

Since *A Doll's House* is a play, one must analyze what elements that may be allusive to something else. Also, check the language used to see if some things are allegorical, ironic, metaphorical, figurative, and so on.

According to *The Continental Drama of Today* by Barrett H. Clark (1914, pp. 17–19) Henrik Ibsen had a desire to expose ideas that, at the time, would have caused horror in a puritanical society such as the one he lived in. Case in point, the idea of a woman leaving her husband, children, and position in society, to go "somewhere" and find herself as a human being is quite subversive. If this idea still sort of pulls a nerve in the 21st century's social mindset, imagine what it did 200 plus years ago when society was entirely bound to norms and rules that women were expected, nay, obligated, to follow.

This being said, a topic of this nature had to be treated in a very subtle way. To do so, figurative language and literary elements would come quite handy to disguise an otherwise controversial topic.

Here are some examples:

Doll's house—The title of the play itself entails that the home where Nora lives is not really a typical family household, but a type of stage where she gets to play the part of her husband's "little squirrel," that is, entertainer, nurturer, and keeper. Nora is not a real doll, but she definitely plays the part. The title is a metaphor of her situation.

Holiday season (Christmas)—The play takes place during a season that is joyous, family-oriented, but also cold and isolating. It is also a season of indulgence and gift-giving. Most of these elements also describe Nora's marriage: cold, isolated, but filled with little indulgences that seem to make up for the lack of everything else. Some of these indulgences include the eating of macaroons behind Torvald's back, shopping, dancing, and playing the role of the house's "doll."

The Tarantella—In Act II, with a gripping fear of the incriminating letter left by Krogstad, Nora diverts her husband's attention by asking him to watch her dance the Tarantella. This, is an ancient Italian dance that is folkloric, and supposedly meant to rid people of the poison caused by spider bites.

Similarly, there is a poison Nora wants to get rid of: the secret of her dealings with Krogstad. As such, Nora danced so wildly that her hair came down, and her husband was shocked about it:

"Stop! This is sheer madness. You have forgotten everything I've taught you."

This quote also tells volumes: Nora's secret is oppressing her but, her husband, who is expected to dictate her life, oppresses her as well. She is on the verge of a serious shift of mind.

Macaroons: The famous macaroons (which should read "macarons"—one "o") that Nora is so fond of, are symbols of her secrecy. She eats them behind her husband's back (although he is fully aware of her sweet tooth) in a way that shows a mild rebellion towards him. She knows that her husband likes to curb her enthusiasm for this treat. As such, she eats them regardless, and in hiding. This is another way to show how Nora wants to defy what would be an "establishment" that intends to dictate the way she should lead her life.