginning to understand thoroughly.

*Helmer (walking about the room).* What a horrible awakening! All these eight years—she who was my joy and pride—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal! The unutterable ugliness of it all!—For shame! For shame! (*NORA is silent and looks steadily at him. He stops in front of her.*) I ought to have suspected that something of the sort would happen. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle—be silent!—all your father's want of principle has come out in you. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty—How I am punished for having winked at what he did! I did it for your sake, and this is how you repay me.

*Nora.* Yes, that's just it.

*Helmer.* Now you have destroyed all my happiness. You have ruined all my future. It is horrible to think of! I am in the power of an unscrupulous man; he can do what he likes with me, ask anything he likes of me, give me any orders he pleases—I dare not refuse. And I must sink to such miserable depths because of a thoughtless woman!

*Nora.* When I am out of the way, you will be free.

*Helmer.* No fine speeches, please. Your father had always plenty of those ready, too. What good would it be to me if you were out of the way, as you say? Not the slightest. He can make the affair known everywhere; and if he does, I may be falsely suspected of having been a party to your criminal action. Very likely people will think

I was behind it all—that it was I who prompted you! And I have to thank you for all this—you whom I have cherished during the whole of our married life. Do you understand now what it is you have done for me?

*Nora (coldly and quietly).* Yes.

*Helmer.* It is so incredible that I can't take it in. But we must come to some understanding. Take off that shawl. Take it off, I tell you. I must try and appease him some way or another. The matter must be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it must appear as if everything between us were as before—but naturally only in the eyes of the world. You will still remain in my house, that is a matter of course. But I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you. To think that I should be obliged to say so to one whom I have loved so dearly, and whom I still—. No, that is all over. From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance—

*(A ring is heard at the front-door bell.)*

*Helmer (with a start).* What is that? So late! Can the worst—? Can he—? Hide yourself, Nora. Say you are ill.

*(NORA stands motionless. HELMER goes and unlocks the hall door.)*

*Maid (half-dressed, comes to the door).* A letter for the mistress.

*Helmer.* Give it to me. *(Takes the letter, and shuts the door.)* Yes, it is from him. You shall not have it; I will read it myself.

*Nora.* Yes, read it.

*Helmer (standing by the lamp).* I scarcely have the courage to do it. It may mean ruin for both of us. No, I must know. *(Tears open the letter, runs his eye over a few lines, looks at a paper enclosed, and gives a shout of joy.)* Nora! *(She looks at him, questioningly.)* Nora! No, I must read it once again—. Yes, it is true! I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

*Nora.* And I?

*Helmer.* You too, of course; we are both saved, both saved, both you and I. Look, he sends you your bond back. He says he regrets and repents—that a happy change in his life—never mind what he says! We are saved, Nora! No one can do anything to you. Oh, Nora, Nora!—no, first I must destroy these hateful things. Let me see—. *(Takes a look at the bond.)* No, no, I won't look at it. The whole thing shall be nothing but a bad dream to me. *(Tears up the bond and both letters, throws them all into the stove, and watches them burn.)* There—now it doesn't exist any longer. He says that since Christmas Eve you—. These must have been three dreadful days for you, Nora.

*Nora.* I have fought a hard fight these three days.

*Helmer.* And suffered agonies, and seen no way out but—. No, we won't call any of the horrors to mind. We will only shout with joy, and keep saying, "It's all over! It's all over!" Listen to me, Nora. You don't seem to realise that it is all over. What is this?—such a cold, set face! My poor little Nora, I quite understand; you don't feel as if you could believe that I have forgiven you. But it is true, Nora, I swear it; I have forgiven you everything. I know that what you did, you did out of love for me.

*Nora.* That is true.

*Helmer.* You have loved me as a wife ought to love her husband. Only you had not sufficient knowledge to judge of the means you used. But do you suppose you are any the less dear to me, because you don't understand how to act on your own responsibility? No, no; only lean on me; I will advise you and direct you. I should not be a man if this womanly helplessness did not just give you a double attractiveness in my eyes. You must not think any more about the hard things I said in my first moment of consternation, when I thought everything was going to overwhelm me. I have forgiven you, Nora; I swear to you I have forgiven you.

*Nora.* Thank you for your forgiveness. (*She goes out through the door to the right.*)

*Helmer.* No, don't go—. (*Looks in.*) What are you doing in there?

*Nora (from within).* Taking off my fancy dress.

*Helmer (standing at the open door).* Yes, do. Try and calm yourself, and make your mind easy again, my frightened little singing-bird. Be at rest, and feel secure; I have broad wings to shelter you under. (*Walks up and down by the door.*) How warm and cosy our home is, Nora. Here is shelter for you; here I will protect you like a hunted dove that I have saved from a hawk's claws; I will bring peace to your poor beating heart. It will come, little by little, Nora, believe me. To-morrow morning you will look upon it all quite differently; soon everything will be just as it was before. Very soon you won't need me to assure you that I have forgiven you; you will yourself feel the certainty that I have done so. Can you suppose I should ever think of such a thing as repudiating you, or even reproaching you? You have no idea what a true man's heart is like, Nora. There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife—forgiven her freely, and with all his heart. It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life, so to speak; and she is in a way become both wife and child to him. So you shall be for me after this, my little scared, helpless darling. Have no anxiety about anything, Nora; only be frank and open with me, and I will serve as will and conscience both to you—. What is this? Not gone to bed? Have you changed your things?

*Nora (in everyday dress).* Yes, Torvald, I have changed my things now.



*Helmer.* But what for?—so late as this.

*Nora.* I shall not sleep tonight.

*Helmer.* But, my dear Nora—

*Nora (looking at her watch).* It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. You and I have much to say to one another. *(She sits down at one side of the table.)*

*Helmer.* Nora—what is this?—this cold, set face?

*Nora.* Sit down. It will take some time; I have a lot to talk over with you.

*Helmer (sits down at the opposite side of the table).* You alarm me, Nora!—and I don't understand you.

*Nora.* No, that is just it. You don't understand me, and I have never understood you either—before tonight. No, you mustn't interrupt me. You must simply listen to what I say. Torvald, this is a settling of accounts.

*Helmer.* What do you mean by that?

*Nora (after a short silence).* Isn't there one thing that strikes you as strange in our sitting here like this?

*Helmer.* What is that?

*Nora.* We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation?

*Helmer.* What do you mean by serious?

*Nora.* In all these eight years—longer than that—from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on any serious subject.

*Helmer.* Was it likely that I would be continually and forever telling you about worries that you could not help me to bear?

*Nora.* I am not speaking about business matters. I say that we have never sat down in earnest together to try and get at the bottom of anything.

*Helmer.* But, dearest Nora, would it have been any good to you?

*Nora.* That is just it; you have never understood me. I have been greatly wronged, Torvald—first by papa and then by you.

*Helmer.* What! By us two—by us two, who have loved you better than anyone else in the world?

*Nora (shaking her head).* You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me.

*Helmer.* Nora, what do I hear you saying?

*Nora.* It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you—

*Helmer.* What sort of an expression is that to use about our marriage?

*Nora (undisturbed).* I mean that I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you—or else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which—I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman—just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

*Helmer.* How unreasonable and how ungrateful you are, Nora! Have you not been happy here?

*Nora.* No, I have never been happy. I thought I was, but it has never really been so.

*Helmer.* Not—not happy!

*Nora.* No, only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child; and here the children have been my dolls. I thought it great fun when you played with me, just as they thought it great fun when I played with them. That is what our marriage has been, Torvald.

*Helmer.* There is some truth in what you say—exaggerated and strained as your view of it is. But for the future it shall be different. Playtime shall be over, and lesson-time shall begin.

*Nora.* Whose lessons? Mine, or the children's?

*Helmer.* Both yours and the children's, my darling Nora.

*Nora.* Alas, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being a proper wife for you.

*Helmer.* And you can say that!

*Nora.* And I—how am I fitted to bring up the children?

*Helmer.* Nora!

*Nora.* Didn't you say so yourself a little while ago—that you dare not trust me to bring them up?

*Helmer.* In a moment of anger! Why do you pay any heed to that?

*Nora.* Indeed, you were perfectly right. I am not fit for the task. There is another task I must undertake first. I must try and educate myself—you are not the man to help me in that. I must do that for myself. And that is why I am going to leave you now.

*Helmer (springing up).* What do you say?

*Nora.* I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer.

*Helmer.* Nora, Nora!

*Nora.* I am going away from here now, at once. I am sure Christine will take me in for the night—

*Helmer.* You are out of your mind! I won't allow it! I forbid you!

*Nora.* It is no use forbidding me anything any longer. I will take with me what belongs to myself. I will take nothing from you, either now or later.

*Helmer.* What sort of madness is this!

*Nora.* Tomorrow I shall go home—I mean to my old home. It will be easiest for me to find something to do there.

*Helmer.* You blind, foolish woman!

*Nora.* I must try and get some sense, Torvald.

*Helmer.* To desert your home, your husband and your children! And you don't consider what people will say!

*Nora.* I cannot consider that at all. I only know that it is necessary for me.

*Helmer.* It's shocking. This is how you would neglect your most sacred duties.

*Nora.* What do you consider my most sacred duties?

*Helmer.* Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

*Nora.* I have other duties just as sacred.

*Helmer.* That you have not. What duties could those be?

*Nora.* Duties to myself.

*Helmer.* Before all else, you are a wife and mother.

*Nora.* I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being, just as you are—or, at all events, that I must try and become one. I know quite well, Torvald, that most people would think you right, and that views of that kind are to be found in books; but I can no longer content myself with what most people say, or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them.

*Helmer.* Can you not understand your place in your own home? Have you not a reliable guide in such matters as that?—have you no religion?

*Nora.* I am afraid, Torvald, I do not exactly know what religion is.

*Helmer.* What are you saying?

*Nora.* I know nothing but what the clergyman said, when I went to be confirmed. He told us that religion was this, and that, and the other. When I am away from all this, and am alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see if what the clergyman said is true, or at all events if it is true for me.

*Helmer.* This is unheard of in a girl of your age! But if religion cannot lead you aright, let me try and awaken your conscience. I suppose you have some moral sense? Or—answer me—am I to think you have none?

*Nora.* I assure you, Torvald, that is not an easy question to answer. I really don't know. The thing perplexes me altogether. I only know that you and I look at it in quite a different light. I am learning, too, that the law is quite another thing from what I supposed; but I find it impossible to convince myself that the law is right. According to it a woman has no right to spare her old dying father, or to save her husband's life. I can't believe that.

*Helmer.* You talk like a child. You don't understand the conditions of the world in which you live.

*Nora.* No, I don't. But now I am going to try. I am going to see if I can make out who is right, the world or I.

*Helmer.* You are ill, Nora; you are delirious; I almost think you are out of your mind.

*Nora.* I have never felt my mind so clear and certain as to-night.

*Helmer.* And is it with a clear and certain mind that you forsake your husband and your children?

*Nora.* Yes, it is.

*Helmer.* Then there is only one possible explanation.

*Nora.* What is that?

*Helmer.* You do not love me any more.

*Nora.* No, that is just it.

*Helmer.* Nora!—and you can say that?

*Nora.* It gives me great pain, Torvald, for you have always been so kind to me, but I cannot help it. I do not love you any more.

*Helmer (regaining his composure).* Is that a clear and certain conviction too?

*Nora.* Yes, absolutely clear and certain. That is the reason why I will not stay here any longer.

*Helmer.* And can you tell me what I have done to forfeit your love?

*Nora.* Yes, indeed I can. It was to-night, when the wonderful thing did not happen; then I saw you were not the man I had thought you.

*Helmer.* Explain yourself better—I don't understand you.

*Nora.* I have waited so patiently for eight years; for, goodness knows, I knew very well that wonderful things don't happen every day. Then this horrible misfortune came upon me; and then I felt quite certain that the wonderful thing was going to happen at last. When Krogstad's letter was lying out there, never for a moment did I imagine that you would consent to accept this man's conditions. I was so absolutely certain that you would say to him: Publish the thing to the whole world. And when that was done—

*Helmer.* Yes, what then?—when I had exposed my wife to shame and disgrace?

*Nora.* When that was done, I was so absolutely certain, you would come forward and take everything upon yourself, and say: I am the guilty one.

*Helmer.* Nora—!

*Nora.* You mean that I would never have accepted such a sacrifice on your part? No, of course not. But what

would my assurances have been worth against yours? That was the wonderful thing which I hoped for and feared; and it was to prevent that, that I wanted to kill myself.

*Helmer.* I would gladly work night and day for you, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves.

*Nora.* It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done.

*Helmer.* Oh, you think and talk like a heedless child.

*Nora.* Maybe. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over—and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you—when the whole thing was past, as far as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. (*Getting up.*) Torvald—it was then it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man, and had borne him three children—. Oh! I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into little bits!

*Helmer (sadly).* I see, I see. An abyss has opened between us—there is no denying it. But, Nora, would it not be possible to fill it up?

*Nora.* As I am now, I am no wife for you.

*Helmer.* I have it in me to become a different man.

*Nora.* Perhaps—if your doll is taken away from you.

*Helmer.* But to part!—to part from you! No, no, Nora, I can't understand that idea.

*Nora (going out to the right).* That makes it all the more certain that it must be done. (*She comes back with her cloak and hat and a small bag which she puts on a chair by the table.*)

*Helmer.* Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till tomorrow.

*Nora (putting on her cloak).* I cannot spend the night in a strange man's room.

*Helmer.* But can't we live here like brother and sister—?

*Nora (putting on her hat).* You know very well that would not last long. (*Puts the shawl round her.*) Good-bye, Torvald. I won't see the little ones. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can be of no use to them.

*Helmer.* But some day, Nora—some day?

*Nora.* How can I tell? I have no idea what is going to become of me.

*Helmer.* But you are my wife, whatever becomes of you.

*Nora.* Listen, Torvald. I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband's house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all obligations towards her. In any case I set you free from all your obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest way, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. See, here is your ring back. Give me mine.

*Helmer.* That too?

*Nora.* That too.

*Helmer.* Here it is.

*Nora.* That's right. Now it is all over. I have put the keys here. The maids know all about everything in the house—better than I do. Tomorrow, after I have left her, Christine will come here and pack up my own things that I brought with me from home. I will have them sent after me.

*Helmer.* All over! All over!—Nora, shall you never think of me again?

*Nora.* I know I shall often think of you and the children and this house.

*Helmer.* May I write to you, Nora?

*Nora.* No—never. You must not do that.

*Helmer.* But at least let me send you—

*Nora.* Nothing—nothing—

*Helmer.* Let me help you if you are in want.

*Nora.* No. I can receive nothing from a stranger.

*Helmer.* Nora—can I never be anything more than a stranger to you?

*Nora (taking her bag).* Ah, Torvald, the most wonderful thing of all would have to happen.

*Helmer.* Tell me what that would be!

*Nora.* Both you and I would have to be so changed that—. Oh, Torvald, I don't believe any longer in wonderful things happening.

*Helmer.* But I will believe in it. Tell me? So changed that—?

*Nora.* That our life together would be a real wedlock. Good-bye. *(She goes out through the hall.)*

*Helmer (sinks down on a chair at the door and buries his face in his hands).* Nora! Nora! *(Looks round, and rises.)* Empty. She is gone. *(A hope flashes across his mind.)* The most wonderful thing of all—?

*(The sound of a door shutting is heard from below.)*

*A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen is in the Public Domain and available through [Project Gutenberg](https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2444).

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## Ideas for Writing

### Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog" and Social Justice

Objective: Explore the themes of equity and social justice in Anton Chekhov's *The Lady with the Dog* through a contemporary lens. Analyze how the characters' societal positions and personal choices reflect broader social issues.

Instructions:

1. Read Chekhov's *The Lady with the Dog* carefully. Note instances where social class, gender, and marital status influence the characters' lives and relationships.
2. Then briefly research the societal context of Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on gender roles and class dynamics.
3. Find at least two scholarly articles that discuss themes of social justice in Chekhov's works.
4. Write an essay in which you do one of the following:
  - Discuss how Chekhov portrays the characters' struggles with societal expectations and personal desires. How do these struggles relate to issues of social justice?
  - Analyze the characters' relationships through the lens of equity. Consider how power dynamics based on gender and social class are depicted in the story.
  - Reflect on how the narrative would change if it were set in today's society. Which issues would remain the same, and which would differ?



## Gender Roles and Societal Norms in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*

Objective: Examine how Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* addresses themes of equity, societal norms, and social justice by analyzing the challenges to gender roles and societal expectations presented in the play, discussing how the play critiques the societal norms of its time and advocates for gender equity, and reflecting on the relevance of these themes in contemporary society.

Instructions:

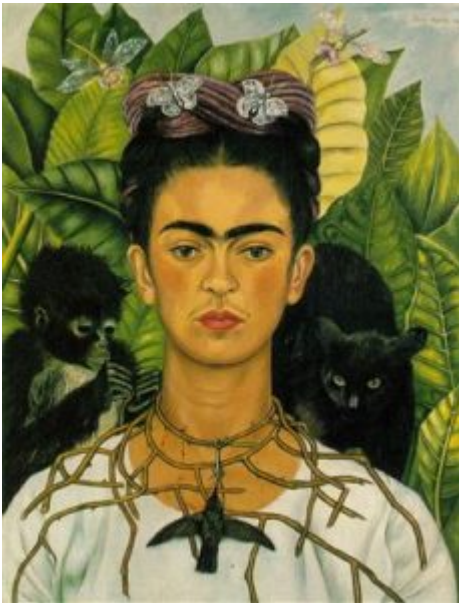
Write a concise essay analyzing *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, focusing on its critique of gender roles and societal norms in the context of equity and social justice.

## 2.

# FEMINISM

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## Feminism



“Self Portrait with Necklace of Thorns” by Frida Kahlo is included on the basis of fair use as described in the [Code of Best Practices in Fair use for Open Education](#).

Feminist literary criticism is **literary criticism** born from feminist theory. This school of **literary criticism** uses ideas from feminist theory to critique literature by illustrating how the common narrative of male domination is pervasive through the drawing of economic, political, psychological, and social constructs inherent in literature. As a result of **feminism**, the **literary canon** has expanded, and literature can be viewed through a new lens. One of the earliest examples of feminism is Mary Wollstonecraft’s “Vindication on the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects,” which was published in 1792.

The feminist movement and other social justice movements have challenged traditional narratives and introduced new perspectives into literature. From the suffragette literature of the early 20th century to the contemporary works of authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the Nigerian born author of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *That Thing Around Your Neck*, and Roxane Gay, activist and author of *Hunger, An Untamed State*, and *Difficult Women*, both of whom speak to the power of voice, these movements have expanded the scope of literary exploration to include diverse voices and experiences.



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“Roxanne Gay’s Brief But Spectacular take on effective ways of being heard” by PBS News Hour on YouTube is licensed all rights reserved.



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## Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz



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Juana de Asuaje y Ramírez de Santillana, better known as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz OSH, is a Mexican writer, philosopher, composer and poet born in 1651 during the Baroque period, as well as a Hieronymite nun, nicknamed “The Tenth Muse” and “The Phoenix of America” by her contemporary critics. After a few years

in court as a young woman disillusioned her and in order to study, at age twenty-one de la Cruz entered the Convent of the Order of St. Jérôme, where she would remain until her death. Controversy surrounded her writing, often because it lacked religious content. The Church eventually forced her to give up her scholarly materials and focus solely on religious matters.



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## “Philosophical Satire Poem 92” by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz

Poem 92. Philosophical Satire

[Points out the inconsistency of the tastes and censure of men who denounce in women what they themselves have caused.]

You mulish men, accusing  
woman without reason,  
not seeing you occasion  
the very wrong you blame:

since you, with craving unsurpassed,  
have sought for their disdain,  
why do you hope for their good works  
when you urge them on to ill?

You assail all their resistance,  
then, speaking seriously,  
you say it was frivolity,  
forgetting all your diligence.

What most resembles the bravery  
of your mad opinion

is the boy who summons the bogeyman  
and then cowers in fear of him.

You hope, with mulish presumption,  
to find the one you seek:  
for the one you court, a Thais;  
but possessing her, Lucrecia.

Whose humor could be more odd  
than he who, lacking judgment,  
himself fogs up the mirror,  
then laments that it's not clear?

Of their favor and their disdain  
you hold the same condition:  
complaining if they treat you ill;  
mocking them, if they love you well.

A fair opinion no woman can win,  
no matter how discrete she is;  
if she won't admit you, she is mean,  
and if she does, she's frivolous.

You're always so stubbornly mulish  
that, using your unbalanced scale,  
you blame one woman for being cruel,  
the other one, for being easy.

For how can she be temperate  
when you are wooing after her,  
if her being mean offends you  
and her being easy maddens?

Yet between the anger and the grief  
that your taste recounts,  
blessed the woman who doesn't love you,  
and go complain for all you're worth.

Your lover's grief gives  
wings to their liberties,

yet after making them so bad  
you hope to find them very good.

Whose blame should be the greater  
in an ill-starred passion:  
she who, begged-for, falls,  
or he who, fallen, begs her?

Or who deserves more blame,  
though both of them do ill:  
she who sins for pay,  
or he who pays for sin?

So why are you so afraid  
of the blame that is your own?  
Love them just as you have made them,  
or make them as you seek to find.

Just stop your soliciting  
and then, with all the more reason,  
you may denounce the infatuation  
of the woman who comes to beg for you.

With all these arms, then, I have proved  
that what you wield is arrogance,  
for in your promises and your demands  
you join up devil, flesh, and world.

“[Juana Inés de la Cruz](#)” by Wikipedia is licensed CC-BY-SA.

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## Mary Wollstonecraft



“[Mary Wollstonecraft, 1797](#)” by [James Heath](#) and [John Opie](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the public domain.

### “Vindication on the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects” by Mary Wollstonecraft

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

\*Only introductory material and Chapter 1 are included. Full text is available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/3420/pg3420-images.html>

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### A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

M. Wollstonecraft was born in 1759. Her father was so great a wanderer, that the place of her birth is uncertain;



she supposed, however, it was London, or Epping Forest: at the latter place she spent the first five years of her life. In early youth she exhibited traces of exquisite sensibility, soundness of understanding, and decision of character; but her father being a despot in his family, and her mother one of his subjects, Mary, derived little benefit from their parental training. She received no literary instructions but such as were to be had in ordinary day schools. Before her sixteenth year she became acquainted with Mr. Clare a clergyman, and Miss Frances Blood; the latter, two years older than herself; who possessing good taste and some knowledge of the fine arts, seems to have given the first impulse to the formation of her character. At the age of nineteen, she left her parents, and resided with a Mrs. Dawson for two years; when she returned to the parental roof to give attention to her mother, whose ill health made her presence necessary. On the death of her mother, Mary bade a final adieu to her father's house, and became the inmate of F. Blood; thus situated, their intimacy increased, and a strong attachment was reciprocated. In 1783 she commenced a day school at Newington green, in conjunction with her friend, F. Blood. At this place she became acquainted with Dr. Price, to whom she became strongly attached; the regard was mutual.

It is said that she became a teacher from motives of benevolence, or rather philanthropy, and during the time she continued in the profession, she gave proof of superior qualification for the performance of its arduous and important duties. Her friend and coadjutor married and removed to Lisbon, in Portugal, where she died of a pulmonary disease; the symptoms of which were visible before her marriage. So true was Mary's attachment to her, that she entrusted her school to the care of others, for the purpose of attending Frances in her closing scene. She aided, as did Dr. Young, in "Stealing Narcissa a grave." Her mind was expanded by this residence in a foreign country, and though clear of religious bigotry before, she took some instructive lessons on the evils of superstition, and intolerance.

On her return she found the school had suffered by her absence, and having previously decided to apply herself to literature, she now resolved to commence. In 1787 she made, or received, proposals from Johnson, a publisher in London, who was already acquainted with her talents as an author. During the three subsequent years, she was actively engaged, more in translating, condensing, and compiling, than in the production of original works. At this time she laboured under much depression of spirits, for the loss of her friend; this rather increased, perhaps, by the publication of "Mary, a novel," which was mostly composed of incidents and reflections connected with their intimacy.

The pecuniary concerns of her father becoming embarrassed, Mary practised a rigid economy in her expenditures, and with her savings was enabled to procure her sisters and brothers situations, to which without her aid, they could not have had access; her father was sustained at length from her funds; she even found means to take under her protection an orphan child.

She had acquired a facility in the arrangement and expression of thoughts, in her avocation of translator, and compiler, which was no doubt of great use to her afterward. It was not long until she had occasion for them. The eminent Burke produced his celebrated "Reflections on the Revolution in France." Mary full of

sentiments of liberty, and indignant at what she thought subversive of it, seized her pen and produced the first attack upon that famous work. It succeeded well, for though intemperate and contemptuous, it was vehemently and impetuously eloquent; and though Burke was beloved by the enlightened friends of freedom, they were dissatisfied and disgusted with what they deemed an outrage upon it.

It is said that Mary, had not wanted confidence in her own powers before, but the reception this work met from the public, gave her an opportunity of judging what those powers were, in the estimation of others. It was shortly after this, that she commenced the work to which these remarks are prefixed. What are its merits will be decided in the judgment of each reader; suffice it to say she appears to have stepped forth boldly, and singly, in defence of that half of the human race, which by the usages of all society, whether savage or civilized, have been kept from attaining their proper dignity—their equal rank as rational beings. It would appear that the disguise used in placing on woman the silken fetters which bribed her into endurance, and even love of slavery, but increased the opposition of our authoress: she would have had more patience with rude, brute coercion, than with that imposing gallantry, which, while it affects to consider woman as the pride, and ornament of creation, degrades her to a toy—an appendage—a cypher. The work was much reprehended, and as might well be expected, found its greatest enemies in the pretty soft creatures—the spoiled children of her own sex. She accomplished it in six weeks.

In 1792 she removed to Paris, where she became acquainted with Gilbert Imlay, of the United States. And from this acquaintance grew an attachment, which brought the parties together, without legal formalities, to which she objected on account of some family embarrassments, in which he would thereby become involved. The engagement was however considered by her of the most sacred nature, and they formed the plan of emigrating to America, where they should be enabled to accomplish it. These were the days of Robespierrean cruelty, and Imlay left Paris for Havre, whither after a time Mary followed him. They continued to reside there, until he left Havre for London, under pretence of business, and with a promise of rejoining her soon at Paris, which however he did not, but in 1795 sent for her to London. In the mean time she had become the mother of a female child, whom she called Frances in commemoration of her early friendship.

Before she went to England, she had some gloomy forebodings that the affections of Imlay, had waned, if they were not estranged from her; on her arrival, those forebodings were sorrowfully confirmed. His attentions were too formal and constrained to pass unobserved by her penetration, and though he ascribed his manner, and his absence, to business duties, she saw his affection for her was only something to be remembered. To use her own expression, “Love, dear delusion! Rigorous reason has forced me to resign; and now my rational prospects are blasted, just as I have learned to be contented with rational enjoyments.” To pretend to depict her misery at this time would be futile; the best idea can be formed of it from the fact that she had planned her own destruction, from which Imlay prevented her. She conceived the idea of suicide a second time, and threw herself into the Thames; she remained in the water, until consciousness forsook her, but she was taken up and resuscitated. After divers attempts to revive the affections of Imlay, with sundry explanations and professions on his part,

through the lapse of two years, she resolved finally to forgo all hope of reclaiming him, and endeavour to think of him no more in connexion with her future prospects. In this she succeeded so well, that she afterwards had a private interview with him, which did not produce any painful emotions.

In 1796 she revived or improved an acquaintance which commenced years before with Wm. Godwin, author of "Political Justice," and other works of great notoriety. Though they had not been favourably impressed with each other on their former acquaintance, they now met under circumstances which permitted a mutual and just appreciation of character. Their intimacy increased by regular and almost imperceptible degrees. The partiality they conceived for each other was, according to her biographer, "In the most refined style of love. It grew with equal advances in the mind of each. It would have been impossible for the most minute observer to have said who was before, or who after. One sex did not take the priority which long established custom has awarded it, nor the other overstep that delicacy which is so severely imposed. Neither party could assume to have been the agent or the patient, the toil-spreader or the prey in the affair. When in the course of things the disclosure came, there was nothing in a manner for either to disclose to the other."

Mary lived but a few months after her marriage, and died in child-bed; having given birth to a daughter who is now known to the literary world as Mrs. Shelly, the widow of Percy Bysche Shelly.

We can scarcely avoid regret that one of such splendid talents, and high toned feelings, should, after the former seemed to have been fully developed, and the latter had found an object in whom they might repose, after their eccentric and painful efforts to find a resting place—that such an one should at such a time, be cut off from life is something which we cannot contemplate without feeling regret; we can scarcely repress the murmur that she had not been removed ere clouds darkened her horizon, or that she had remained to witness the brightness and serenity which might have succeeded. But thus it is; we may trace the cause to anti-social arrangements; it is not individuals but society which must change it, and that not by enactments, but by a change in public opinion.

The authoress of the "Rights of Woman," was born April 1759, died September 1797.

That there may be no doubt regarding the facts in this sketch, they are taken from a memoir written by her afflicted husband. In addition to many kind things he has said of her, (he was not blinded to imperfections in her character) is, that she was "Lovely in her person, and in the best and most engaging sense feminine in her manners."

TO

M. TALLEYRAND PERIGORD,

LATE BISHOP OF AUTUN.

Sir:—

Having read with great pleasure a pamphlet, which you have lately published, on National Education, I dedicate this volume to you, the first dedication that I have ever written, to induce you to read it with attention; and, because I think that you will understand me, which I do not suppose many pert witlings will, who may ridicule the arguments they are unable to answer. But, sir, I carry my respect for your understanding still farther: so far, that I am confident you will not throw my work aside, and hastily conclude that I am in the wrong because you did not view the subject in the same light yourself. And pardon my frankness, but I must observe, that you treated it in too cursory a manner, contented to consider it as it had been considered formerly, when the rights of man, not to advert to woman, were trampled on as chimerical. I call upon you, therefore, now to weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of woman, and national education; and I call with the firm tone of humanity. For my arguments, sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit: I plead for my sex, not for myself. Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue; and independence I will ever secure by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath.

It is, then, an affection for the whole human race that makes my pen dart rapidly along to support what I believe to be the cause of virtue: and the same motive leads me earnestly to wish to see woman placed in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding, the progress of those glorious principles that give a substance to morality. My opinion, indeed, respecting the rights and duties of woman, seems to flow so naturally from these simple principles, that I think it scarcely possible, but that some of the enlarged minds who formed your admirable constitution, will coincide with me.

In France, there is undoubtedly a more general diffusion of knowledge than in any part of the European world, and I attribute it, in a great measure, to the social intercourse which has long subsisted between the sexes. It is true, I utter my sentiments with freedom, that in France the very essence of sensuality has been extracted to regale the voluptuary, and a kind of sentimental lust has prevailed, which, together with the system of duplicity that the whole tenor of their political and civil government taught, have given a sinister sort of sagacity to the French character, properly termed *finesse*; and a polish of manners that injures the substance, by hunting sincerity out of society. And, modesty, the fairest garb of virtue has been more grossly insulted in France than even in England, till their women have treated as PRUDISH that attention to decency which brutes instinctively observe.

Manners and morals are so nearly allied, that they have often been confounded; but, though the former should

only be the natural reflection of the latter, yet, when various causes have produced factitious and corrupt manners, which are very early caught, morality becomes an empty name. The personal reserve, and sacred respect for cleanliness and delicacy in domestic life, which French women almost despise, are the graceful pillars of modesty; but, far from despising them, if the pure flame of patriotism have reached their bosoms, they should labour to improve the morals of their fellow-citizens, by teaching men, not only to respect modesty in women, but to acquire it themselves, as the only way to merit their esteem.

Contending for the rights of women, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge, for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate, unless she know why she ought to be virtuous? Unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good? If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot; and the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can only be produced by considering the moral and civil interest of mankind; but the education and situation of woman, at present, shuts her out from such investigations.

In this work I have produced many arguments, which to me were conclusive, to prove, that the prevailing notion respecting a sexual character was subversive of morality, and I have contended, that to render the human body and mind more perfect, chastity must more universally prevail, and that chastity will never be respected in the male world till the person of a woman is not, as it were, idolized when little virtue or sense embellish it with the grand traces of mental beauty, or the interesting simplicity of affection.

Consider, Sir, dispassionately, these observations, for a glimpse of this truth seemed to open before you when you observed, “that to see one half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation of government, was a political phenomenon that, according to abstract principles, it was impossible to explain.” If so, on what does your constitution rest? If the abstract rights of man will bear discussion and explanation, those of woman, by a parity of reasoning, will not shrink from the same test: though a different opinion prevails in this country, built on the very arguments which you use to justify the oppression of woman, prescription.

Consider, I address you as a legislator, whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves, respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason?

In this style, argue tyrants of every denomination from the weak king to the weak father of a family; they are all eager to crush reason; yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful. Do you not act a similar part, when you FORCE all women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured

in their families groping in the dark? For surely, sir, you will not assert, that a duty can be binding which is not founded on reason? If, indeed, this be their destination, arguments may be drawn from reason; and thus augustly supported, the more understanding women acquire, the more they will be attached to their duty, comprehending it, for unless they comprehend it, unless their morals be fixed on the same immutable principles as those of man, no authority can make them discharge it in a virtuous manner. They may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent.

But, if women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason, else this flaw in your NEW CONSTITUTION, the first constitution founded on reason, will ever show that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant, and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality.

I have repeatedly asserted, and produced what appeared to me irrefragable arguments drawn from matters of fact, to prove my assertion, that women cannot, by force, be confined to domestic concerns; for they will however ignorant, intermeddle with more weighty affairs, neglecting private duties only to disturb, by cunning tricks, the orderly plans of reason which rise above their comprehension.

Besides, whilst they are only made to acquire personal accomplishments, men will seek for pleasure in variety, and faithless husbands will make faithless wives; such ignorant beings, indeed, will be very excusable when, not taught to respect public good, nor allowed any civil right, they attempt to do themselves justice by retaliation.

The box of mischief thus opened in society, what is to preserve private virtue, the only security of public freedom and universal happiness?

Let there be then no coercion ESTABLISHED in society, and the common law of gravity prevailing, the sexes will fall into their proper places. And, now that more equitable laws are forming your citizens, marriage may become more sacred; your young men may choose wives from motives of affection, and your maidens allow love to root out vanity.

The father of a family will not then weaken his constitution and debase his sentiments, by visiting the harlot, nor forget, in obeying the call of appetite, the purpose for which it was implanted; and the mother will not neglect her children to practise the arts of coquetry, when sense and modesty secure her the friendship of her husband.

But, till men become attentive to the duty of a father, it is vain to expect women to spend that time in their nursery which they, “wise in their generation,” choose to spend at their glass; for this exertion of cunning is only an instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share; for, if women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges.

I wish, sir, to set some investigations of this kind afloat in France; and should they lead to a confirmation of my principles, when your constitution is revised, the rights of woman may be respected, if it be fully proved that reason calls for this respect, and loudly demands JUSTICE for one half of the human race.

I am, sir,

Yours respectfully,

M. W.

## INTRODUCTION.

After considering the historic page, and viewing the living world with anxious solicitude, the most melancholy emotions of sorrowful indignation have depressed my spirits, and I have sighed when obliged to confess, that either nature has made a great difference between man and man, or that the civilization, which has hitherto taken place in the world, has been very partial. I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result? a profound conviction, that the neglected education of my fellow creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore; and that women in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion. The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove, that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers that are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men, who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than rational wives; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

In a treatise, therefore, on female rights and manners, the works which have been particularly written for their improvement must not be overlooked; especially when it is asserted, in direct terms, that the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement; that the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions; and that, in the true style of Mahometanism, they are only considered as females, and not as a part of the human species, when improvable reason is allowed to be the dignified distinction, which raises men above the brute creation, and puts a natural sceptre in a feeble hand.

Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose, that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the equality and inferiority of the sex; but as the subject lies in my way, and I cannot pass it over without subjecting the main tendency of my reasoning to misconstruction, I shall stop a

moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion. In the government of the physical world, it is observable that the female, in general, is inferior to the male. The male pursues, the female yields—this is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated in favour of woman. This physical superiority cannot be denied—and it is a noble prerogative! But not content with this natural pre-eminence, men endeavour to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society.

I am aware of an obvious inference: from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women; but where are they to be found? If, by this appellation, men mean to inveigh against their ardour in hunting, shooting, and gaming, I shall most cordially join in the cry; but if it be, against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennoble the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind—all those who view them with a philosophical eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine.

This discussion naturally divides the subject. I shall first consider women in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties; and afterwards I shall more particularly point out their peculiar designation.

I wish also to steer clear of an error, which many respectable writers have fallen into; for the instruction which has hitherto been addressed to women, has rather been applicable to LADIES, if the little indirect advice, that is scattered through Sandford and Merton, be excepted; but, addressing my sex in a firmer tone, I pay particular attention to those in the middle class, because they appear to be in the most natural state. Perhaps the seeds of false refinement, immorality, and vanity have ever been shed by the great. Weak, artificial beings raised above the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature unnatural manner, undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society! As a class of mankind they have the strongest claim to pity! the education of the rich tends to render them vain and helpless, and the unfolding mind is not strengthened by the practice of those duties which dignify the human character. They only live to amuse themselves, and by the same law which in nature invariably produces certain effects, they soon only afford barren amusement.

But as I purpose taking a separate view of the different ranks of society, and of the moral character of women, in each, this hint is, for the present, sufficient; and I have only alluded to the subject, because it appears to me to be the very essence of an introduction to give a cursory account of the contents of the work it introduces.

My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their FASCINATING graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade



women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them, that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.

Dismissing then those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak elegance of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners, supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex; and that secondary views should be brought to this simple touchstone.

This is a rough sketch of my plan; and should I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by some of my readers. Animated by this important object, I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style—I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for wishing rather to persuade by the force of my arguments, than dazzle by the elegance of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, nor in fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings, which, coming from the head, never reach the heart. I shall be employed about things, not words! and, anxious to render my sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid that flowery diction which has slid from essays into novels, and from novels into familiar letters and conversation.

These pretty nothings, these caricatures of the real beauty of sensibility, dropping glibly from the tongue, vitiate the taste, and create a kind of sickly delicacy that turns away from simple unadorned truth; and a deluge of false sentiments and over-stretched feelings, stifling the natural emotions of the heart, render the domestic pleasures insipid, that ought to sweeten the exercise of those severe duties, which educate a rational and immortal being for a nobler field of action.

The education of women has, of late, been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavour by satire or instruction to improve them. It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments: meanwhile, strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves, the only way women can rise in the world—by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry, they act as such children may be expected to act: they dress; they paint, and nickname God's creatures. Surely these weak beings are only fit for the seraglio! Can they govern a family, or take care of the poor babes whom they bring into the world?

If then it can be fairly deduced from the present conduct of the sex, from the prevalent fondness for pleasure, which takes place of ambition and those nobler passions that open and enlarge the soul; that the instruction which women have received has only tended, with the constitution of civil society, to render them insignificant

objects of desire; mere propagators of fools! if it can be proved, that in aiming to accomplish them, without cultivating their understandings, they are taken out of their sphere of duties, and made ridiculous and useless when the short lived bloom of beauty is over\*, I presume that RATIONAL men will excuse me for endeavouring to persuade them to become more masculine and respectable.

(\*Footnote. A lively writer, I cannot recollect his name, asks what business women turned of forty have to do in the world.)

Indeed the word masculine is only a bugbear: there is little reason to fear that women will acquire too much courage or fortitude; for their apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength, must render them, in some degree, dependent on men in the various relations of life; but why should it be increased by prejudices that give a sex to virtue, and confound simple truths with sensual reveries?

Women are, in fact, so much degraded by mistaken notions of female excellence, that I do not mean to add a paradox when I assert, that this artificial weakness produces a propensity to tyrannize, and gives birth to cunning, the natural opponent of strength, which leads them to play off those contemptible infantile airs that undermine esteem even whilst they excite desire. Do not foster these prejudices, and they will naturally fall into their subordinate, yet respectable station in life.

It seems scarcely necessary to say, that I now speak of the sex in general. Many individuals have more sense than their male relatives; and, as nothing preponderates where there is a constant struggle for an equilibrium, without it has naturally more gravity, some women govern their husbands without degrading themselves, because intellect will always govern.

## VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.

### CHAPTER 1.

#### THE RIGHTS AND INVOLVED DUTIES OF MANKIND CONSIDERED.

In the present state of society, it appears necessary to go back to first principles in search of the most simple truths, and to dispute with some prevailing prejudice every inch of ground. To clear my way, I must be allowed to ask some plain questions, and the answers will probably appear as unequivocal as the axioms on which reasoning is built; though, when entangled with various motives of action, they are formally contradicted, either by the words or conduct of men.

In what does man's pre-eminence over the brute creation consist?

The answer is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in

Reason.

What acquirement exalts one being above another? Virtue; we spontaneously reply.

For what purpose were the passions implanted? That man by struggling with them might attain a degree of knowledge denied to the brutes: whispers Experience.

Consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness, must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively.

The rights and duties of man thus simplified, it seems almost impertinent to attempt to illustrate truths that appear so incontrovertible: yet such deeply rooted prejudices have clouded reason, and such spurious qualities have assumed the name of virtues, that it is necessary to pursue the course of reason as it has been perplexed and involved in error, by various adventitious circumstances, comparing the simple axiom with casual deviations.

Men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they cannot trace how, rather than to root them out. The mind must be strong that resolutely forms its own principles; for a kind of intellectual cowardice prevails which makes many men shrink from the task, or only do it by halves. Yet the imperfect conclusions thus drawn, are frequently very plausible, because they are built on partial experience, on just, though narrow, views.

Going back to first principles, vice skulks, with all its native deformity, from close investigation; but a set of shallow reasoners are always exclaiming that these arguments prove too much, and that a measure rotten at the core may be expedient. Thus expediency is continually contrasted with simple principles, till truth is lost in a mist of words, virtue in forms, and knowledge rendered a sounding nothing, by the specious prejudices that assume its name.

That the society is formed in the wisest manner, whose constitution is founded on the nature of man, strikes, in the abstract, every thinking being so forcibly, that it looks like presumption to endeavour to bring forward proofs; though proof must be brought, or the strong hold of prescription will never be forced by reason; yet to urge prescription as an argument to justify the depriving men (or women) of their natural rights, is one of the absurd sophisms which daily insult common sense.

The civilization of the bulk of the people of Europe, is very partial; nay, it may be made a question, whether they have acquired any virtues in exchange for innocence, equivalent to the misery produced by the vices that have been plastered over unsightly ignorance, and the freedom which has been bartered for splendid slavery. The desire of dazzling by riches, the most certain pre-eminence that man can obtain, the pleasure of commanding flattering sycophants, and many other complicated low calculations of dotting self-love, have all contributed to overwhelm the mass of mankind, and make liberty a convenient handle for mock patriotism. For whilst rank and titles are held of the utmost importance, before which Genius “must hide its diminished

head," it is, with a few exceptions, very unfortunate for a nation when a man of abilities, without rank or property, pushes himself forward to notice. Alas! what unheard of misery have thousands suffered to purchase a cardinal's hat for an intriguing obscure adventurer, who longed to be ranked with princes, or lord it over them by seizing the triple crown!

Such, indeed, has been the wretchedness that has flowed from hereditary honours, riches, and monarchy, that men of lively sensibility have almost uttered blasphemy in order to justify the dispensations of providence. Man has been held out as independent of his power who made him, or as a lawless planet darting from its orbit to steal the celestial fire of reason; and the vengeance of heaven, lurking in the subtle flame, sufficiently punished his temerity, by introducing evil into the world.

Impressed by this view of the misery and disorder which pervaded society, and fatigued with jostling against artificial fools, Rousseau became enamoured of solitude, and, being at the same time an optimist, he labours with uncommon eloquence to prove that man was naturally a solitary animal. Misled by his respect for the goodness of God, who certainly for what man of sense and feeling can doubt it! gave life only to communicate happiness, he considers evil as positive, and the work of man; not aware that he was exalting one attribute at the expense of another, equally necessary to divine perfection.

Reared on a false hypothesis, his arguments in favour of a state of nature are plausible, but unsound. I say unsound; for to assert that a state of nature is preferable to civilization in all its possible perfection, is, in other words, to arraign supreme wisdom; and the paradoxical exclamation, that God has made all things right, and that evil has been introduced by the creature whom he formed, knowing what he formed, is as unphilosophical as impious.

When that wise Being, who created us and placed us here, saw the fair idea, he willed, by allowing it to be so, that the passions should unfold our reason, because he could see that present evil would produce future good. Could the helpless creature whom he called from nothing, break loose from his providence, and boldly learn to know good by practising evil without his permission? No. How could that energetic advocate for immortality argue so inconsistently? Had mankind remained for ever in the brutal state of nature, which even his magic pen cannot paint as a state in which a single virtue took root, it would have been clear, though not to the sensitive unreflecting wanderer, that man was born to run the circle of life and death, and adorn God's garden for some purpose which could not easily be reconciled with his attributes.

But if, to crown the whole, there were to be rational creatures produced, allowed to rise in excellency by the exercise of powers implanted for that purpose; if benignity itself thought fit to call into existence a creature above the brutes, who could think and improve himself, why should that inestimable gift, for a gift it was, if a man was so created as to have a capacity to rise above the state in which sensation produced brutal ease, be called, in direct terms, a curse? A curse it might be reckoned, if all our existence was bounded by our continuance in this world; for why should the gracious fountain of life give us passions, and the power of

reflecting, only to embitter our days, and inspire us with mistaken notions of dignity? Why should he lead us from love of ourselves to the sublime emotions which the discovery of his wisdom and goodness excites, if these feelings were not set in motion to improve our nature, of which they make a part, and render us capable of enjoying a more godlike portion of happiness? Firmly persuaded that no evil exists in the world that God did not design to take place, I build my belief on the perfection of God.

Rousseau exerts himself to prove, that all WAS right originally: a crowd of authors that all IS now right: and I, that all WILL BE right.

But, true to his first position, next to a state of nature, Rousseau celebrates barbarism, and, apostrophizing the shade of Fabricius, he forgets that, in conquering the world, the Romans never dreamed of establishing their own liberty on a firm basis, or of extending the reign of virtue. Eager to support his system, he stigmatizes, as vicious, every effort of genius; and uttering the apotheosis of savage virtues, he exalts those to demigods, who were scarcely human—the brutal Spartans, who in defiance of justice and gratitude, sacrificed, in cold blood, the slaves that had shown themselves men to rescue their oppressors.

Disgusted with artificial manners and virtues, the citizen of Geneva, instead of properly sifting the subject, threw away the wheat with the chaff, without waiting to inquire whether the evils, which his ardent soul turned from indignantly, were the consequence of civilization, or the vestiges of barbarism. He saw vice trampling on virtue, and the semblance of goodness taking place of the reality; he saw talents bent by power to sinister purposes, and never thought of tracing the gigantic mischief up to arbitrary power, up to the hereditary distinctions that clash with the mental superiority that naturally raises a man above his fellows. He did not perceive, that the regal power, in a few generations, introduces idiotism into the noble stem, and holds out baits to render thousands idle and vicious.

Nothing can set the regal character in a more contemptible point of view, than the various crimes that have elevated men to the supreme dignity. Vile intrigues, unnatural crimes, and every vice that degrades our nature, have been the steps to this distinguished eminence; yet millions of men have supinely allowed the nerveless limbs of the posterity of such rapacious prowlers, to rest quietly on their ensanguined thrones.

What but a pestilential vapour can hover over society, when its chief director is only instructed in the invention of crimes, or the stupid routine of childish ceremonies? Will men never be wise? will they never cease to expect corn from tares, and figs from thistles?

It is impossible for any man, when the most favourable circumstances concur, to acquire sufficient knowledge and strength of mind to discharge the duties of a king, entrusted with uncontrolled power; how then must they be violated when his very elevation is an insuperable bar to the attainment of either wisdom or virtue; when all the feelings of a man are stifled by flattery, and reflection shut out by pleasure! Surely it is madness to make the fate of thousands depend on the caprice of a weak fellow creature, whose very station sinks him

NECESSARILY below the meanest of his subjects! But one power should not be thrown down to exalt another—for all power intoxicates weak man; and its abuse proves, that the more equality there is established among men, the more virtue and happiness will reign in society. But this, and any similar maxim deduced from simple reason, raises an outcry—the church or the state is in danger, if faith in the wisdom of antiquity is not implicit; and they who, roused by the sight of human calamity, dare to attack human authority, are reviled as despisers of God, and enemies of man. These are bitter calumnies, yet they reached one of the best of men, (Dr. Price.) whose ashes still preach peace, and whose memory demands a respectful pause, when subjects are discussed that lay so near his heart.

After attacking the sacred majesty of kings, I shall scarcely excite surprise, by adding my firm persuasion, that every profession, in which great subordination of rank constitutes its power, is highly injurious to morality.

A standing army, for instance, is incompatible with freedom; because subordination and rigour are the very sinews of military discipline; and despotism is necessary to give vigour to enterprises that one will direct. A spirit inspired by romantic notions of honour, a kind of morality founded on the fashion of the age, can only be felt by a few officers, whilst the main body must be moved by command, like the waves of the sea; for the strong wind of authority pushes the crowd of subalterns forward, they scarcely know or care why, with headlong fury.

Besides, nothing can be so prejudicial to the morals of the inhabitants of country towns, as the occasional residence of a set of idle superficial young men, whose only occupation is gallantry, and whose polished manners render vice more dangerous, by concealing its deformity under gay ornamental drapery. An air of fashion, which is but a badge of slavery, and proves that the soul has not a strong individual character, awes simple country people into an imitation of the vices, when they cannot catch the slippery graces of politeness. Every corps is a chain of despots, who, submitting and tyrannizing without exercising their reason, become dead weights of vice and folly on the community. A man of rank or fortune, sure of rising by interest, has nothing to do but to pursue some extravagant freak; whilst the needy GENTLEMAN, who is to rise, as the phrase turns, by his merit, becomes a servile parasite or vile pander.

Sailors, the naval gentlemen, come under the same description, only their vices assume a different and a grosser cast. They are more positively indolent, when not discharging the ceremonials of their station; whilst the insignificant fluttering of soldiers may be termed active idleness. More confined to the society of men, the former acquire a fondness for humour and mischievous tricks; whilst the latter, mixing frequently with well-bred women, catch a sentimental cant. But mind is equally out of the question, whether they indulge the horse-laugh or polite simper.

May I be allowed to extend the comparison to a profession where more mind is certainly to be found; for the clergy have superior opportunities of improvement, though subordination almost equally cramps their faculties? The blind submission imposed at college to forms of belief, serves as a noviciate to the curate who

most obsequiously respects the opinion of his rector or patron, if he means to rise in his profession. Perhaps there cannot be a more forcible contrast than between the servile, dependent gait of a poor curate, and the courtly mien of a bishop. And the respect and contempt they inspire render the discharge of their separate functions equally useless.

It is of great importance to observe, that the character of every man is, in some degree, formed by his profession. A man of sense may only have a cast of countenance that wears off as you trace his individuality, whilst the weak, common man, has scarcely ever any character, but what belongs to the body; at least, all his opinions have been so steeped in the vat consecrated by authority, that the faint spirit which the grape of his own vine yields cannot be distinguished.

Society, therefore, as it becomes more enlightened, should be very careful not to establish bodies of men who must necessarily be made foolish or vicious by the very constitution of their profession.

In the infancy of society, when men were just emerging out of barbarism, chiefs and priests, touching the most powerful springs of savage conduct—hope and fear—must have had unbounded sway. An aristocracy, of course, is naturally the first form of government. But clashing interests soon losing their equipoise, a monarchy and hierarchy break out of the confusion of ambitious struggles, and the foundation of both is secured by feudal tenures. This appears to be the origin of monarchial and priestly power, and the dawn of civilization. But such combustible materials cannot long be pent up; and getting vent in foreign wars and intestine insurrections, the people acquire some power in the tumult, which obliges their rulers to gloss over their oppression with a show of right. Thus, as wars, agriculture, commerce, and literature, expands the mind, despots are compelled, to make covert corruption hold fast the power which was formerly snatched by open force.\* And this baneful lurking gangrene is most quickly spread by luxury and superstition, the sure dregs of ambition. The indolent puppet of a court first becomes a luxurious monster, or fastidious sensualist, and then makes the contagion which his unnatural state spreads, the instrument of tyranny.

(\*Footnote. Men of abilities scatter seeds that grow up, and have a great influence on the forming opinion; and when once the public opinion preponderates, through the exertion of reason, the overthrow of arbitrary power is not very distant.)

It is the pestiferous purple which renders the progress of civilization a curse, and warps the understanding, till men of sensibility doubt whether the expansion of intellect produces a greater portion of happiness or misery. But the nature of the poison points out the antidote; and had Rousseau mounted one step higher in his investigation; or could his eye have pierced through the foggy atmosphere, which he almost disdained to breathe, his active mind would have darted forward to contemplate the perfection of man in the establishment of true civilization, instead of taking his ferocious flight back to the night of sensual ignorance.

[“Vindications on the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects”](#) by Mary Wollstonecraft is in the public domain.

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## Ideas for Writing

### Strong Women in Literature: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Mary Wollstonecraft

Objective: Students will explore the pioneering contributions of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Mary Wollstonecraft, specifically Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s “Philosophical Satire: Poem 92” and Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.”

Instructions:

Conduct brief research on the historical context surrounding the lives of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Mary Wollstonecraft, focusing on the societal expectations and limitations placed on women during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Read Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s “Philosophical Satire: Poem 92” and Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”

Options for writing:

How did gender figure into the issues of the day?

Describe the key issues that Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Mary Wollstonecraft brought to the forefront in their writings. How did they challenge the status quo of their times?

How did Sor Juana and Wollstonecraft challenge the status quo of women’s subordination, particularly on an intellectual level?

Discuss the relevance of these issues in today’s context. Have the concerns raised by these authors been addressed in contemporary society?

How do the works of these authors contribute to modern feminist thought?



3.

## SATIRE

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### Satire



“[Satirical Europe in 1870](#)” by [Paul Hadol](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the public domain.

**Satire** appears in many art forms, though most frequently in fiction, to point out flaws, often with the purpose of exposing the perceived shortcomings of individuals, corporations, government, or society itself into improvement. It first appears as early as 441 BCE in the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes’ play *Lysistrata* that criticized his nation’s tendency toward war by creating a comical, hypothetical situation in which women deny their husbands sex until they stop going to war. Satire is often meant to entertain (think *Saturday Night Live*, *South Park*, and *Family Guy*), but it can also serve as social criticism by using humor to draw attention to issues of concern in society. Jonathan Swift’s, “A Modest Proposal” is an iconic example of this. As with that piece, satire often uses irony or sarcasm to claim approval of something the writer is questioning and wishes to inspire others to question.

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An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/worldlit/?p=23#h5p-3>

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## Lu Xun



“Lu Xun” via  
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Lu Xun writes during the cultural upheaval of the Maoist regime, which replaced the traditional government. Lu Xun criticized Chinese society, which is illustrated in his writing. In “Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun uses metaphor to conduct social critique. He questions tradition when it inhibits an ability to see society clearly.

Lu Xun is well versed in Western literary traditions, though the literary tradition illustrated by “Diary of a Madman” is distinct from it. The Industrial Revolution, the World Wars, and the Enlightenment changed a lot in the West, and even a writer across the globe would be impacted.

### “Diary of a Madman” by Lu Xun

Tonight the moon is very bright.

I have not seen it for over thirty years, so today when I saw it I felt in unusually high spirits. I begin to realize

that during the past thirty-odd years I have been in the dark; but now I must be extremely careful. Otherwise why should that dog at the Chao house have looked at me twice?

I have reason for my fear.

## II

Tonight there is no moon at all, I know that this bodes ill. This morning when I went out cautiously, Mr. Chao had a strange look in his eyes, as if he were afraid of me, as if he wanted to murder me. There were seven or eight others, who discussed me in a whisper. And they were afraid of my seeing them. All the people I passed were like that. The fiercest among them grinned at me; whereupon I shivered from head to foot, knowing that their preparations were complete.

I was not afraid, however, but continued on my way. A group of children in front were also discussing me, and the look in their eyes was just like that in Mr. Chao's while their faces too were ghastly pale. I wondered what grudge these children could have against me to make them behave like this. I could not help calling out: "Tell me!" But then they ran away.

I wonder what grudge Mr. Chao can have against me, what grudge the people on the road can have against me. I can think of nothing except that twenty years ago I trod on Mr. Ku Chiu's account sheets for many years past, and Mr. Ku was very displeased. Although Mr. Chao does not know him, he must have heard talk of this and decided to avenge him, so he is conspiring against me with the people on the road. But then what of the children? At that time they were not yet born, so why should they eye me so strangely today, as if they were afraid of me, as if they wanted to murder me? This really frightens me; it is so bewildering and upsetting.

I know. They must have learned this from their parents!

## III

I can't sleep at night. Everything requires careful consideration if one is to understand it.

Those people, some of whom have been pilloried by the magistrate, slapped in the face by the local gentry, had their wives taken away by bailiffs, or their parents driven to suicide by creditors, never looked as frightened and as fierce then as they did yesterday.

The most extraordinary thing was that woman on the street yesterday who spanked her son and said, "Little devil! I'd like to bite several mouthfuls out of you to work off my feelings!" Yet all the time she looked at me. I

gave a start, unable to control myself; then all those green-faced, long-toothed people began to laugh derisively. Old Chen hurried forward and dragged me home.

He dragged me home. The folk at home all pretended not to know me; they had the same look in their eyes as all the others. When I went into the study, they locked the door outside as if cooping up a chicken or a duck. This incident left me even more bewildered.

A few days ago a tenant of ours from Wolf Cub Village came to report the failure of the crops, and told my elder brother that a notorious character in their village had been beaten to death; then some people had taken out his heart and liver, fried them in oil and eaten them, as a means of increasing their courage. When I interrupted, the tenant and my brother both stared at me. Only today have I realized that they had exactly the same look in their eyes as those people outside.

Just to think of it sets me shivering from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet.

They eat human beings, so they may eat me.

I see that woman's "bite several mouthfuls out of you," the laughter of those green-faced, long-toothed people and the tenant's story the other day are obviously secret signs. I realize all the poison in their speech, all the daggers in their laughter. Their teeth are white and glistening: they are all man-eaters.

It seems to me, although I am not a bad man, ever since I trod on Mr. Ku's accounts it has been touch-and-go. They seem to have secrets which I cannot guess, and once they are angry they will call anyone a bad character. I remember when my elder brother taught me to write compositions; no matter how good a man was, if I produced arguments to the contrary he would mark that passage to show his approval; while if I excused evil-doers, he would say: "Good for you; that shows originality." How can I possibly guess their secret thoughts—especially when they are ready to eat people?

Everything requires careful consideration if one is to understand it. In ancient times, as I recollect, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology, and scrawled all over each page are the words: "Virtue and Morality." Since I could not sleep anyway, I read intently half the night, until I began to see words between the lines, the whole book being filled with the two words—"Eat people."

All these words written in the book, all the words spoken by our tenant, gaze at me strangely with an enigmatic smile.

I too am a man, and they want to eat me!

## IV

In the morning I sat quietly for some time. Old Chen brought lunch in: one bowl of vegetables, one bowl of steamed fish. The eyes of the fish were white and hard, and its mouth was open just like those people who want to eat human beings. After a few mouthfuls I could not tell whether the slippery morsels were fish or human flesh, so I brought it all up.

I said, “Old Chen, tell my brother that I feel quite suffocated, and want to have a stroll in the garden.” Old Chen said nothing but went out, and presently he came back and opened the gate.

I did not move, but watched to see how they would treat me, feeling certain that they would not let me go. Sure enough! My elder brother came slowly out, leading an old man. There was a murderous gleam in his eyes, and fearing that I would see it he lowered his head, stealing glances at me from the side of his spectacles.

“You seem to be very well today,” said my brother.

“Yes,” said I.

“I have invited Mr. Ho here today,” said my brother, “to examine you.”

“All right,” said I. Actually I knew quite well that this old man was the executioner in disguise! He simply used the pretext of feeling my pulse to see how fat I was; for by so doing he would receive a share of my flesh. Still I was not afraid. Although I do not eat men, my courage is greater than theirs. I held out my two fists, to see what he would do. The old man sat down, closed his eyes, fumbled for some time and remained still for some time; then he opened his shifty eyes and said, “Don’t let your imagination run away with you. Rest quietly for a few days, and you will be all right.”

Don’t let your imagination run away with you! Rest quietly for a few days! When I have grown fat, naturally they will have more to eat; but what good will it do me, or how can it be “all right”? All these people wanting to eat human flesh and at the same time stealthily trying to keep up appearances, not daring to act promptly, really made me nearly die of laughter. I could not help roaring with laughter, I was so amused. I knew that in this laughter were courage and integrity. Both the old man and my brother turned pale, awed by my courage and integrity.

But just because I am brave they are the more eager to eat me, in order to acquire some of my courage. The old man went out of the gate, but before he had gone far he said to my brother in a low voice, “To be eaten at once!” And my brother nodded. So you are in it too! This stupendous discovery, although it came as a shock, is yet no more than I had expected: the accomplice in eating me is my elder brother!

The eater of human flesh is my elder brother!

I am the younger brother of an eater of human flesh!

I myself will be eaten by others, but none the less I am the younger brother of an eater of human flesh!

## V

These few days I have been thinking again: suppose that old man were not an executioner in disguise, but a real doctor; he would be none the less an eater of human flesh. In that book on herbs, written by his predecessor Li Shih-chen, it is clearly stated that men's flesh can be boiled and eaten; so can he still say that he does not eat men?

As for my elder brother, I have also good reason to suspect him. When he was teaching me, he said with his own lips, "People exchange their sons to eat." And once in discussing a bad man, he said that not only did he deserve to be killed, he should "have his flesh eaten and his hide slept on. . . ." I was still young then, and my heart beat faster for some time, he was not at all surprised by the story that our tenant from Wolf Cub Village told us the other day about eating a man's heart and liver, but kept nodding his head. He is evidently just as cruel as before. Since it is possible to "exchange sons to eat," then anything can be exchanged, anyone can be eaten. In the past I simply listened to his explanations, and let it go at that; now I know that when he explained it to me, not only was there human fat at the corner of his lips, but his whole heart was set on eating men.

## VI

Pitch dark. I don't know whether it is day or night. The Chao family dog has started barking again.

The fierceness of a lion, the timidity of a rabbit, the craftiness of a fox. . . .

## VII

I know their way; they are not willing to kill anyone outright, nor do they dare, for fear of the consequences. Instead they have banded together and set traps everywhere, to force me to kill myself. The behavior of the men and women in the street a few days ago, and my elder brother's attitude these last few days, make it quite obvious. What they like best is for a man to take off his belt, and hang himself from a beam; for then they can enjoy their heart's desire without being blamed for murder. Naturally that sets them roaring with delighted laughter. On the other hand, if a man is frightened or worried to death, although that makes him rather thin, they still nod in approval.

They only eat dead flesh! I remember reading somewhere of a hideous beast, with an ugly look in its eye, called

“hyena” which often eats dead flesh. Even the largest bones it grinds into fragments and swallows: the mere thought of this is enough to terrify one. Hyenas are related to wolves, and wolves belong to the canine species. The other day the dog in the Chao house looked at me several times; obviously it is in the plot too and has become their accomplice. The old man’s eyes were cast down, but that did not deceive me!

The most deplorable is my elder brother. He is also a man, so why is he not afraid, why is he plotting with others to eat me? Is it that when one is used to it he no longer thinks it a crime? Or is it that he has hardened his heart to do something he knows is wrong?

In cursing man-eaters, I shall start with my brother, and in dissuading man-eaters, I shall start with him too.

## VIII

Actually, such arguments should have convinced them long ago. . . .

Suddenly someone came in. He was only about twenty years old and I did not see his features very clearly. His face was wreathed in smiles, but when he nodded to me his smile did not seem genuine. I asked him “Is it right to eat human beings?”

Still smiling, he replied, “When there is no famine how can one eat human beings?”

I realized at once, he was one of them; but still I summoned up courage to repeat my question:

“Is it right?”

“What makes you ask such a thing? You really are . . . fond of a joke. . . . It is very fine today.”

“It is fine, and the moon is very bright. But I want to ask you: Is it right?”

He looked disconcerted, and muttered: “No....”

“No? Then why do they still do it?”

“What are you talking about?”

“What am I talking about? They are eating men now in Wolf Cub Village, and you can see it written all over the books, in fresh red ink.”

His expression changed, and he grew ghastly pale. “It may be so,” he said, staring at me. “It has always been like that. . . .”

“Is it right because it has always been like that?”

“I refuse to discuss these things with you. Anyway, you shouldn’t talk about it. Whoever talks about it is in the wrong!”

I leaped up and opened my eyes wide, but the man had vanished. I was soaked with perspiration. He was much younger than my elder brother, but even so he was in it. He must have been taught by his parents. And I am afraid he has already taught his son: that is why even the children look at me so fiercely.

## IX

Wanting to eat men, at the same time afraid of being eaten themselves, they all look at each other with the deepest suspicion. . . .

How comfortable life would be for them if they could rid themselves of such obsessions and go to work, walk, eat and sleep at ease. They have only this one step to take. Yet fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brothers, friends, teachers and students, sworn enemies and even strangers, have all joined in this conspiracy, discouraging and preventing each other from taking this step.

## X

Early this morning I went to look for my elder brother. He was standing outside the hall door looking at the sky, when I walked up behind him, stood between him and the door, and with exceptional poise and politeness said to him:

“Brother, I have something to say to you.”

“Well, what is it?” he asked, quickly turning towards me and nodding.

“It is very little, but I find it difficult to say. Brother, probably all primitive people ate a little human flesh to begin with. Later, because their outlook changed, some of them stopped, and because they tried to be good they changed into men, changed into real men. But some are still eating—just like reptiles. Some have changed into fish, birds, monkeys and finally men; but some do not try to be good and remain reptiles still. When those who eat men compare themselves with those who do not, how ashamed they must be. Probably much more ashamed than the reptiles are before monkeys.

“In ancient times Yi Ya boiled his son for Chieh and Chou to eat; that is the old story. But actually since the creation of heaven and earth by Pan Ku men have been eating each other, from the time of Yi Ya’s son to the



time of Hsu Hsi-lin, and from the time of Hsu Hsi-lin down to the man caught in Wolf Cub Village. Last year they executed a criminal in the city, and a consumptive soaked a piece of bread in his blood and sucked it.

“They want to eat me, and of course you can do nothing about it single-handed; but why should you join them? As man-eaters they are capable of anything. If they eat me, they can eat you as well; members of the same group can still eat each other. But if you will just change your ways immediately, then everyone will have peace. Although this has been going on since time immemorial, today we could make a special effort to be good, and say this is not to be done! I’m sure you can say so, brother. The other day when the tenant wanted the rent reduced, you said it couldn’t be done.”

At first he only smiled cynically, then a murderous gleam came into his eyes, and when I spoke of their secret his face turned pale. Outside the gate stood a group of people, including Mr. Chao and his dog, all craning their necks to peer in. I could not see all their faces, for they seemed to be masked in cloths; some of them looked pale and ghastly still, concealing their laughter. I knew they were one band, all eaters of human flesh. But I also knew that they did not all think alike by any means. Some of them thought that since it had always been so, men should be eaten. Some of them knew that they should not eat men, but still wanted to; and they were afraid people might discover their secret; thus when they heard me they became angry, but they still smiled their cynical, tight-lipped smile.

Suddenly my brother looked furious, and shouted in a loud voice:

“Get out of here, all of you! What is the point of looking at a madman?”

Then I realized part of their cunning. They would never be willing to change their stand, and their plans were all laid; they had stigmatized me as a madman. In future when I was eaten, not only would there be no trouble, but people would probably be grateful to them. When our tenant spoke of the villagers eating a bad character, it was exactly the same device. This is their old trick.

Old Chen came in too, in a great temper, but they could not stop my mouth, I had to speak to those people:

“You should change, change from the bottom of your hearts!” I said. “You most know that in future there will be no place for man-eaters in the world.

“If you don’t change, you may all be eaten by each other. Although so many are born, they will be wiped out by the real men, just like wolves killed by hunters. Just like reptiles!”

Old Chen drove everybody away. My brother had disappeared. Old Chen advised me to go back to my room. The room was pitch dark. The beams and rafters shook above my head. After shaking for some time they grew larger. They piled on top of me.

The weight was so great, I could not move. They meant that I should die. I knew that the weight was false, so I struggled out, covered in perspiration. But I had to say:

“You should change at once, change from the bottom of your hearts! You must know that in future there will be no place for man-eaters in the world . . . .”

## XI

The sun does not shine, the door is not opened, every day two meals.

I took up my chopsticks, then thought of my elder brother; I know now how my little sister died: it was all through him. My sister was only five at the time. I can still remember how lovable and pathetic she looked. Mother cried and cried, but he begged her not to cry, probably because he had eaten her himself, and so her crying made him feel ashamed. If he had any sense of shame. . . .

My sister was eaten by my brother, but I don't know whether mother realized it or not.

I think mother must have known, but when she cried she did not say so outright, probably because she thought it proper too. I remember when I was four or five years old, sitting in the cool of the hall, my brother told me that if a man's parents were ill, he should cut off a piece of his flesh and boil it for them if he wanted to be considered a good son; and mother did not contradict him. If one piece could be eaten, obviously so could the whole. And yet just to think of the mourning then still makes my heart bleed; that is the extraordinary thing about it!

## XII

I can't bear to think of it.

I have only just realized that I have been living all these years in a place where for four thousand years they have been eating human flesh. My brother had just taken over the charge of the house when our sister died, and he may well have used her flesh in our rice and dishes, making us eat it unwittingly.

It is possible that I ate several pieces of my sister's flesh unwittingly, and now it is my turn, . . .

How can a man like myself, after four thousand years of man-caring history—even though I knew nothing about it at first—ever hope to face real men?

## XIII

Perhaps there are still children who have not eaten men? Save the children. . . .

*April 1918*

[Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman"](#) is produced by the Marxist Internet Archive and released under a public domain license.

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## Jonathan Swift



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Jonathan Swift is an Anglo-Irish satirist, author, essayist, political pamphleteer, poet, and Anglican cleric. Swift wrote works such as *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), *An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* (1712), *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and *A Modest Proposal* (1729). He is widely regarded as the foremost prose satirist in the English language. His deadpan, ironic writing style, particularly in *A Modest Proposal*, has led to such satire being subsequently termed “Swiftian”.

### “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift

#### Introduction

For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland, from being a burden on their parents or country, and

for making them beneficial  
to the publick.

by Dr. Jonathan Swift  
1729

Introduction

### A Modest Proposal

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in stroling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropt from

its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expence than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple, whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couple, who are able to maintain their own children, (although I apprehend there cannot be so many under the present distresses of the kingdom) but this being granted, there will remain a hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand, for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remain a hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, How this number shall be reared and provided for? which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in handicraft or agriculture; they neither build houses, (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old; except where they are of towardly parts, although I confess they learn the rudiments much earlier; during which time they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers; as I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan, who protested to me, that he never knew

above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art. I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl, before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most, on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriments and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragoust.

I do therefore humbly offer it to publick consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine, and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore, one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, encreaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper

for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Infant's flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by a grave author, an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolifick dyet, there are more children born in Roman Catholick countries about nine months after Lent, than at any other season; therefore, reckoning a year after Lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants, is at least three to one in this kingdom, and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of Papists among us. I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend, or his own family to dine with him. Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants, the mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.

Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen. As to our City of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose, in the most convenient parts of it, and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting; although I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs.

A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased in discoursing on this matter, to offer a refinement upon my scheme. He said, that many gentlemen of this kingdom, having of late destroyed their deer, he conceived that the want of venison might be well supplied by the bodies of young lads and maidens, not exceeding fourteen years of

age, nor under twelve; so great a number of both sexes in every county being now ready to starve for want of work and service: and these to be disposed of by their parents if alive, or otherwise by their nearest relations. But with due deference to so excellent a friend, and so deserving a patriot, I cannot be altogether in his sentiments; for as to the males, my American acquaintance assured me from frequent experience, that their flesh was generally tough and lean, like that of our schoolboys, by continual exercise, and their taste disagreeable, and to fatten them would not answer the charge. Then as to the females, it would, I think, with humble submission, be a loss to the publick, because they soon would become breeders themselves: and besides, it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice, (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon cruelty, which, I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, how well soever intended.

But in order to justify my friend, he confessed, that this expedient was put into his head by the famous Psalmanaazor, a native of the island Formosa, who came from thence to London, above twenty years ago, and in conversation told my friend, that in his country, when any young person happened to be put to death, the executioner sold the carcass to persons of quality, as a prime dainty; and that, in his time, the body of a plump girl of fifteen, who was crucified for an attempt to poison the Emperor, was sold to his imperial majesty's prime minister of state, and other great mandarins of the court in joints from the gibbet, at four hundred crowns. Neither indeed can I deny, that if the same use were made of several plump young girls in this town, who without one single groat to their fortunes, cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at a playhouse and assemblies in foreign fineries which they never will pay for, the kingdom would not be the worse. Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken, to ease the nation of so grievous an incumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known, that they are every day dying, and



rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition. They cannot get work, and consequently pine away from want of nourishment, to a degree, that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it, and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject.

I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance.

For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies, and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage by the absence of so many good Protestants, who have chosen rather to leave their country, than stay at home and pay tithes against their conscience to an episcopal curate.

Secondly, The poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to a distress, and help to pay their landlord's rent, their corn and cattle being already seized, and money a thing unknown.

Thirdly, Whereas the maintainance of a hundred thousand children, from two years old, and upwards, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, besides the profit of a new dish, introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among our selves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Fourthly, The constant breeders, besides the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.

Fifthly, This food would likewise bring great custom to taverns, where the vintners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the

best receipts for dressing it to perfection; and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen, who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating; and a skilful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests, will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Sixthly, This would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would encrease the care and tenderness of mothers towards their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the publick, to their annual profit instead of expence. We should soon see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market. Men would become as fond of their wives, during the time of their pregnancy, as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, or sows when they are ready to farrow; nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage.

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barrel'd beef: the propagation of swine's flesh, and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables; which are no way comparable in taste or magnificence to a well grown, fat yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a Lord Mayor's feast, or any other publick entertainment. But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

Supposing that one thousand families in this city, would be constant customers for infants flesh, besides others who might have it at merry meetings, particularly at weddings and christenings, I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses; and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand.

I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged, that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own,

and was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other that ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon Earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: Of taxing our absentees at five shillings a pound: Of using neither clothes, nor household furniture, except what is of our own growth and manufacture: Of utterly rejecting the materials and instruments that promote foreign luxury: Of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women: Of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence and temperance: Of learning to love our country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders, and the inhabitants of Topinamboo: Of quitting our animosities and factions, nor acting any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city was taken: Of being a little cautious not to sell our country and consciences for nothing: Of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants. Lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill into our shopkeepers, who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the price, the measure, and the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, till he hath at least some glympse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them into practice. But, as to myself, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which, as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expence and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, and flesh being of too tender a consistence, to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country, which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it. After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion, as to reject any offer, proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally

innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. But before something of that kind shall be advanced in contradiction to my scheme, and offering a better, I desire the author or authors will be pleased maturely to consider two points. First, As things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for a hundred thousand useless mouths and backs. And secondly, There being a round million of creatures in humane figure throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock, would leave them in debt two million of pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession, to the bulk of farmers, cottagers and labourers, with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect; I desire those politicians who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes, as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of intailing the like, or greater miseries, upon their breed for ever.

I profess in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the publick good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

“[A Modest Proposal](#)” by Jonathon Swift, [Project Gutenberg](#) is in the Public Domain.

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## Ideas for Writing

### A Not-so-modest Proposal

Objective: Students will consider the role and effectiveness of satire in literature in propelling social change.

Instructions: Read “Diary of a Madman” and “A Modest Proposal.”

Options for Writing:

Research the context for Lu Xun or Jonathan Swift’s pieces. Then write an argumentative essay in which you argue that what either piece describes is reasonable. Offer reasons as to why based on the context in which the pieces are written, thereby essentially countering the satire.

Or

Research consider a current social issue and develop an satirical essay arguing for a solution.

## 4.

# MODERNISM

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## Modernism



“[Land and the Village](#)”  
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**Modernism** inspired a period of experimentation in the arts, including literature, from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I. In this era of **industrialization**, capitalism, rapid social change, and advances in science, Modernists felt a growing alienation incompatible with Victorian morality, optimism, and convention. New ideas in psychology, philosophy, and political theory kindled a search for new modes of expression.

The Modernist movement was fueled by industrialization and **urbanization** and by the search for an authentic response to a much-changed world. The enormity of the war had undermined humankind’s faith in the foundations of Western society and culture, and postwar Modernist literature reflected a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation. A primary theme of T.S. Eliot’s long poem “The Waste Land,” a seminal Modernist work, is the search for redemption and renewal in a sterile and spiritually empty landscape. With its fragmentary images and obscure allusions, the poem is typical of Modernism in requiring the reader to take an active role in interpreting the text:

“Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with dried tubers.  
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee  
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,  
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.”

Virginia Woolf and José Martí embody these aspects of Modernism in different ways, as evidenced in these works.

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*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/worldlit/?p=32#h5p-4>

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## Virginia Woolf



“[Virginia Woolf 1927](#)” via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the public domain.

Adeline Virginia Woolf was an English writer. She is considered one of the most important modernist 20th-century authors. She pioneered the use of stream of consciousness as a narrative device.

Woolf began writing professionally in 1900. During the inter-war period, Woolf was an important part of London's literary and artistic society. In 1915, she published her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, through her half-brother's publishing house, Gerald Duckworth and Company. Her best-known works include the novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928). She is also known for her essays, such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

Woolf became one of the central subjects of the 1970s movement of feminist criticism. Her works, translated into more than 50 languages, have attracted attention and widespread commentary for inspiring feminism. A large body of writing is dedicated to her life and work. She has been the subject of plays, novels, and films. Woolf is commemorated by statues, societies dedicated to her work, and a building at the University of London.

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## "The Mark on the Wall" by Virginia Woolf

Read "[The Mark on the Wall](#)."

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## José Martí



"[José Martí retrato más conocido Jamaica 1892](#)" by Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed [CC0](#).



José Julián Martí Pérez was a Cuban Nationalist, poet, philosopher, essayist, journalist, translator, professor, and publisher, who is considered a Cuban national hero because of his role in the liberation of his country from Spain. He was also an important figure in Latin American literature. He was very politically active and is considered an important philosopher and political theorist. Through his writings and political activity, he became a symbol of Cuba's bid for independence from the Spanish Empire in the 19th century, and is referred to as the "Apostle of Cuban Independence". From adolescence on, he dedicated his life to the promotion of liberty, political independence for Cuba, and intellectual independence for all Spanish Americans; his death was used as a cry for Cuban independence from Spain by both the Cuban revolutionaries and those Cubans previously reluctant to start a revolt.

Martí is considered one of the great turn-of-the-century Latin American intellectuals. His written works include a series of poems, essays, letters, lectures, a novel, and a children's magazine. He wrote for numerous Latin American and American newspapers; he also founded a number of newspapers. His newspaper, *Patria*, was an important instrument in his campaign for Cuban independence. After his death, many of his verses from the book, *Versos Sencillos (Simple Verses)* were adapted to the song "Guantanamera", which has become a prominent representative song of Cuba. The concepts of freedom, liberty, and democracy are prominent themes in all of his works, which were influential on the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío and the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral. Following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, Martí's ideology became a major driving force in Cuban politics. He is also regarded as Cuba's "martyr".

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## "Nuestra América"

Published in *El Partido Liberal* (Mexico City), January 20, 1891

Revised translation for the Centro de Estudios Martianos by Esther Allen

The pompous villager thinks his hometown is the whole world. As long as he can stay on as mayor, humiliate the rival who stole his sweetheart, and watch his nest egg grow in its strongbox, he believes the universe is in good order. He knows nothing of the giants in seven-league boots who can crush him underfoot, the battling comets in the heavens which devour the worlds that lie sleeping in their paths. Whatever is left in América of such drowsy provincialism must awaken. These are not times for lying comfortably in bed. Like Juan de Castellanos' men, we must have no other pillow but our weapons—weapons of the mind, which vanquish all others. Fortifications built of ideas are more valuable than those built of stone.

No armored prow can smash through a cloud of ideas. A vital idea brandished before the world at the right moment like the mystic banner of Judgment Day can stop a fleet of battleships. Nations that remain strangers

must rush to know one another, like soldiers about to go into battle together. Those who once shook their fists at each other like jealous brothers quarreling over who has the bigger house or who owns a plot of land must now grip each other so tightly that their two hands become one. Those who took land from a conquered brother—a brother punished far in excess of any crime—and who, under protection of a criminal tradition, smeared their swords in the same blood that flows through their own veins must now return their brother's land if they don't want to be known as a nation of plunderers. A man of honor does not collect a debt of honor in money, at so much per slap. We can no longer be a village of leaves fluttering in the air, crowned in flowers, creaking and buzzing under the caress of capricious sunlight or thrashed and felled by tempests. The trees must line up to block the giant in his seven-league boots. The hour to muster and march in unison is upon us and our ranks must be as compact as the veins of silver in the depths of the Andes.

Only runts—so stunted they have no faith in their own nation— will fail to find the courage. Lacking courage themselves, they'll deny that other men do have it. Their spindly arms, with clinking bracelets and polished fingernails, shaped by Madrid or Paris, cannot reach the lofty tree, and so they say the tree is unreachable. We must load up the ships with these termites that gnaw away at the core of the patria that nurtured them. If they're Parisians or Madrileños, then let them stroll the Prado by lamplight or take an ice at Tortoni's. These carpenter's sons, ashamed that their father was a carpenter! These men born in América, ashamed of the mother who raised them because she wears an Indian tunic! These scoundrels who disown their sick mother and leave her alone in her sickbed! Who is more truly a man? One who stays with his mother to nurse her through her illness? Or one who curses the bosom that bore him, forces her to work somewhere out of sight, and lives off her sustenance in corrupted lands, sporting a worm for a necktie and a sign that says "traitor" on the back of his paper jacket? These sons of our América, which must save herself through her Indians and is on the rise; these deserters, who ask to take up arms with the forces of North America, which drowns its Indians in blood and is on the wane! These delicate creatures who are men but don't want to do men's work! Did Washington, the founder of their nation, go off to live in England when he saw the English marching against his land? But these incredible creatures drag their honor across foreign soil like the *incroyables* of the French Revolution who danced, primped, and dragged out their Rs.

For what other patria can a man take greater pride in than our long-suffering republics of América? — built by the bloody arms of a hundred apostles, amid mute masses of Indians, to the sound of battle between the book and the monk's candlestick. Never before have such advanced and unified nations been created so rapidly from elements so disparate. The haughty man imagines that because he wields a quick pen and coins vivid phrases the earth was made to be his pedestal; he accuses his native republic of hopeless incapacity because its virgin jungles don't offer him scope for parading about the world like a bigwig, driving Persian ponies and spilling champagne as he goes. The incapacity lies not in the nascent country, which demands forms appropriate to itself and a grandeur that is useful to it, but in those who wish to govern unique populaces, singularly and violently composed, by laws inherited from four centuries of free practice in the United States and nineteen centuries of monarchy in France. A Llanero's bolting colt can't be stopped in its tracks by one of Alexander

Hamilton's laws. The sluggish blood of the Indian race can't be quickened with a phrase from Sieyès. He who would govern well must attend closely to the place being governed. In América, a good governor isn't one who knows how to govern a German or a Frenchman. It is, rather, one who knows what elements his own country is made up of, and how best to marshal them so as to achieve, by means and institutions arising from the country itself, that desirable state in which every man knows himself and exercises his talents, and all enjoy the abundance that Nature, for the good of all, has bestowed on the land they make fruitful by their labor and defend with their lives. The government must arise from the country. The government's spirit must be the spirit of the country. The government's form must be in harmony with the country's natural constitution. The government is no more than the equilibrium among the country's natural elements.

The natural man has triumphed over the imported book in América; natural men have triumphed over an artificial intelligentsia. The native mestizo has triumphed over the exotic criollo. The battle is not between civilization and barbarity but between false erudition and nature. The natural man is good and will follow and reward a superior intelligence as long as that intelligence doesn't use his submission against him or offend him by ignoring him, which the natural man finds unforgivable. He is prepared to use force to regain the respect of anyone who has wounded his sensibilities or harmed his interests. The tyrants of América have come to power by taking up the cause of these scorned natural elements, and have fallen as soon as they betrayed them. The republics have cured the former tyrannies of their inability to know the true elements of the country, derive the form of government from them, and govern along with them. *Governor*, in a new nation, means *Creator*.

In nations composed of educated and uneducated elements, the uneducated will govern by their habit of attacking and resolving all doubts with their fists, as long as the educated haven't learned the art of governing. The uneducated masses are lazy and timid in matters of the intellect and want to be well-governed, but if a government injures them they shake it off and govern themselves. How can our governors emerge from our universities when there isn't a university in América that teaches the most basic element of the art of governing: the analysis of all that is unique to the peoples of América? Our young men go out into the world wearing Yankee- or French-colored glasses, and aspire to govern by guesswork over a country about which they know nothing. Men who are unacquainted with the rudiments of politics should be barred from a career in politics. The top academic prizes shouldn't go to the finest ode, but to the best study of the political factors in the country where the student lives. In the newspapers, the lecture halls, and the academies, the study of the country's real factors must advance. Knowing those factors, without blinkers or circumlocution, will suffice. Anyone who deliberately or unknowingly sets aside a part of the truth will ultimately fail because of that missing truth, which expands, under such neglect, to bring down whatever was built without it. Solving a problem in full knowledge of its elements is easier than solving it without knowing them. The natural man, strong and indignant, comes and overthrows an authority accumulated from books because that authority isn't administered in keeping with the manifest needs of the country. To know is to solve. To know the country and govern it in accordance with that knowledge is the only way to free it from tyranny. The European university must yield to the American university. The history of América from the Incas to the present must be taught in

its smallest detail, even if the Greek Archons go untaught. Our own Greece is preferable to the Greece that is not ours: we need it more. Statesmen who arise from the nation must replace statesmen who are alien to it. Let the world be grafted onto our republics, but we must be the trunk. And all the vanquished pedants can hold their tongues: there is no patria a man can take greater pride in than our long-suffering American republics.

Our feet upon a rosary, our faces white-skinned, and our bodies a motley of Indian and criollo, we boldly entered the community of nations. Bearing the Virgin's standard, we went forth to conquer our liberty. A priest, a few lieutenants and a woman built a republic in Mexico upon the shoulders of the Indians. A Spanish cleric, under cover of his priestly cape, taught French liberty to a handful of magnificent students who chose a Spanish general to lead Central America against Spain. Still accustomed to monarchy, but with the sun blazing in their chests, the Venezuelans to the north and the Argentines to the south set out to build nations. When the two heroes clashed and the continent was about to erupt, one of them, not the lesser of the two, turned back. But heroism is less glorious in peacetime than in war, and thus rarer; it's easier for a man to die with honor than to think in an orderly way. Exalted and unanimous sentiments are more readily governed than the divergent, arrogant, ambitious, and foreign ideas that emerge when the battle is over. Confronted with the population's cat-like wariness and the sheer weight of reality, the same powers once swept up in the epic struggle began to undermine the governing edifice, which had raised the standard of lands sustained by wise governance in the continual practice of reason and freedom above the crude and singular regions of our mestizo América, in lands where bare legs alternate with Parisian dress-coats. The hierarchical character of the colonies resisted the democratic organization of the republic. The capital city, in its elegant cravat, left the countryside, in its horsehide boots, waiting at the door. The redeemers born from books didn't understand that a revolution that triumphed when the soul of the land was unleashed by a savior's voice had to govern with the soul of the land, and not against or without it. For all these reasons, América began enduring and still endures the weary task of reconciling the discordant and hostile elements inherited from its perverse, despotic colonizer with the imported forms and ideas that have, in their lack of local reality, delayed the advent of a logical form of government. Deformed by three centuries of a rule that denied men the right to exercise their reason, and overlooking or refusing to listen to the ignorant masses that helped it redeem itself, the continent entered into new kind of government based on reason— which should have meant the reason of all directed towards things of concern to all, and not the university-schooled reason of the few imposed upon the rustic reason of others. The problem with independence was not the change in form, but the change in spirit.

Common cause had to be made with the oppressed, in order to consolidate a system that opposed the interests and governmental habits of the oppressor. But the tiger frightened away by the flash of gunfire will creep back in the night to find his prey. He will die with flames shooting from his eyes, his claws unsheathed, but now his step is inaudible for he comes on velvet paws, and when the prey awakens, the tiger is upon him. The colony lived on in the republic. But our América is saving itself from its gravest failings—the arrogance of the capital cities, the blind triumph of the scorned campesinos, the excessive importation of foreign ideas and formulas, the wicked and impolitic disdain for the native race—through the superior virtue, authenticated by necessary

bloodshed, of the republic that struggles against the colony. The tiger lurks behind every tree, crouches in every corner. He will die, his claws unsheathed, flames shooting from his eyes.

“These countries will save themselves,” as the Argentine Rivadavia, who erred on the side of urbanity during uncouth times, once proclaimed. A machete won’t fit in a silken scabbard, nor can the *lanzón* be repudiated in a nation won by the *lanzón*, for the nation will go into a rage and stand at the doorway of Iturbide’s Congress demanding that “the white man become emperor.” These countries will save themselves. Through the serene harmony of nature, the genius of moderation seems to be prevailing on the continent of light. Under the influence of the critical reading which, in Europe, has replaced the blundering ideas about phalansteries that the previous generation was steeped in, the real man is being born to América in these very real times.

What a sight we were, with an athlete’s chest, a dandy’s hands, and a child’s forehead. We were a veritable fancy dress ball, wearing British trousers, a Parisian waistcoat, and a North American overcoat, topped with a Spanish bullfighter’s montera. The Indian circled us mutely and went to the mountaintop to christen his children. The black man, spied upon from above, sang his heart’s music in the night, alone and unknown, between waves and wild beasts. The campesinos, men of the land, creators, rose up in blind indignation against the disdainful city, their own creation. We wore military epaulets and judges’ robes in countries that came into the world wearing rope sandals and Indian headbands. The wise course would have been to unite—with the charity in our hearts and our founders’ audacity—the Indian headband and the judicial robe, to disentrammel the Indian, make a place for the able black, and tailor liberty to the bodies of those who rose up and triumphed in its name. What we had were the judge, the general, the man of letters, and the cleric. Our angelic youth, as if struggling to escape the grasping tentacles of an octopus, cast their minds into the heavens and fell back in sterile glory, crowned in clouds. The natural people, driven by instinct, blind with triumph, overwhelmed their gilded rulers. No Yankee or European book could furnish the key to the Hispano-American enigma. So people tried hatred instead, and each year our countries amounted to less and less. Weary now of useless hatred and the struggle of book against sword, reason against the monk’s candlestick, city against countryside, and the quarreling urban castes’ impossible empire against the tempestuous or inert natural nation, we begin, almost without realizing it, to try love. The nations arise and salute one another. “What are we?” they ask, and begin telling each other what they are. When a problem arises in Cojimar, the solution is no longer sought in Danzig. The frock-coats are still French but the thinking is starting to be American. The young men of América are rolling up their sleeves and plunging their hands into the dough to make it rise with the leavening of their sweat. They understand that there is too much imitation, that salvation lies in creating. *Create* is the password of this generation. Make wine from plantains. It may be sour, but it is our wine! It is finally understood that a country’s form of government must adapt to the country’s natural elements, that unless absolute ideas are expressed in relative forms, an error of form will cause them to collapse; that liberty, in order to be viable, must be sincere and complete, that if the republic does not open its arms to all and include all in its progress, it dies. The tiger that lurks inside us attacks through the rents in our social fabric, and the tiger that lurks outside us does, too. The general holds the cavalry to the pace of the infantry; if he leaves the infantry too far behind,

the enemy will surround the cavalry. Politics is strategy. Nations must continually criticize themselves—for criticism is health—but with a single heart and a single mind. Go down amidst the unfortunate and raise them up in your arms! Let the heart's fires thaw all that is frozen and motionless in América, and let the country's natural blood surge and throb through its veins! Standing tall, and with the joy of those who work in their eyes, the new men of América salute each other from one country to the next. Natural statesmen are emerging from the direct study of nature. They read in order to apply what they read, not copy it. Economists study problems at their origins. Orators speak in measured tones. Dramatists put native characters onstage. Academies debate practical subjects. Poetry snips off its wild, Zorilla-esque locks and leaves its red waistcoat hanging from the tree of past glories. Prose, polished and gleaming, is replete with ideas. The governors of Indian republics learn Indian languages.

América is saving herself from all her dangers. Over some republics the octopus sleeps still. Others, by the law of equilibrium, run with mad, sublime speed to the sea, to recover the lost centuries. Others, forgetting that Juárez traveled in a coach drawn by mules, hitch their coaches to the wind and take soap bubbles as their coachmen— as the poison of luxury, liberty's enemy, corrupts the frivolous and opens the door to foreigners. The virile character of other nations is being refined by the epic spirit of a threatened independence. And others, in rapacious wars against their neighbors, nurture an unruly soldier caste that may one day devour them. But our América may also face another danger, which does not come from within it, but from the differing origins, methods, and interests of the continent's two factions. The hour is near when she will be approached by an enterprising and forceful nation that will demand intimate relations with her, though it does not know her and disdains her. And virile nations, self-made by the rifle and the law, love other virile nations, and only those. The hour of unbridled passion and ambition from which North America may escape by the ascendancy of the purest elements in its blood—or into which its vengeful and sordid masses, its tradition of conquest, and the self-interest of a cunning leader could plunge it— is not yet so near, even to the most apprehensive eye, that there is no time left for it to be confronted and averted by the manifestation of a discreet and unswerving pride. Its dignity as a republic, in the eyes of the watchful nations of the Universe, places a brake upon North America that our América must not remove by puerile provocation, ostentatious arrogance, or patricidal discord. Therefore the urgent duty of our América is to show herself as she is, united in soul and intent, fast overcoming the crushing weight of her past, and stained only with the fertilizing blood shed by hands that do battle against ruins, or by veins opened by our former masters. The disdain of the formidable neighbor who does not know her is the greatest danger that faces our América. It is urgent—for the day of the visit draws close—that her neighbor come to know her, and quickly, so he will not disdain her. Out of ignorance, he may begin to covet her. But when he knows her, he will remove his hands from her in respect. One must have faith in the best in man, and distrust the worst. One must give the best every opportunity to reveal itself and prevail over the worst. For if not, the worst will prevail. Nations should have one special pillory for those who incite them to futile hatreds, and another for those who do not tell them the truth until it is too late.

There is no racial hatred because there are no races. Low, weak minds working in dim light, have cobbled together and kept in circulation the library-shelf races that the honest traveler and cordial observer search for in vain within the justice of Nature, where triumphant love and turbulent appetite demonstrate again and again the universal identity of mankind. The soul, equal and eternal, emanates from bodies that are diverse in form and color. Anyone who promotes and disseminates opposition or hatred among races is committing a sin against humanity. But within the jumble of peoples that lives in close proximity to our peoples, certain peculiar and dynamic characteristics are condensed—ideas and habits of expansion, acquisition, vanity, and greed—that could, in a period of internal disorder or precipitation of the nation’s cumulative character, cease to be latent national preoccupations and become a serious threat to the neighboring, isolated and weak lands that the strong country declares to be perishable and inferior. To think is to serve. We must not, out of a villager’s antipathy, impute some lethal and congenital wickedness to the continent’s light-skinned nation simply because it does not speak our language or share our view of what home life should be or resemble us in its political failings, which are different from ours, or because it does not think highly of quick-tempered, swarthy men, or look with charity, from its still uncertain eminence, upon those less favored by history who, in heroic stages are ascending the path that all republics travel. But neither should we seek to conceal the obvious facts of the problem which can, for the peace of the centuries, be resolved by timely study and the urgent, wordless union of the continental soul. For the hymn of unanimity is already ringing forth. The present generation bears industrious América along the road sanctioned by our sublime forefathers. From the Río Bravo to the Straits of Magellan, the Great Cemi, riding high astride a condor, has scattered the seeds of the new América across the romantic nations of the continent and the suffering islands of the sea!

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## Ideas for Writing

### The Manifestation of Modernism in Literature

Objective: Students will explore characteristics of modern literature

Instructions: Choose one of the following options.

Conduct brief research on stream of consciousness as a narrative device as illustrated by Virginia Woolf.

Some of the notoriety of José Julián Martí Pérez is because of his political activism. Modernist writers often rebelled against straight-forward storytelling and simple verse from the 19th century in favor of more fragmented stories that reflected the fragmented state of society during and after World War I. Conduct brief research on the role of politics in Modernist writing, including that of Perez.

Based on your research, develop an argument around key influences on Modernist literature using Woolf or Perez as examples to support your claims.



5.

# SURREALISM

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## Surrealism



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**Surrealism**, a cultural movement that emerged in the early 20th century in the aftermath of WWI, sought to challenge and expand the boundaries of artistic and literary expression by tapping into the subconscious and irrational aspects of the human mind. The movement emerged during a period of significant cultural

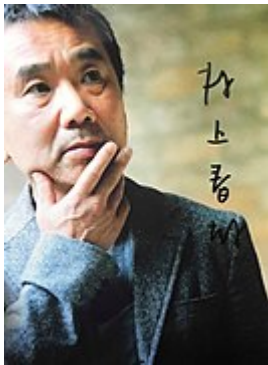
shifts influenced by **industrialization** and **post-industrialization**, which altered traditional life patterns and introduced new **existential** challenges. As artists and writers grappled with these changes, themes such as the impacts of slavery, **colonialism**, and their **post-colonial** legacies began to surface in surrealist works. These themes often critiqued the prevailing power structures and highlighted the absurdities of societal norms. Furthermore, surrealism intersected with feminism and various social justice movements, providing a platform for marginalized voices and unconventional perspectives. This interweaving of surrealism with social and political issues enriched literature by infusing it with deep critiques of inequality, explorations of identity, and a profound questioning of reality and human rights.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/worldlit/?p=34#h5p-5>

## Haruki Murakami



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### “The Second Bakery Attack” by Haruki Murakami

I’m still not sure I made the right choice when I told my wife about the bakery attack. But then, it might not have been a question of right and wrong. Which is to say that wrong choices can produce right results, and vice versa. I myself have adopted the position that, in fact, *we never choose anything at all*. Things happen. Or not.

If you look at it this way, *it just so happens* that I told my wife about the bakery attack. I hadn’t been planning to bring it up—I had forgotten all about it—but it wasn’t one of those now-that-you-mention-it kind of things, either.

What reminded me of the bakery attack was an unbearable hunger. It hit just before two o'clock in the morning. We had eaten a light supper at six, crawled into bed at nine-thirty, and gone to sleep. For some reason, we woke up at exactly the same moment. A few minutes later, the pangs struck with the force of the tornado in *The Wizard of Oz*. These were tremendous, overpowering hunger pangs.

Our refrigerator contained not a single item that could be technically categorized as food. We had a bottle of French dressing, six cans of beer, two shriveled onions, a stick of butter, and a box of refrigerator deodorizer. With only two weeks of married life behind us, we had yet to establish a precise conjugal understanding with regard to the rules of dietary behavior. Let alone anything else.

I had a job in a law firm at the time, and she was doing secretarial work at a design school. I was either twenty-eight or twenty-nine—why can't I remember the exact year we married?—and she was two years and eight months younger. Groceries were the last things on our minds.

We both felt too hungry to go back to sleep, but it hurt just to lie there. On the other hand, we were also too hungry to do anything useful. We got out of bed and drifted into the kitchen, ending up across the table from each other. What could have caused such violent hunger pangs?

We took turns opening the refrigerator door and hoping, but no matter how many times we looked inside, the contents never changed. Beer and onions and butter and dressing and deodorizer. It might have been possible to sauté the onions in the butter, but there was no chance those two shriveled onions could fill our empty stomachs. Onions are meant to be eaten with other things. They are not the kind of food you use to satisfy an appetite.

“Would madame care for some French dressing sautéed in deodorizer?”

I expected her to ignore my attempt at humor, and she did. “Let's get in the car and look for an all-night restaurant,” I said. “There must be one on the highway.”

She rejected that suggestion. “We can't. You're not supposed to go out to eat after midnight.” She was old-fashioned that way.

I breathed once and said, “I guess not.”

Whenever my wife expressed such an opinion (or thesis) back then, it reverberated in my ears with the authority of a revelation. Maybe that's what happens with newlyweds, I don't know. But when she said this to me, I began to think that this was a special hunger, not one that could be satisfied through the mere expedient of taking it to an all-night restaurant on the highway.

A special kind of hunger. And what might that be?

I can present it here in the form of a cinematic image.

*One*, I am in a little boat, floating on a quiet sea. *Two*, I look down, and in the water I see the peak of a volcano thrusting up from the ocean floor. *Three*, the peak seems pretty close to the water's surface, but just how close I cannot tell. *Four*, this is because the hypertransparency of the water interferes with the perception of distance.

This is a fairly accurate description of the image that arose in my mind during the two or three seconds between the time my wife said she refused to go to an all-night restaurant and I agreed with my "I guess not." Not being Sigmund Freud, I was, of course, unable to analyze with any precision what this image signified, but I knew intuitively that it was a revelation. Which is why—the almost grotesque intensity of my hunger notwithstanding—I all but automatically agreed with her thesis (or declaration).

We did the only thing we could do: opened the beer. It was a lot better than eating those onions. She didn't like beer much, so we divided the cans, two for her, four for me. While I was drinking the first one, she searched the kitchen shelves like a squirrel in November. Eventually, she turned up a package that had four butter cookies in the bottom. They were leftovers, soft and soggy, but we each ate two, savoring every crumb.

It was no use. Upon this hunger of ours, as vast and boundless as the Sinai Peninsula, the butter cookies and beer left not a trace.

Time oozed through the dark like a lead weight in a fish's gut. I read the print on the aluminum beer cans. I stared at my watch. I looked at the refrigerator door. I turned the pages of yesterday's paper. I used the edge of a postcard to scrape together the cookie crumbs on the tabletop.

"I've never been this hungry in my whole life," she said. "I wonder if it has anything to do with being married."

"Maybe," I said. "Or maybe not."

While she hunted for more fragments of food, I leaned over the edge of my boat and looked down at the peak of the underwater volcano. The clarity of the ocean water all around the boat gave me an unsettled feeling, as if a hollow had opened somewhere behind my solar plexus—a hermetically sealed cavern that had neither entrance nor exit. Something about this weird sense of absence—this sense of the existential reality of non-existence—resembled the paralyzing fear you might feel when you climb to the very top of a high steeple. This connection between hunger and acrophobia was a new discovery for me.

Which is when it occurred to me that I had once before had this same kind of experience. My stomach had been just as empty then....When?...Oh, sure, that was—

"The time of the bakery attack," I heard myself saying.

"The bakery attack? What are you talking about?"

And so it started.

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“I once attacked a bakery. Long time ago. Not a big bakery. Not famous. The bread was nothing special. Not bad, either. One of those ordinary little neighborhood bakeries right in the middle of a block of shops. Some old guy ran it who did everything himself. Baked in the morning, and when he sold out, he closed up for the day.”

“If you were going to attack a bakery, why that one?”

“Well, there was no point in attacking a big bakery. All we wanted was bread, not money. We were attackers, not robbers.”

“We? Who’s we?”

“My best friend back then. Ten years ago. We were so broke we couldn’t buy toothpaste. Never had enough food. We did some pretty awful things to get our hands on food. The bakery attack was one.”

“I don’t get it.” She looked hard at me. Her eyes could have been searching for a faded star in the morning sky. “Why didn’t you get a job? You could have worked after school. That would have been easier than attacking bakeries.”

“We didn’t want to work. We were absolutely clear on that.”

“Well, you’re working now, aren’t you?”

I nodded and sucked some more beer. Then I rubbed my eyes. A kind of beery mud had oozed into my brain and was struggling with my hunger pangs.

“Times change. People change,” I said. “Let’s go back to bed. We’ve got to get up early.”

“I’m not sleepy. I want you to tell me about the bakery attack.”

“There’s nothing to tell. No action. No excitement.”

“Was it a success?”

I gave up on sleep and ripped open another beer. Once she gets interested in a story, she has to hear it all the way through. That’s just the way she is.

“Well, it was kind of a success. And kind of not. We got what we wanted. But as a holdup, it didn’t work. The baker gave us the bread before we could take it from him.”

“Free?”

“Not exactly, no. That’s the hard part.” I shook my head. “The baker was a classical-music freak, and when we got there, he was listening to an album of Wagner overtures. So he made us a deal. If we would listen to the record all the way through, we could take as much bread as we liked. I talked it over with my buddy and we figured, Okay. It wouldn’t be work in the purest sense of the word, and it wouldn’t hurt anybody. So we put our knives back in our bag, pulled up a couple of chairs, and listened to the overtures to *Tannhäuser* and *The Flying Dutchman*.”

“And after that, you got your bread?”

“Right. Most of what he had in the shop. Stuffed it in our bag and took it home. Kept us fed for maybe four or five days.” I took another sip. Like soundless waves from an undersea earthquake, my sleepiness gave my boat a long, slow rocking.

“Of course, we accomplished our mission. We got the bread. But you couldn’t say we had committed a crime. It was more of an exchange. We listened to Wagner with him, and in return, we got our bread. Legally speaking, it was more like a commercial transaction.”

“But listening to Wagner is not work,” she said.

“Oh, no, absolutely not. If the baker had insisted that we wash his dishes or clean his windows or something, we would have turned him down. But he didn’t. All he wanted from us was to listen to his Wagner LP from beginning to end. Nobody could have anticipated that. I mean—Wagner? It was like the baker put a curse on us. Now that I think of it, we should have refused. We should have threatened him with our knives and taken the damn bread. Then there wouldn’t have been any problem.”

“You had a problem?”

I rubbed my eyes again.

“Sort of. Nothing you could put your finger on. But things started to change after that. It was kind of a turning point. Like, I went back to the university, and I graduated, and I started working for the firm and studying for the bar exam, and I met you and got married. I never did anything like that again. No more bakery attacks.”

“That’s it?”

“Yup, that’s all there was to it.” I drank the last of the beer. Now all six cans were gone. Six pull-tabs lay in the ashtray like scales from a mermaid.

Of course, it wasn’t true that nothing had happened as a result of the bakery attack. There were plenty of things that you could easily have put your finger on, but I didn’t want to talk about them with her.

“So, this friend of yours, what’s he doing now?”

“I have no idea. Something happened, some nothing kind of thing, and we stopped hanging around together. I haven’t seen him since. I don’t know what he’s doing.”

For a while, she didn’t speak. She probably sensed that I wasn’t telling her the whole story. But she wasn’t ready to press me on it.

“Still,” she said, “that’s why you two broke up, isn’t it? The bakery attack was the direct cause.”

“Maybe so. I guess it was more intense than either of us realized. We talked about the relationship of bread to Wagner for days after that. We kept asking ourselves if we had made the right choice. We couldn’t decide. Of course, if you look at it sensibly, we *did* make the right choice. Nobody got hurt. Everybody got what he wanted. The baker—I still can’t figure out why he did what he did—but anyway, he succeeded with his Wagner propaganda. And we succeeded in stuffing our faces with bread.

“But even so, we had this feeling that we had made a terrible mistake. And somehow, this mistake has just stayed there, unresolved, casting a dark shadow on our lives. That’s why I used the word ‘curse.’ It’s true. It was like a curse.”

“Do you think you still have it?”

I took the six pull-tabs from the ashtray and arranged them into an aluminum ring the size of a bracelet.

“Who knows? I don’t know. I bet the world is full of curses. It’s hard to tell which curse makes any one thing go wrong.”

“That’s not true.” She looked right at me. “You can tell, if you think about it. And unless you, yourself, personally break the curse, it’ll stick with you like a toothache. It’ll torture you till you die. And not just you. Me, too.”

“You?”

“Well, I’m your best friend now, aren’t I? Why do you think we’re both so hungry? I never, ever, once in my life felt a hunger like this until I married you. Don’t you think it’s abnormal? Your curse is working on me, too.”

I nodded. Then I broke up the ring of pull-tabs and put them back in the ashtray. I didn't know if she was right, but I did feel she was onto something.

The feeling of starvation was back, stronger than ever, and it was giving me a deep headache. Every twinge of my stomach was being transmitted to the core of my head by a clutch cable, as if my insides were equipped with all kinds of complicated machinery.

I took another look at my undersea volcano. The water was even clearer than before—much clearer. Unless you looked closely, you might not even notice it was there. It felt as though the boat were floating in midair, with absolutely nothing to support it. I could see every little pebble on the bottom. All I had to do was reach out and touch them.

“We've only been living together for two weeks,” she said, “but all this time I've been feeling some kind of weird presence.” She looked directly into my eyes and brought her hands together on the tabletop, her fingers interlocking. “Of course, I didn't know it was a curse until now. This explains everything. You're under a curse.”

“What kind of presence?”

“Like there's this heavy, dusty curtain that hasn't been washed for years, hanging down from the ceiling.”

“Maybe it's not a curse. Maybe it's just me,” I said, and smiled.

She did not smile.

“No, it's not you,” she said.

“Okay, suppose you're right. Suppose it is a curse. What can I do about it?”

“Attack another bakery. Right away. Now. It's the only way.”

“Now?”

“Yes. Now. While you're still hungry. You have to finish what you left unfinished.”

“But it's the middle of the night. Would a bakery be open now?”

“We'll find one. Tokyo's a big city. There must be at least one all-night bakery.”

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We got into my old Corolla and started drifting around the streets of Tokyo at 2:30 a.m., looking for a bakery.



There we were, me clutching the steering wheel, she in the navigator's seat, the two of us scanning the street like hungry eagles in search of prey. Stretched out on the backseat, long and stiff as a dead fish, was a Remington automatic shotgun. Its shells rustled dryly in the pocket of my wife's windbreaker. We had two black ski masks in the glove compartment. Why my wife owned a shotgun, I had no idea. Or ski masks. Neither of us had ever skied. But she didn't explain and I didn't ask. Married life is weird, I felt.

Impeccably equipped, we were nevertheless unable to find an all-night bakery. I drove through the empty streets, from Yoyogi to Shinjuku, on to Yotsuya and Akasaka, Aoyama, Hiroo, Roppongi, Daikanyama, and Shibuya. Late-night Tokyo had all kinds of people and shops, but no bakeries.

Twice we encountered patrol cars. One was huddled at the side of the road, trying to look inconspicuous. The other slowly overtook us and crept past, finally moving off into the distance. Both times I grew damp under the arms, but my wife's concentration never faltered. She was looking for that bakery. Every time she shifted the angle of her body, the shotgun shells in her pocket rustled like buckwheat husks in an old-fashioned pillow.

"Let's forget it," I said. "There aren't any bakeries open at this time of night. You've got to plan for this kind of thing or else—"

"Stop the car!"

I slammed on the brakes.

"This is the place," she said.

The shops along the street had their shutters rolled down, forming dark, silent walls on either side. A barbershop sign hung in the dark like a twisted, chilling glass eye. There was a bright McDonald's hamburger sign some two hundred yards ahead, but nothing else.

"I don't see any bakery," I said.

Without a word, she opened the glove compartment and pulled out a roll of cloth-backed tape. Holding this, she stepped out of the car. I got out my side. Kneeling at the front end, she tore off a length of tape and covered the numbers on the license plate. Then she went around to the back and did the same. There was a practiced efficiency to her movements. I stood on the curb staring at her.

"We're going to take that McDonald's," she said, as coolly as if she were announcing what we would have for dinner.

"McDonald's is not a bakery," I pointed out to her.

"It's *like* a bakery," she said. "Sometimes you have to compromise. Let's go."

I drove to the McDonald's and parked in the lot. She handed me the blanket-wrapped shotgun.

"I've never fired a gun in my life," I protested.

"You don't have to fire it. Just hold it. Okay? Do as I say. We walk right in, and as soon as they say 'Welcome to McDonald's,' we slip on our masks. Got that?"

"Sure, but—"

"Then you shove the gun in their faces and make all the workers and customers get together. Fast. I'll do the rest."

"But—"

"How many hamburgers do you think we'll need? Thirty?"

"I guess so." With a sigh, I took the shotgun and rolled back the blanket a little. The thing was as heavy as a sandbag and as black as a dark night.

"Do we really have to do this?" I asked, half to her and half to myself.

"Of course we do."

Wearing a McDonald's hat, the girl behind the counter flashed me a McDonald's smile and said, "Welcome to McDonald's." I hadn't thought that girls would work at McDonald's late at night, so the sight of her confused me for a second. But only for a second. I caught myself and pulled on the mask. Confronted with this suddenly masked duo, the girl gaped at us.

Obviously, the McDonald's hospitality manual said nothing about how to deal with a situation like this. She had been starting to form the phrase that comes after "Welcome to McDonald's," but her mouth seemed to stiffen and the words wouldn't come out. Even so, like a crescent moon in the dawn sky, the hint of a professional smile lingered at the edges of her lips.

As quickly as I could manage, I unwrapped the shotgun and aimed it in the direction of the tables, but the only customers there were a young couple—students, probably—and they were facedown on the plastic table, sound asleep. Their two heads and two strawberry-milk-shake cups were aligned on the table like an avant-garde sculpture. They slept the sleep of the dead. They didn't look likely to obstruct our operation, so I swung my shotgun back toward the counter.

All together, there were three McDonald's workers. The girl at the counter, the manager—a guy with a pale, egg-shaped face, probably in his late twenties—and a student type in the kitchen—a thin shadow of a guy with nothing on his face that you could read as an expression. They stood together behind the register, staring into

the muzzle of my shotgun like tourists peering down an Incan well. No one screamed, and no one made a threatening move. The gun was so heavy I had to rest the barrel on top of the cash register, my finger on the trigger.

“I’ll give you the money,” said the manager, his voice hoarse. “They collected it at eleven, so we don’t have too much, but you can have everything. We’re insured.”

“Lower the front shutter and turn off the sign,” said my wife.

“Wait a minute,” said the manager. “I can’t do that. I’ll be held responsible if I close up without permission.”

My wife repeated her order, slowly. He seemed torn.

“You’d better do what she says,” I warned him.

He looked at the muzzle of the gun stop the register, then at my wife, and then back at the gun. He finally resigned himself to the inevitable. He turned off the sign and hit a switch on an electrical panel that lowered the shutter. I kept my eye on him, worried that he might hit a burglar alarm, but apparently McDonald’s don’t have burglar alarms. Maybe it had never occurred to anybody to attack one.

The front shutter made a huge racket when it closed, like an empty bucket being smashed with a baseball bat, but the couple sleeping at their table was still out cold. Talk about a sound sleep: I hadn’t seen anything like that in years.

“Thirty Big Macs. For takeout,” said my wife.

“Let me just give you the money,” pleaded the manager. “I’ll give you more than you need. You can go buy food somewhere else. This is going to mess up my accounts and—”

“You’d better do what she says,” I said again.

The three of them went into the kitchen area together and started making the thirty Big Macs. The student grilled the burgers, the manager put them in buns, and the girl wrapped them up. Nobody said a word.

I leaned against a big refrigerator, aiming the gun toward the griddle. The meat patties were lined up on the griddle like brown polka dots, sizzling. The sweat smell of grilling meat burrowed into every pore of my body like a swarm of microscopic bugs, dissolving into my blood and circulating to the farthest corners, then massing together inside my hermetically sealed hunger cavern, clinging to its pink walls.

A pile of white-wrapped burgers was growing nearby. I wanted to grab and tear into them, but I could not be certain that such an act would be consistent with our objective. I had to wait. In the hot kitchen area, I started sweating under my ski mask.

The McDonald's people sneaked glances at the muzzle of the shotgun. I scratched my ears with the little finger of my left hand. My ears always get itchy when I'm nervous. Jabbing my finger into an ear through the wool, I was making the gun barrel wobble up and down, which seemed to bother them. It couldn't have gone off accidentally, because I had the safety on, but they didn't know that and I wasn't about to tell them.

My wife counted the finished hamburgers and put them into two shopping bags, fifteen burgers to a bag.

"Why do you have to do this?" the girl asked me. "Why don't you just take the money and buy something you like? What's the good of eating thirty Big Macs?"

I shook my head.

My wife explained, "We're sorry, really. But there weren't any bakeries open. If there had been, we would have attacked a bakery."

That seemed to satisfy them. At least they didn't ask any more questions. Then my wife ordered two large Cokes from the girl and paid for them.

"We're stealing bread, nothing else," she said. The girl responded with a complicated head movement, sort of like nodding and sort of like shaking. She was probably trying to do both at the same time. I thought I had some idea how she felt.

My wife then pulled a ball of twine from her pocket—she came equipped—and tied the three to a post as expertly as if she were sewing on buttons. She asked if the cord hurt, or if anyone wanted to go to the toilet, but no one said a word. I wrapped the gun in the blanket, she picked up the shopping bags, and out we went. The customers at the table were still asleep, like a couple of deep-sea fish. What would it have taken to rouse them from a sleep so deep?

We drove for a half hour, found an empty parking lot by a building, and pulled in. There we ate hamburgers and drank our Cokes. I sent six Big Macs down to the cavern of my stomach, and she ate four. That left twenty Big Macs in the back seat. Our hunger—that hunger that had felt as if it could go on forever—vanished as the dawn was breaking. The first light of the sun dyed the building's filthy walls purple and made a giant SONY BETA ad tower glow with painful intensity. Soon the whine of highway truck tires was joined by the chirping of birds. The American Armed Forces radio was playing cowboy music. We shared a cigarette. Afterward, she rested her head on my shoulder.

"Still, was it really necessary for us to do this?" I asked.

"Of course it was!" With one deep sigh, she fell asleep against me. She felt as soft and as light as a kitten.

Alone now, I leaned over the edge of my boat and looked down to the bottom of the sea. The volcano was

gone. The water's calm surface reflected the blue of the sky. Little waves—like silk pajamas fluttering in a breeze—lapped against the side of the boat. There was nothing else.

I stretched out in the bottom of the boat and closed my eyes, waiting for the rising tide to carry me where I belonged.

## Grazia Deledda



“[Grazia Deledda 1926](#)” by Nobel Foundation via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the public domain.

### “While the East Wind Blows” by Grazia Deledda

According to an ancient Sardinian legend, the bodies of those who are born on Christmas Eve will never dissolve into dust but are preserved until the end of time.

Now this was the natural subject of conversation in the house of the rich peasant Diddinu Frau, called Zio (uncle) Diddinu. His daughter's fiancé, Predu Tasca, raised the objection:

“But for what purpose? To what use is our body to us when we are dead?”

“Well,” answered the peasant, “isn't it a divine grace not to be reduced to ashes? And when we arrive at the universal judgment, would it not be wonderful to find one's body intact?”

“Pooh, would it really be that great?” Predu replied, looking very skeptical.

“Listen, my son-in-law,” the peasant exclaimed, “the topic is a good one. Shall we sing about it tonight?”

We ought to be aware that Uncle Diddinu was an extemporaneous poet, like his father had been and his grandfather, too. Joyfully he seized every opportunity to propose a contest of extemporaneous song, especially whenever there were poets around who were less skillful than himself.

“Oh,” Maria Franzisca observed, making herself as graceful as she could since her beloved looked at her, “the argument is a little gloomy.”

“Shut up! You can go to bed!” the father shouted rudely at her.

Although he was a poet, Diddinu was a wild and brutal man who dealt severely with his family, in particular with his daughters. His family respected him, but they all feared him. In the presence of her father, Maria Franzisca would hardly have dared to sit down close to her dear Predu. According to the custom of engaged couples, she kept a distance from her fiancé, only to charm him more, enticing him with the lovely movements of her body, veiled in the fleecy scarlet vest embroidered with flowers, and the blazes of her turquoise-green, almond-shaped eyes.

Thus, it was Christmas Eve—a gray day, dimmed but mild since an east wind was blowing, carrying the enervating warmth of distant deserts and a humid scent of the sea.

It appeared that, somewhere among the mountains, their slopes green from the cold grass of winter, or in the valleys where the shaking almond trees prematurely bloomed, throwing to the wind the white petals of snow as if from harm, there burned a great fire, the flames of which were not seen, but which was the source of the heat. And the clouds incessantly issuing from the mountaintops and spanning the sky seemed to be the smoke of that invisible fire.

The country sounded from the ringing of feast; people, yielding to the strange Levantine wind, crowded streets and houses, gathering to celebrate the birth of Christ. Families exchanged their gifts: suckling pigs roasted whole, lambs of autumn, meat, sweets, cakes, and dried fruit. Shepherds brought to their masters the first milk of their calves, and the lady of the house returned the container to the shepherds, filled with vegetables or other things, having first carefully emptied it in order not to bring down ruin on the cattle.

Predu Tasca, who was a swineherd, had accordingly killed his finest little pig, painted it with its blood, filled it with bundles of asphodel, and sent it as a gift to his fiancée. And his fiancée returned the basket with a cake of honey and almonds, giving a scudo of silver [5 lire] to the woman who brought it.

Towards evening, the young man came to the house of the Frau's and pressed his young lady's hand. She blushed, radiant with joy, and withdrew her hand from his grip; but in her palm, hot from the amorous squeeze, she found a gold coin concealed. In the next moment, she went about the house discreetly showing Predu's beautiful present.

Outside the bells chimed joyfully, and the east wind spread the metallic sound in the tepid damp of the dusk.

Predu wore the splendid national costume of medieval origin, a blue velvet vest and short black woolen coat finely embroidered, an ornate waist belt of leather, and filigree buttons of gold. His long black hair covered his ears and was carefully combed and greased with olive oil; and since he had already had some wine and anisette, his black eyes beamed, and his red lips burned in his black beard. He was as sound and handsome as a rural god.

“Bonas tardas,” he said and sat down close to his father-in-law at the hearth, where a log of holly was burning. “May the Lord grant you a hundred Christmases! How are you?”

“Like an old vulture that has lost its claws,” the wild, aging farmer replied. Then he recited the famous verse:

*S'omine cando est bezzu no est bonu...* (When the man gets old, he is good for nothing.)

This way they got on to the legend about people born on Christmas Eve.

“Let us go to mass,” Uncle Diddinu said. “When we get back, we will enjoy a good supper, and then we shall sing!”

“We can sing before, too, if you want.”

“Not now!” Diddinu replied, striking the stick on the stones of the hearth. “As long as the holy eve lasts, it must be respected. Our Lady suffers the pains of delivery, and we may not eat meat, nor may we sing. O, good evening, Mattia Portolu! Please be seated and tell us of the others who will come. Maria Franzisca, pour out well! Bring these little lambs something to drink.”

The young lady served her fiancé; and when she bent beside him to give him the glass, which scintillated as a ruby, he became drunk with her smile and her looks. In the meantime, the newcomer told of the friends who were to arrive.

The women were already busy at the hearth in the center of the kitchen, preparing the supper. On the one side of the four stones enclosing the hearth in the middle of the floor, the men were sitting; on the other, the women were cooking. Half of the pig that Predu had sent as a present was already roasting on a long skewer, and a pleasant odor of food filled the kitchen.

Two old relatives arrived, two brothers who had never married because they did not want to divide their inheritance. They looked like two patriarchs with their long hair curled over the large white beards.

Then came a blind young man, who groped about the stone walls, on the beat of his thin stick of oleander.

One of the old brothers took Maria Franzisca around the waist, pushed her towards the fiancé, and said,

“What’s the matter with you, little lambs of my heart? Why are you as distant from each other as the stars of heaven? Hold your hands, embrace...”

The two young people regarded each other, burning with desire; but Uncle Diddinu raised a thundering voice:

“Old ram! Leave them in peace! They do not need your counsels.”

“I know, and nor do they need yours! They will find ways to be their own masters.”

“If that were to happen,” the peasant said, “I would have to drive away that young man as the wasps are driven away. Fill up, Maria Franzisca!”

The young woman extricated herself from the arms of the old man, a bit affronted.

Smiling and adjusting his woolen cap, Predu said, “Well, thus we may neither eat nor sing nor do anything else... but drink?”

“You can do anything you wish, because God is grand,” the blind man murmured, seated beside the son-in-law.

“Glory to God in the heavens and peace on earth to all men of good will!”

And so they drank—and how heavily!

Pred� alone barely bathed his lips at the hem of the glass.

Outside the bells were ringing. Songs and cries of merriment were carried by the wind. Toward eleven, all rose to attend the midnight mass. In the house only the old grandmother stayed, who in her youth had learned that, on Christmas night, the dead return to visit the houses of their kinsfolk. For this reason, she performed an ancient rite: setting out a plate of food and a clay jug of wine for the dead. And that custom she followed this Christmas, too. As soon as she was alone, she got up, brought the wine and the food, and put it on a ladder outside the house, which led from the courtyard to the rooms upstairs.

A poor neighbor, who was accustomed to the old woman’s practice, accordingly climbed the ring wall of the farmstead and emptied the plate and the jug.

As soon as they all had returned from mass, the old and the young merrily assembled for supper. Big sacks of wool were put on the floor and were covered with homespun linen tablecloths.

In great yellow and red clay containers smoked the maccheroni made by the women, and on the wooden chopping-board, Predu skillfully sliced the well-done pig. All sat on the floor, on mats and bags; a powerful flame crackled on the hearth, throwing a red light on the faces of the guests; the scene seemed Homeric. And how they tiddled!



After supper, the women had to withdraw, as was the rigid wish of the host. The men sat or lay down around the hearth and began to sing. All faces were scarlet, their eyes languid but lucent. The old peasant began the contest:

Duncas, ggheneru meu, ello ite naras,  
Chi a sett'unzas de terra puzzinosa ...

“So, my son-in-law,” the old one sang, “tell me what is best: to be reduced to seven ounces of despicable earth... or to find our body again intact on the day of the universal judgment?”

Predu adjusted his cap and responded.

“The topic is dead serious,” he sang. “Let us think of other things and sing the praises of love, celebrate pleasure, and ‘sas Venus hermosas’ [the Venus-like beauties] in song, and other graceful and delightful things.”

All, except the old peasant, applauded this pagan stanza. The old poet was annoyed and replied in verse that his opponent did not want to answer because he did not feel himself capable of dealing with the highest subjects.

Then Predu once again adjusted his cap and answered, all the time in Sardinian verse:

“Well, since you really want it, I will answer you. The argument does not appeal to me because it is sad; I do not want to think of death on this night of joy and life. But since that is your wish, I say to you: it is of no importance to me whether our body remains intact or is dissolved. What are we after death? Nothing. The essential thing is that the body is healthy and vigorous during life, so that we may work and enjoy... nothing but that!”

The peasant retorted. And Predu objected over and over again, always embracing the pleasures and joys of life. The two old siblings applauded it; even the blind man gave signs of approval. The peasant pretended to get angry, but at heart he was content that his son-in-law proved to be a good poet. That foreboded a continuation of the glorious traditions of the family!

But even as he tried to demonstrate the vanity of the pleasures of the body, Uncle Diddinu drank and urged the others to drink too. Towards three o'clock in the morning, all were drunk; only the blind man, a formidable drinker, and Predu, who had drunk very little, had preserved their clarity of mind.

But Predu had been inebriated by his song, and as the hours passed, the memory of a promise Maria Franzisca had given him made him tremble with joy. Little by little, the voice of the singers became weaker; the old one

began to stutter; the young man pretended to be sleepy. Finally, all dozed off; only the blind one remained seated, silently nibbling at the rough knob of his cane.

Suddenly, the rooster sang in the courtyard.

Predu opened his eyes and watched the blind man.

“He does not see me,” he thought, raising himself cautiously; and he went out into the yard.

Maria Franzisca silently came down the outer ladder, and fell into his arms.

But the blind man knew that someone had left and gone outside; he thought it was Predu. He did not move but only murmured: “Glory to God in heaven and peace on earth to the men of good will.”

Outside, the moon still ran behind diaphanous clouds, and in the silvery night, the east wind carried the scent of the sea and the warmth of the desert.

From *A European Collection of Social Poetry and Art (1800-1950)* is available from the Internet Archive.

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## Ideas for Writing

### A New Norm

Objective: Students will explore the themes of compulsion and societal norms in Haruki Murakami’s short story “The Second Bakery Attack,” and connect these themes to broader societal issues of equity and social justice.

Instructions: Read “The Second Bakery Attack” by Haruki Murakami, focusing on how the characters deal with hunger and societal expectations.

Then identify a scene where the protagonists confront or discuss inequity, analyze how this scene can be interpreted as a commentary on societal norms or economic conditions, and conclude with what the story suggests about personal fulfillment and societal pressures.

6.

# MAGICAL REALISM

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## Magical Realism

**Magical realism** as a literary genre adeptly integrates the supernatural with the mundane, reflecting the complexities of the human experience. This genre has profoundly absorbed the impacts of major cultural shifts such as industrialization and **post-industrialization**, which have altered perceptions of reality and time. Furthermore, the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and post-colonialism are intricately woven into narratives that blend the real with the magical, offering a space to re-examine historical injustices and cultural identities. Feminism and various **social justice** movements also find expression in magical realism, as the genre often challenges traditional power structures and explores marginalized voices through a fantastical lens. Overall, magical realism not only entertains but also serves as a reflective mirror and a form of cultural critique, making it a powerful vehicle for discussing and digesting complex societal changes.



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## Gabriel Garcia Marquez



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## Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The 20th century saw the emergence of magic realism as a distinct genre with Latin American authors leading the way. Two of the most prominent figures in this movement were Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a Columbian writer is often considered the epitome of magic realism. His novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) is a quintessential example of this genre. The novel tells the story of the Buendia family in the fictional town of Macondo. The story blends the ordinary and the extraordinary with characters who experience both mundane and supernatural events.

Published in 1985, *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is less typical of magical realism, though it illustrates the theme of love in an unconventional way. Marquez does not use supernatural elements to develop the plot, but the way characters develop produces unexpected results. It is a story of Fermina and Florentino, lovers who are separated and come together only when they are old. The novel challenges ideas of love and hate, life and death, to parallel the precolonial past and post-industrial present.

Read an excerpt from “[Love in the Time of Cholera](#)” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

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[“Salman Rushdie, Oktober 2023 Ausschnitt”](#) by [Elena Ternovaja](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

## Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie’s innovative blending of magical elements with social and political commentary has had a significant impact on contemporary literature. Therefore, it is not surprising that Rushdie is widely regarded as one of the foremost practitioners of magical realism in English-language literature.

*Quichotte* is a satire of modern America, India, and the U.K. The novel sets *Don Quixote in America*’s immigrant communities as it takes a road trip on a steady diet of slightly outdated pop culture references.

Read an excerpt from [“\*Quichotte\*”](#) by Salman Rushdie

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## Leslie Marmon Silko



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Leslie Marmon Silko is a Native American author associated with the magic realism literary movement. Silko blends elements of Native American storytelling, traditional beliefs, and magical realism with a realistic portrayal of contemporary Native American life. Silko’s contributions to the genre have helped to expand the boundaries of the genre and bring attention to the experiences and perspectives of **indigenous** peoples in literature.

Silko’s work also address the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism and post-colonialism, examining how these forces have impacted indigenous peoples and their cultures. Her narratives interweave the personal and political, delving into issues of feminism and social justice movements by presenting strong female protagonists who confront and defy the constraints imposed by both their societies and historical circumstances. Through her use of magical realism, Silko not only tells stories but also preserves and reclaims cultural practices and perspectives, offering insights into resilience and adaptation in the face of pervasive cultural changes.

Leslie Marmon Silko, a pivotal Native American writer, integrates magical realism into her narratives to profound effect, particularly in her story *Yellow Woman*, published in 1974. In this tale, Silko blends Laguna Pueblo mythology with contemporary settings to explore themes of identity, culture, and personal mythology. Through the character of Yellow Woman, who navigates between mythic and modern landscapes, Silko comments on the broader cultural shifts resulting from industrialization. These forces often challenge and erode indigenous traditions, requiring a renegotiation of identity in the face of modernity.

Read [“Yellow Woman”](#) by Leslie Marmon Silko

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## Ideas for Writing

### The World through the Eyes of Magical Realism

Objective: Students will explore themes of love, time, identity, and magical connections between humanity and nature by identifying key elements of magical realism in the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Salmon Rushdie, and/or Leslie Marmon Silko.

Instructions: Read the works of Marquez, Rushdie, and Silko.

Consider where the lines of reality and fantasy is blurred in each of their works.

Write an essay in which you persuade your readers of how each work illustrates key characteristics of magical realism.

7.

## POST-COLONIALISM

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### Post-colonialism



“Dutch Ships Arriving in Harbours of Bengal” by Schenk, P. via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the public domain.

**Colonialism** and its aftermath have profoundly impacted world literature, giving rise to post-colonial studies. Authors such as Fayeza Hasanat, Chinua Achebe, and Anita Desai have explored themes of identity, resistance, and the legacies of colonialism, contributing to a richer, more diverse literary world.

Colonialism is a nation extending control over another nation or territory. Typically, people from the colonizing country settle in the nation or territory, altering its society, political structure, culture, arts. The colonizing country typically exploits the resources and labor of the colonized region.

Postcolonial literature is the literature by people from formerly colonized countries, originating from all continents except Antarctica beginning in the late 1980s and continuing to today. Postcolonial literature often addresses the problems and consequences of the **decolonization** of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and themes such as racialism and



**colonialism.** A range of literary theory has evolved around the subject. It addresses the role of literature in perpetuating and challenging what postcolonial critic Edward Said refers to as cultural imperialism.

Cultural imperialism (also cultural colonialism) comprises the cultural dimensions of **imperialism**. The word “imperialism” describes practices in which a country engages culture (language, tradition, and ritual, politics, economics) to create and maintain unequal social and economic relationships among social groups. Cultural imperialism often uses wealth, media power and violence to implement the system of cultural **hegemony**, or dominance in a culturally diverse society by by a ruling class, that legitimizes **imperialism**. Cultural imperialism may take various forms, including an attitude, a formal policy, or military action, as each of these reinforces the empire’s cultural **hegemony**.

Migrant literature and postcolonial literature show some considerable overlap. However, not all migration takes place in a colonial setting, and not all postcolonial literature deals with migration. A question of current debate is the extent to which postcolonial theory also speaks to migration literature in non-colonial settings.

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## Fayeza Hasanat



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Fayeza Hasanat is a Bangladeshi American literary scholar whose expertise includes translation studies, gender studies, postcolonial literature and literature of the South Asian **diaspora**. She teaches at the University of Central Florida. Her first collection of short stories was published in 2018; “When Our Fathers Die” is from that collection, entitled *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*.

Read [“When Our Fathers Die”](#)

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## Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe was a renowned Nigerian writer and critic, born on November 16, 1930, in Ogidi, a large village in Nigeria. His groundbreaking novel, *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958, is often considered a seminal work in African literature, as it captures the clash between native African culture and the invasive forces of European colonialism. Achebe’s writing not only critiques the social injustices and racial stereotypes propagated by **colonialism** but also eloquently articulates the complexities of African identity and resistance. Throughout his career, Achebe was a vocal advocate for social justice, equality, and the preservation of African cultures. He argued fervently against the corruption and ineptitude that plagued post-colonial governance in Africa and emphasized the importance of storytelling as a means of cultural preservation and resistance. His works challenge the Western narrative of African history and insist on the recognition of African voices and perspectives. Achebe’s activism extended beyond his writings. He held several academic positions in Nigeria and the United States, using these platforms to promote African arts, critique the degradation of African

environments and societies, and advocate for social and political reform. His efforts earned him numerous awards and honors, including the Man Booker International Prize in 2007 for his lifetime achievement in fiction. Chinua Achebe passed away on March 21, 2013, but his legacy endures, inspiring new generations to appreciate and critique the interwoven complexities of culture, history, and identity.



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Chinua Achebe's "[The Sacrificial Egg](#)" was published *The Atlantic*.

## Anita Desai



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Born in British India, Anita Desai's parents were Dhiren Mazumdar, an Indian businessman, and Antoinette Nim, a German. She spoke German and Hindi at home and learned English at school. Despite her parents' anti-British sentiments, Desai attended Dehli's Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School, a school run by British Catholic nuns. She then attended Miranda House, a women's college of Dehli University. She majored in English literature and published her first short story while still a student.

After she graduated in 1957, Desai worked at the German Cultural Institute where she met Ashwin Desai, whom she married. She moved with him to various places, including Mumbai and Chandigarh, before they settled in Prune. She also continued her writing, publishing her first novel, *Cry, the Peacock*, in 1963. She followed this with short story collections and novels addressing **postcolonial** issues in India and women's experience in the domestic realm within the larger social and cultural context of middle class, urban India. Her novel *In Custody* (1984) was short-listed for the Booker Prize and made into a film.

Desai gained recognition as a writer of profound psychological insight on the displaced and the alienated who often face prejudice and who often suffer a fractured sense of identity. Her style is characterized by its precision and careful crafting. She has won such important literary prizes as the Indian National Academy of Letters Award and the Benson Medal from London's Royal Society of Literature. She has taught at various prestigious universities around the world, and is professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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Read "[The Domestic Maid](#)" by Anita Desai.

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## Ideas for Writing

### Legacies of Colonialism: Life After Occupation

Objective: Students will understand the repercussions of colonialism and explore its impact on the literature of Fayeza Hasanat, Chinua Achebe, and/or Anita Desai.

Instructions: Read "When Our Fathers Die," "The Sacrificial Egg," and "The Domestic Maid" as well as, possibly, other pieces by Hasanat, Achebe, and Desai or other post-colonial writers, like Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Meena Alexander, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Tayeb Salih, Toni Morrison, J.M. Coetzee, Isabel Allende, and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Then research the cultural impacts of colonialism in the regions or countries about which their stories have been written.

Finally, develop an essay in which you identify how the writer or writers illustrate the impact of colonialism as it manifests in their writing.

# GLOSSARY

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## Colonialism

Colonialism is a process by which one country takes control over another country or region, often by force, and dominates it politically, economically, and culturally. This control can involve settling the new territory with people from the colonizing country, exploiting the local population and resources, and imposing the colonizer's culture, language, and social systems. Literature from colonized societies can offer insight into both colonial experiences, both from the justification of colonization as well as the resistance, identity struggles, and the trauma of oppression. Understanding colonialism in literature helps us grasp how historical events shape societies and identities, and it provides a critical lens for examining power dynamics and cultural interactions.

## Colonization

Colonization is the process by which a country establishes control over a foreign territory, often involving settlement and exploitation of resources. Local populations often face displacement and exploitation. This process has deep implications for the people and cultures in the colonized regions.

## Contemporary

Contemporary means of a time, so something contemporary today means of this time, like works produced in the current time and reflecting the issues of this time; when something is referred to as contemporary to someone of a past time was of their time.

## Culture

Culture refers to the collective social, artistic, intellectual, and behavioral expressions and practices that characterize a specific group. Literature can both reflect and shape culture.

## Decolonization

Decolonization is the process through which colonies gain independence from their colonial rulers, reclaiming political, economic, and cultural autonomy. It involves undoing the structures and impacts of colonization and restoring indigenous rights and identities. Most decolonization movements took place in the mid-20th century, following World War II, when many African, Asian, and Caribbean countries achieved independence from European powers. In literature, decolonization themes explore the struggles

for independence, the challenges of nation-building, and the quest for cultural identity and healing after colonial oppression.

## Existential

Existential refers to personal or individual existence and how individuals find meaning and purpose. Existentialism explores the human condition, the meaning of life, the inevitability of death.

## Feminism

According to dictionary.com, feminism is defined as an organized movement for the attainment of such rights for women.

## Imperialism

## Industrialization

Industrialization is a period of social and economic change that transforms a society from primarily agrarian work in rural settings to industrial work in cities. Such a move brings opportunities but also creates complications in terms of workers' rights, environmental impact, and more.

## Literary Criticism

According to Wikipedia editors, literary criticism is the study and interpretation of literature. Modern literary criticism is often influenced by literary theory, which is the philosophical analysis of writers' methods.

## Magical Realism

According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, magical realism is defined as a literary genre or style associated especially with Latin America that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction.

## Marginalized

The term "marginalized" refers to individuals or groups that are pushed to the edges of society, where they have limited access to resources, rights, and opportunities. This marginalization can be due to various factors like race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

## Modernism

According to Wikipedia.org, modernism is defined as an early 20th-century movement in literature, visual arts, and music that emphasized experimentation, abstraction, and subjective experience.

## Post-Colonialism

According to Wikipedia, post colonialism is defined as the critical academic study of the cultural, political and economic legacy of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the impact of human control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands.

## Post-Industrialization

Post-industrialization is a phase of economic development that follows the industrial era, characterized by a shift from manufacturing-based economies to service-oriented economies. This transition has significant social, economic, and cultural implications, which are often explored in literature.

Understanding post-industrialization in literature helps readers appreciate how economic and technological changes influence society and individual lives. It provides insights into the human experience in an era where traditional industries are fading, and new forms of work and social structures are emerging.

## Power Structure

Power structure refers to the distribution of power within a group of people in terms of who holds authority and how that authority is exercised.

## Realism

According to the Urban Dictionary, realism is defined as a Form of art or literature where something is "real"; Expressing realistic emotions or actions

In his essay about realism, the girl killed herself after learning about her evil step-father.

The artist's realism came through his work when he used textured canvas to paint a love scene.

## Satire

According to Dictionary.com, satire is defined as a work of art, literature, or entertainment in which the folly and corruption of human beings, institutions, or social structures are exposed, denounced, or ridiculed:

The skit offended only those who didn't recognize it as a political satire.

Did you notice that all the novels on her bookshelf were satires? Synonyms: travesty, parody, caricature, burlesque

## Social Construct

A social construct is an idea or concept that is created and accepted by the people in a society. It doesn't exist naturally in the world but is an invention of human beings. Social constructs influence how people perceive and interact with each other.

In literature social constructs are explored to reveal how they shape identities, behaviors, and societies. Authors might challenge these constructs, which work to maintain power dynamics within society, or show their impact on individuals and groups.

## Social Justice

Social justice is a fair and equitable society in which all individuals and groups have equal access to opportunities, resources, rights, and privileges through efforts to reform legal, economic, educational, and social systems to achieve these goals.

## Surrealism

According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, surrealism is defined as the principles, ideals, or practice of producing fantastic or incongruous imagery or effects in art, literature, film, or theater by means of unnatural or irrational juxtapositions and combinations

## Urbanization

Urbanization is the process by which rural areas transform into urban areas, resulting in the growth and expansion of cities. Urbanization can lead to economic growth, but it can also create economic disparities between different urban areas and between urban and rural regions. This process has profound social, economic, and cultural effects, which are often explored in literature.