

## Social Context of A Doll's House

**WebQuest Description:** Students research the social historical context of Ibsen's play A Doll's House in order to compose a letter to the editor from the point of view of a Victorian person.

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum:** English / Language Arts

**Keywords:** Ibsen, A Dolls House, victorian society, gender issues, letter to the editor

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**WebQuest URL:** <http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=17294>

### Introduction

Imagine yourself living over a hundred years ago in Victorian England. You have just returned from the theater and you have seen the premier of Henrik Ibsen's play A Doll's House. Depending on who you are you may be amazed or outraged. In any case, this play is unlike anything you have ever seen before, and you decide you must share your feelings with the world through a letter to the editor of the London Times. In this letter, you will either praise the play's revolutionary views or call for it to be banned based on its immoral content. By the time you have finished this WebQuest, you will have a learned about the social and historical context in which A Doll's House was written, and you will be able to answer our controlling question. Why was Ibsen's play considered so controversial when it was first performed on stage?

### Tasks

This activity begins with you choosing one of the following generic Victorian era characters. - An upper-middle class man - An upper-middle class woman - A working class woman - A working class man - A suffragette After choosing a character, your job will be to develop a profile of that person's life using the character profile organizer provided. In doing so, you will learn about Victorian society and culture. Once your profile is complete you will be ready to adopt your new persona. Your task is to adopt your character's perspective, and pretend you have recently seen the play A Doll's House. Seeing the play has sparked your social awareness, and you decide to write a letter to the editor of London Times. In this letter you may condemn or praise the play, but in either case you will demonstrate your understanding of the play and its social context by making specific references to Victorian society norms and events in the play.

### Process

- You will begin this WebQuest by forming groups of three to four students. Your partners will assist you with your research, analysis of the play and editing your letter to the editor.
- Each group member selects a different one of the generic Victorian characters from the following list.
  - An upper-middle class man
  - An upper-middle class woman
  - A working class woman
  - A working class man
  - A suffragette
- Download the "Developing Character Profile" organizer from the link at the bottom of the page. You may print it out and fill it in by hand or type in your answers and print it out when you are finished.
- Research your chosen character. Use the links listed below and complete your "Developing Character Profile." You must read from sources addressing all of the topics below to get a clear picture of Victorian society. Don't focus just on one category.
  - Society in general [Interesting site devoted to fashion, but containing solid overviews on a number of topics](http://www.fashion-era.com/victorians.htm)
  - [Has great overview of entire period divided into short topics, easy to search](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/)
  - [Excellent site focus on gender issues, articles a bit long](http://www.fathom.com/course/10701039/sessions.html)
  - [Excellent site concise overviews. Be sure to search topics in menu on the left](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/welcome.htm)
  - [Huge site, great material, maybe too much](http://www.victorianweb.org/)
  - [Women](http://www.victorianweb.org/Women)
  - <http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~ulrich/femhist/marriage.shtml>
  - [http://crayzray.tripod.com/clpage/writings/other/victorian\\_women.htm](http://crayzray.tripod.com/clpage/writings/other/victorian_women.htm)
  - [http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/lesson7.html](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/topic_2/welcome.htm)
  - [Suffragettes](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/suffrage/history.htm)
  - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3153388.stm>
  - <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/suffragettes.htm>
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/pankhurst\\_emmeline.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/pankhurst_emmeline.shtml)
  - [Men](http://www.lahacal.org/gentleman/behavior.html)
  - <http://www.victorianweb.org/vn/victor10.html>
  - <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/gentleman.html>
- After completing character profiles, group members should share and discuss their results. Group members should offer suggestions for refining and improving each others work.
- Now that you know something about Victorian society and its norms, working together, each group compiles a list of characters, events and actions from the play that deviate from the Victorian ideal.
- Open and read the review of the play from the link at the bottom of the page. This review was written in 1889. Compare the reviewer's complaints to the list you generated in #6.
- You are almost ready to begin composing your letter to the editor. Before you start writing, visit the sites linked below to learn about correct business letter format and tips for writing letters to the editor. You will be using the Full Block style. Your letter will be graded on format and style as well as content. Carefully read the Letter to the Editor Rubric linked at the bottom of the page.
  - [Business Letter Format](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/#resourcenav)
  - <http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/Format.pdf>

&nbsp;Letter to the Editor <http://www.ncte.org/about/issues/action/resources/122268.htm>

<http://www.mapinc.org/resource/how2lte.htm> <http://letterstoeditors.net/about/tips.html> &nbsp; 9.&nbsp;You may now compose your letter to the editor of the London Times. Remember you are composing this letter from the point of view of your character. In this letter you state your opinion on the play A Doll's House. Your letter should accurately reflect Victorian attitudes by making specific social and cultural references as well as refer to specific parts of the play.10.&nbsp;Once all group members have completed the 1st drafts of their letters, you should peer evaluate each others' work using the Letter to Editor Rubric linked at the bottom of the page. Print out the rubric and complete it for your group members' letters. Mark up and make suggestions directly on each others' 1st drafts. Help each other compose the best letter possible11.&nbsp;Make revisions to your paper and submit it to the teacher along with your 1st draft and your "Developing Character Profile" organizer.

## Evaluation

Category and Score	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Very Good 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Participation in group work and WebQuest research	Frequently off task requires numerous reminders from teacher. Minimal constructive participation in group discussion. Very little if any constructive advice offered in peer editing process. Has difficulty completing tasks on time.	Usually on task but requiring reminders from the teacher. Participates in group work. Makes some comments in discussion. Superficial completion peer editing. Tasks completed mostly on time, may lag behind at times. Superficial completion of peer editing. Tasks completed mostly on time, may lag behind at times.	Consistently on task. Seldom requires reminders from the teacher. Works with well group members. Makes informed comments in discussion and makes useful suggestions during peer editing. all tasks completed in a timely manner.	Always on task. Needs no reminders from the teacher. Works very constructively with group members. Offers insightful and thoughtful comments in group discussion. Makes abundant and useful suggestions during peer editing. All tasks completed in a timely manner.	10
Character profile	Organizer partially or very superficially completed. Contains minimal information on the Victorian era. Minimal or erroneous conclusions about the character.	Organizer mostly completed. Contains significant information about Victorian era. Draws some conclusions about character, but may be superficial or inaccurate at times.	Organizer completed. Accurate and sufficient information about the Victorian era. Meaningful and useful conclusions about character.	Organizer thoroughly completed with abundant information about the Victorian era. Very insightful conclusions about character	10
Letter to the Editor: Content	Demonstrates minimal knowledge of the Victorian period and or the play. Uses minimal support or have inaccurate information.	Demonstrates some knowledge of the Victorian period and the play. Use some support from research and the play but relevance may be unclear or inconsistent	Demonstrates a good knowledge of the Victorian period and the play. Uses support from research and play consistently.	Demonstrates in depth knowledge of the Victorian era and the play. Uses ample support from the play and research.	30
Letter to the Editor: Style and Format	Fails to use the business letter format. Significant errors in grammar and usage that interfere with the meaning. Tone and style are inappropriate for character and format.	Uses the business letter format but has significant errors. Some errors in grammar and usage with no errors that interfere with meaning. Style and tone may deviate significantly from the character and letter to the editor format in places	Correctly uses the business letter format with only minimal errors if any. Few errors in grammar and usage with no errors that interfere with meaning. Style and tone are appropriate but may not be consistently well developed	Business letter format used with no errors. No errors in grammar and usage. Style and tone are very well developed and consistent with the character and the letter to editor format.	20
Total Score					70

## Conclusion

Congratulations on completing your&nbsp;A Doll's House WebQuest!&nbsp;You should now understand why Ibsen's play was so controversial when it was first produced and appreciate how knowledge of &nbsp;the social, cultural and historical context of the work can add depth to your understanding of a work of literature.&nbsp;Also take a moment to consider whether or not we have changed that much since Victorian times. What issues are now considered controversial in art, film and literature?

## Teacher Page

Teacher: Mr.

Alford  
Subject: English 10 G&T Date: 10/3/2008 Topic or Unit of Study: A Doll's House Overview/Background: Our study of A Doll's House is part of a larger unit focused on the sociological approach to literary criticism. In this web quest activity students will explore the sociological, historical and cultural context in which the play was written. Prior to this activity students have read acts one and two of the play and they will finish it independently while we work on the web quest in class. This web quest will also help prepare them for the culminating activity of the unit where they will research a social topic and compose a letter to the editor which will be mailed to an actual publication of their choosing. Maryland Core Learning Goal: 1.3.2 The student will interpret a work by using a critical approach (e.g., reader response, historical, cultural, biographical, and structural) that is supported with textual references. 2.1.4 The student will compose persuasive texts that support, modify, or refute a position and include effective rhetorical strategies. 2.3.2 The student will use various information retrieval sources (traditional and electronic) to obtain information on a self-selected and/or given topic. Electronic sources include automated catalogs, CD ROM products, and on-line services like Internet, World Wide Web, and others. BCPS Grade Ten G&T English Indicators #1 - Analyze world literature and examine the cultural context in which it was written to determine the diversity of world cultures and similarities of the human condition. #2 - Use a variety of formalized critical approaches including Formalistic, historical/biographical, psychological, philosophical, and archetypal in order to support a literary analysis of a work of world literature. #7 - Identify points of view in narratives to determine how they shape the stories and compose a narrative incorporating an appropriate point of view. Summative Assessment of Indicator: The students will compose a letter to the editor from the point of view of the character they have researched and developed. This letter will address how the character feels about Ibsen's play The Doll's House, and will assess their understanding of both the play and the social, historical and cultural context in which it was written. Students will also be assessed on their proper use of business letter format. Proposed # of days for Instruction: 5 Lesson Objective(s): By participating in a web quest students will learn how the social, historical and cultural context of a work affects its overall meaning of a work in order to compose a persuasive letter addressing A Doll's House from the point of view of a Victorian character. Lesson Activities and Instructional Strategies: Mind Jog: Presented on a PowerPoint slide What factors do you feel have the most influence on people's opinions and attitudes? Rank the following factors on a scale of one to five with five being the most influential. Family Peers Income Occupation Religion Gender Transition: When the play A Doll's House was first performed throughout Europe it was a very controversial play. It was banned in some places and Ibsen was even forced to rewrite the ending in order to get it performed in Germany. Today you will begin a web quest activity in which you will explore the Victorian period and discover why the play was considered so controversial. In your research you will learn about various aspect of the society and you will speculate on how they influenced people of that time period. Lesson: The teacher will introduce the class to the web quest and explain how it works and the process they will follow. Process 1. Students work in self-selected groups of 3-4 students. 2. Each group member selects a different generic character to research. 3. Students research chosen character by following links provided in the web quests. 4. Students record the results of their research on the "Developing Character Profile" worksheet. 5. After students complete their research, group members will share their profiles and make suggestions for refining each other's work. 6. Working together, each group will compile a list of list of characters and events from the play that deviate from the norms of Victorian society. 7. Students will visit links to sites on writing letters to the editor and business letter format. 8. Students will individually compose a letter to the editor for an imaginary Victorian paper from the point of view of the characters they researched. In this letter they will comment on the play. 9. Groups members will proof read each other's letters and make revisions. Application/Closure: Towards the end of the class period the teacher will redirect the students' attention away from the web quest to a brief class discussion on what they have found. What is the most interesting thing you have learned about your chosen character? How does this fact influence the character in general? Based on your knowledge of the play and your character, would your character approve of the play? Do the characters in the play conform to Victorian society norms? Formative Assessment: Students will be assessed throughout this activity based on their performance in group work, class discussion and their completion of the "Developing a Character Profile" worksheet.

## Standards

## Credits

## Other