

Anne Hyde Process Workbook

My contribution to our group presentation comparing *Lovesong* (Morgan, 2011) and *A Doll's House* (Ibsen, 1992) was to research the action, storyline, and subtext and design costumes for some of the characters.

I first worked on the action and the story, re-reading the plays and making notes on the narrative to summarise the story. The action comprises the key moments in the plays, so I had to figure out the plays' essential parts. To do this, I re-read the plays, picking out what I thought were the most powerful or storyline-progressing parts of the play. It is interesting that both plays revolve around family and include strong female leads.

I began researching nuance and subtext because symbolism can be important to set designers as they can use it to make the play more impactful. This can be visual in the scene or costumes or even audibly. Indeed, Thomas (2009) notes that in modern plays, subtext can be more important than dialogue. *Lovesong* and *A Doll's House* have a lot of symbolism, but they are both shown quite differently. In *Lovesong*, the items of symbolism appear in the characters' lines and are sometimes depicted as physical objects. For example, the lines "We need to pick the peaches. They're going soft. Wasps are getting them" (Morgan, 2011, p. 30) and "it's just the starlings" (Morgan, 2011, p. 75). I identified much symbolism relating to autumn, fertility and transformation. In *A Doll's House*, the symbolism is primarily used in Torvald's nicknames for Nora, including "squirrel", "little", "skylark", and "songbird" – all wild creatures whose freedom contrasts with her actual situation. His use of the moniker 'little' also belittles Nora, suggesting her doll-like status in contrast to his patriarchal protector.

Using this research into story and subtext, I worked on the costumes. As this is set in the modern day, I thought it was appropriate to find some old people's clothes in charity shops to help inspire Maggie and Billy's costumes from *Lovesong*. I based my costume for Maggie on brown trousers and a knitted sweater paired with a string of fake pearls (see Appendix 1). While for Billy, I went for blue trousers and a blue shirt (see Appendix 2).

For Nora's costume from *A Doll's House*, I looked at the Norwegian National Museum website online archives (National Museum of Norway). This was to get an idea of what sort of things Norwegians would have worn in and around 1879. While doing this, I found some additional items that I wasn't initially looking for, such as some folded hand fans and some woollen gloves. When I had found some inspiration for the style of outfit, I decided to look for period dolls for inspiration on the colour and details for the costume. I think the coat would be made out of thick, heavy material such as wool as the play is set in winter, and so it would be very cold (see Appendix 3). The coat would also not be worn for very long on stage: only briefly when Nora comes in from outside

before hanging it up and then when she is about to go outside, so there would be no concern about the actor overheating on stage.

The last thing I looked for on their website was examples of Norwegian embroidery of birds to embellish the bottom of the coat and the cuffs. I really like the design I found, as it showed some birds standing and watching a couple of other birds fly away. I associate this with Nora wanting and yearning for more before finally setting herself free and leaving Torvald. The dress could be made from something lighter such as cotton.

The dress would be quite plain because I wanted Nora's outfit to be as doll-like as possible, and the dolls I found had very plain outfits (see Appendix 4). This reinforces the idea that Torvald is the one controlling her and she doesn't have much freedom. Contrary to this, her coat and shoes are decorated a bit more. This is because I feel like Torvald would want to show her off when they go out, so the clothes would need to be more impressive. I also added some symbolism for her eventual freedom into the embroidery on these clothing items because when she leaves, she will be wearing them.

Evaluation

The presentation itself went well. We had some adversities to overcome, especially due to last-minute hospital appointments. I think we dealt with this really well, as we only had a few minutes to sort out the PowerPoint, so that everything made sense.

I really liked looking into the costume from *A Doll's House*. This was because I got to do research into what styles of clothes were popular in 19th century Norway. I also got to look into the typical type of embroidery designs of the time. I found this really interesting and loved being able to incorporate it into my work.

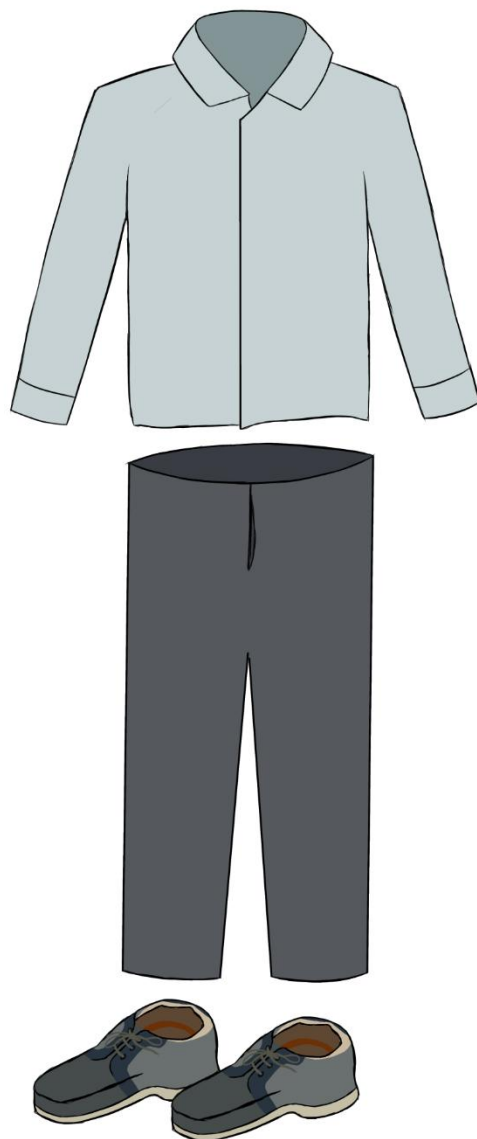
I also really liked looking into the symbolism for both plays, but especially *Lovesong*. Looking at the symbolism from the plays helped me understand the plays on a deeper level. The symbolism can subconsciously show/tell the audience things without the actors having to use words. This is especially true of *Lovesong* as the symbolism of the two different timelines weaving in and out of one another, occasionally crossing over so the characters of the different time periods interact, really brings home the idea of life flashing before Maggie's eyes before her inevitable death. This made it easier for me to present these parts as it's a lot easier to talk about something you are interested in.

Next time, I would love to include more interactive parts in the presentation, both between all the people presenting and between the presenters and the audience, as the other groups had done. I would also like to work on my confidence so I can look up from the script more as I'm presenting, however, I think I did very well with my contribution to the presentation.

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Porcelain doll
Uidentifiseret
1860-tallet



Porcelain doll
Uidentifiseret
1850-tallet



Porcelain doll
Uidentifiseret
1860-tallet



Appendix 4



Porcelain doll
Uidentifiseret
1860-tallet



Porcelain doll
Uidentifiseret
1850-tallet



Porcelain doll
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