

Aleya Adams

Christopher Clark

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Super Nora

A hero archetype is defined as “a typical character that predominantly exhibits goodness and struggles against evil in order to restore harmony and justice to society” (“literarydevices.com”). In the play *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen, Nora Helmer is arguably apart of the hero archetype category. Ibsen never intended for Nora to stand out in the way she did, but many of her child-like qualities reveal her virtuous spirit and catch the eye of the viewers. Nora Helmer is cast in the light of a silly little skylark, but that is only what Ibsen wants the audience to think to demonstrate the hidden secrets women then horded. The fact that Nora has a secret almost contrasts the hero archetype, but a hero always does the best for the people, and Nora only forged her father’s signature in order to save Torvald. Nora also is thinking of Torvald when she says “How painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether” (1.197), which demonstrates her generosity and friendship. Nora also stands strong with bravery even when Torvald says “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?” (2.113). Nora also stays loyal to her word by spending less on herself “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” (1.479) and this also contributes to her generosity, because she spends the majority on her children and Torvald. Contrarily, Nora also lies, leaves her family, and has a bit of hubris. Nora

lies to Krogstad about her father's signature, Torvald about the Italy trip, and herself about being happy. The cliché hero does not lie and does not break the law. Nora lies all the way to the very end when Torvald asks "What is this? Someone has been at the lock...Here is a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours?" (3.198) And Nora replies "Then it must have been the children –" (3.201). It is really peculiar that she continues to lie even when she knows it is over, maybe she wants to prolong the inevitable. Also contrasting the hero archetype is Nora's lack of self esteem. Torvald degrades her constantly with statements such as "Nora! The same little featherhead!" (1.52) Nora does not stand up for herself and defeats her bravery. Nora is constantly defeating her bravery by letting Torvald push her around with his degrading pet names. Nora is a lot like Achilles with the glowing pride she holds for herself for her loan. Nora tells Ms. Linde "Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life" (1.385). Nora Helmer promotes a higher level of thinking because of her diverse standards and ways of thinking, but it is not certain if she is a hero archetype. The fact that Ibsen did not intend to write her as one makes some people believe she is not, but the virtues she has in common with Beowulf, Achilles, and Gilgamesh makes some think Nora is a subtle hero. The final decision will lay with the viewer who will determine, much like Nora, the fate his/her self.