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- 4 In what ways is the reader seduced or comforted by the ideas in the works studied and in what ways challenged or alienated? Refer to the two literary works you have studied.

'Things Fall Apart', by Chinua Achebe, and 'A Doll's House', by Henrik Ibsen² are two texts which comfort and challenge the readers' ideas, especially the readers of the time in which each text was written in. Achebe wrote 'Things Fall Apart' in order to challenge the Eurocentric misconceptions of the time, while Ibsen merely portrays his ideas regarding the Victorian gender roles and social values in his play.

As previously mentioned, 'Things Fall Apart' challenges many of the Eurocentric views about Africa at the time. After Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' claimed that there was a great difference between the 'white' and 'black' men, and that the Africans were the 'anticivilization', Achebe responded by publishing 'Things Fall Apart', where he explores the richness of the Ibo culture.¹ Since most people who read Achebe's novel had^{only} Eurocentric views about Africa, the readers' views were strongly challenged by 'Things Fall Apart', as the Ibo tribe is portrayed as a culturally rich tribe, and not as a chaotic, messy, 'anti-civilization' community. In 'Things Fall Apart', Achebe describes an Ibo marriage in a whole chapter to show the readers the complex ritual and the values and beliefs of the Ibos, including their polygamous nature. Additionally, Achebe uses Ibo words such as "udu", "obi", "egwugwu", to make his novel more verosimilant by ~~imitating and preserving~~ ^{recording} the Ibo language. The Eurocentric readers of 'Things Fall Apart' have their previous misconceptions about Africa strongly challenged.²

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Florence Stratton, one of the many critics of 'Things Fall Apart,' claims that Achebe does a good job portraying the Ibo community. Achebe reflects the Ibo textualised orality in his novel with the use of Ibo proverbs, such as "when a man says yes, his chi says yes also." He also employs the use of parataxis and periphrasis to make the text very similar to the Ibo culture. Moreover, Achebe uses monosyllabic words to imitate the rhythmic way in which the Ibo speak. Stratton follows her point by saying that Achebe portrays the male Ibo as "active" as he should be. Achebe uses Okonkwo, the protagonist of 'Things Fall Apart' as the embodiment of the Ibo male. He describes Okonkwo as strong by ~~elaborate~~ writing that he "threw Amalinze the Cat" when he was young. He also writes that "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand" and that he had three wives and many barns of yams, "the king of crops". This reflects Okonkwo's success as an Ibo male, thus showing the readers the Ibo values and social roles. ~~of the Ibo~~ As a reader, Florence Stratton's view of the Ibo tribe are comforted by Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart'.

However, Stratton strongly criticizes the way in which Achebe describes the females of the Ibo tribe. She ~~elaborate~~ claims that they are "too passive" and are not accurate depictions of the ~~female~~ female Ibo archetype. Stratton suggests that the women are ^{actually} more similar to Ezinma, Okonkwo's daughter, who he claims has the "right spirit". Therefore, some readers' ideas are also challenged by 'Things Fall Apart' because the novel does not portray ^{the Ibo} ~~the Ibo~~ accurately.

In "A Doll's House", Ibsen explores the gender roles of the typical Victorian male and female with his characters

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Torvald and Mrs. Linde, in the Helmer household. Torvald is ~~seen as the dominant person~~ seen as the dominant person in his and Nora's marriage in Act I. He constantly calls Nora "spend-thrift", "songbird", "skylark" and "little squirrel", which are all diminishing nicknames, which belittle Nora and show how Torvald treats Nora as a child, not as an equal, which was ~~the~~ typical within ~~for~~ a Victorian family. Moreover, near the end of Act I, Torvald is seen scolding Nora for lying, stating that ~~a~~ "a songbird must keep its beak clean" because "lies" can "poison" every corner of the house" and corrupt their children. Once again, Torvald is seen as the dominant character in his and Nora's relationship, which ~~is~~ typical ~~of~~ the Victorian husband.

Mrs. Linde is portrayed as a typical Victorian woman who had to marry for "financial" reasons. She tells Nora that she married because she had her "little brothers to take care of" as well as her ~~own~~ "mother". She also reminds Nora of one of the social values of the time, that "a wife can't borrow money without her husband's consent".

As both ~~the~~ Mrs. Linde and Torvald represent the typical male and female in the Victorian era, the audiences' ideas are comforted by these two characters and Ibsen's first Act.

However, Nora, the protagonist of "A Doll's House", is a character which opposes many of the social beliefs of the era as she is the embodiment of Ibsen's ideas. Although Nora appears to be a typical Victorian woman in Act I, as she is belittled by Torvald, the audience soon discovers that she is not. Nora tells Mrs. Linde that it was "great fun" working and earning money "like a man" and confesses to Mrs. Linde that she borrowed

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money by signing her father's name.^⑤ She also seduces Dr. Rank in Act II, where she calls him "naughty" and "plucks" ~~her~~ her "flesh-coloured" "silk stockings". Seducing men, especially when married, was a scandalous notion during the Victorian Era, and so, Nora's actions strongly challenge the audience's ideas.

In the end of Act III in "A Doll's House", Nora tells Torvald that she is going to leave him because she "has duties equally as sacred [as those of being a mother and wife]; duties to [her]self". She tells him that he never loved her, he only thought he did because she was his "doll-wife". She then proceeds to say that she is tired of being "passed from hand to hand," as she was "papa's doll-child" and then Torvald's "doll-wife" and that her children were "doll-children". The play ends with Nora "slamming" the door. The verb "slamming" is very significant because it shows Nora's conviction and strength in her belief. The ending of 'A Doll's House' was met with outrage by the audience. Actresses claimed that they would not perform such absurdity and Ibsen was forced to write an alternative ending in which Nora ~~decides~~ decides to stay after thinking about her children. The reaction of the audience clearly shows how Ibsen's play challenged the ideas of the audience at the time.

For both 'A Doll's House' and 'Things Fall Apart' the readers who had their view most challenged were the readers of the respective time in which each text was written. This is because 'Things Fall Apart' was written to change all the previous misconceptions of Africa and 'A Doll's House'

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reflected Ibsen's belief in the empowerment of women and the rising feminist movements. Therefore both texts were written to challenge the social values of the time. However, a modern audience of the 21st century would not have its views and ideas so challenged, but rather comforted. In the case of 'Things Fall Apart', the modern reader would only be informed of the Ibo culture as opposed to ~~being~~ having his or her views challenged or comforted.

In conclusion in 'Things Fall Apart', Achebe explores the Ibo culture and comforts the many African people who have been misunderstood and challenges the ~~European~~ ~~ideas~~ ideas of Eurocentric people and critics, such as Stratton, who believe Achebe has not depicted the Ibo tribe correctly. In 'A Doll's House', Ibsen explores the Victorian female gender roles and challenges many of the Victorian audience and comforts the rising feminist movements. ~~and~~ Both texts have challenged the audience ~~of~~ readers of the time more than they have the audience ~~or~~ or readers of today.

① Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" helps eradicate Achebe's idea of a 'single story', where only one perspective is known, understood and considered.

② by Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" because the readers see that the Ibo culture is much more than a primitive tribe.

③ specific social groups within



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④ not society's ideas and values.

⑤ Both these acts were uncommon and nearly unheard of at the time. Men were responsible for the financial stability of a family, and as previously mentioned, "a wife can't borrow money without her husband's consent".

⑥ as he is strong, has many wives and has many barns of yams, the crop of the tribe,