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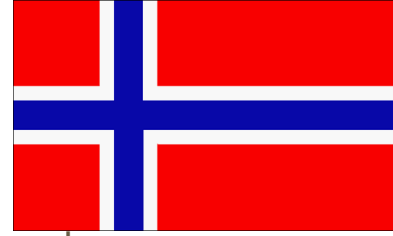
# Women's Suffrage and Feminism at the Time (1880s)

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# Historical Context: Women in Norway



## PRE

- 1854: gained same right to inheritance as their brothers
- From 1863: All unmarried women= legally independent BUT lost independence once married.
- 1879: Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House*, a wife was not legally permitted to borrow money without her husband's consent

## POST

- 1884: Norwegian Association for Women's Rights: first of its kind
- 1888: Marriage Act was passed, declared that women would keep their independence in marriage.
- 1913: Universal Suffrage, Norway was the first country in Europe to do so

*Stemmerettsjubileet*

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# Women's Rights: Economics

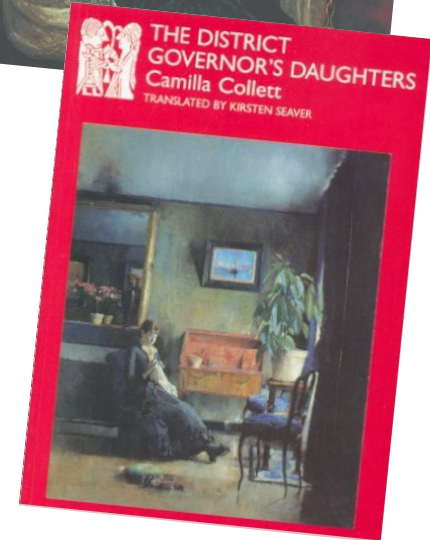
- Poverty forced women into the workplace, early 19th century
- Laws protected women's employment 50 years before Ibsen's play
- Middle of the century: Norwegian women granted same legal protection as male children.
- BUT protections provided were aimed at lower economic classes
- Employment opportunities = low paying domestic jobs, teaching, or clerical work.
- For middle class women, like Nora: the institution of marriage itself restricted freedom
  - “Nils - anyone who's sold herself for somebody else once isn't going to do it again” (2222).



# Marriage and Suffrage: Camilla Collett

First Norwegian feminist, author  
1840s onward: published fiction, memoirs and essays  
*Amtmandens Døtre* (1854–55, “The District Governor’s daughters”)

- Upbringing of middle class young women, purpose= be married
- Prejudiced opinions on womanliness and marriage affect:
  - women’s character
  - relationship between women
- True love between women and men is unattainable in status quo



# Women's Suffrage

Began in earnest in the 1880's

- Fight against traditional ideas about women
- Fear of destruction of traditional home life: women would neglect their duties in the family
- Supporters: women's "motherly" nature is important in politics, especially in social issues
- Gina Krog (feminist and activist): the fact that women were different from men was another reason to give them political rights
- Human rights principles = matter of "women as human individuals and their right to free personal development"

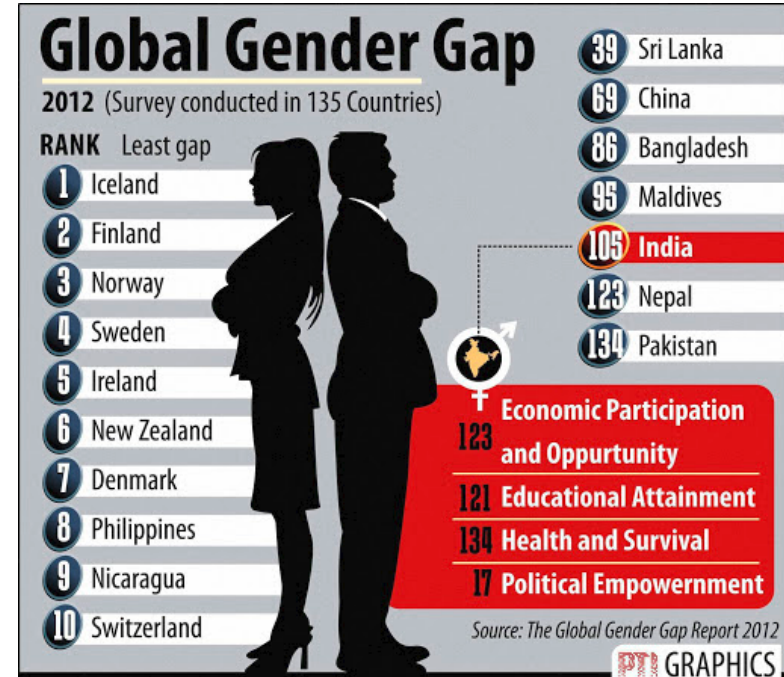


# Suffrage Timeline

- 1898: Universal suffrage for men: unfair for women
- 1901: women gained limited rights to vote in local elections.
- 1910: full suffrage in local elections
- 1913: Universal Suffrage

Today, Norway has one of the smallest “gender gaps”

The Global Gender Gap Index 2012, published by the World Economic Forum, Norway ranks third



# Video Clip

Beginning until 1:47





# Feminism in the Play

18th century writer: Mary Wollstonecraft- essay, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,

- Women are taught to have the “softness of temper, outward obedience, scrupulous attention”. Once accompanied by the gift of beauty, these attributes will ensure them the protection of man.
- Torvald’s words, “You [Nora] can rest easy now; I’ve got wide wings to shelter you with... You’re safe here; I’ll keep you like a hunted dove” (2229).





# Feminism in the Play

Man tries to secure the good conduct of a woman by reducing her to a state of innocence and childhood

- Wollstonecraft: "Children, I grant, should be innocent; but when the epithet is applied to men, or women, it is but a civil term of weakness."
- Torvald treats Nora as a child, forbids her to eat macaroons, makes her dance for him, dress up and recite for him
- *"Putting the macaroon bag in her pocket and wiping her mouth"* (2186).



# Feminism in the Play

The women figures in A Doll's House: socially and psychologically dependent on men in marriage and motherhood

- Mrs. Linde: forced to break up with fiancé and marry another man who could support her and her family
- The nurse: gave up her child to keep her job

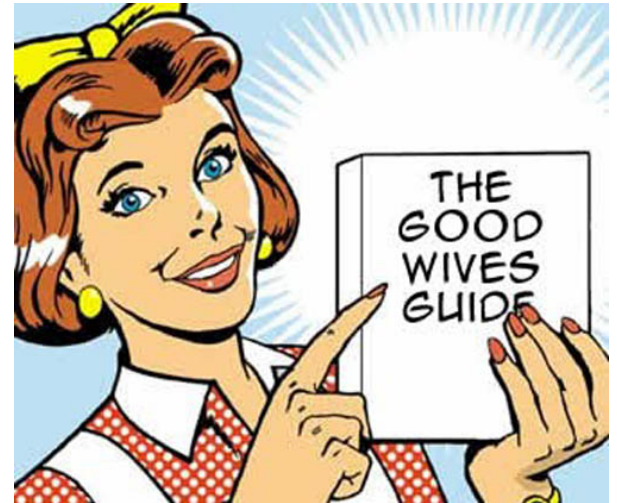
“Don't forget I had a helpless mother and two small brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils; you had such a long road ahead of you then” (2220).

“Wait, tell me, Anne-Marie - I've wondered so often - how could you ever have the heart to give your child over to strangers?” (2205).



# Social and Cultural Context

- During the late nineteenth century, the structure of society was based on patriarchal ideals
  - limited political and economic power
  - if anything was changed, would result in a social revolution
- “Bourgeois respectability”
  - financial success
  - upward mobility
  - freedom from financial debt
- Female expectations
  - marriage and motherhood



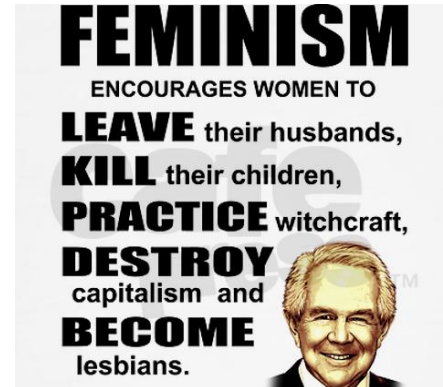
# Social and Cultural Context

- Patriarchal ideals
  - "...how painfully humiliating for him if he ever found out he was in debt to me. That would just ruin our relationship" (2194).
- "Bourgeois respectability"
  - "Won't it be lovely to have stacks of money and not a care in the world?" (2190).
- Female expectations
  - "Tell me, is it really true that you weren't in love with your husband? Why did you marry him then?" (2191).



# Critiques and Ibsen's Response

- Play went against societal norms
  - advocated feminism and women's rights
  - provoked strong criticism and support
    - upset conservatives and anti-feminists
    - liberals and feminists approved
- Ibsen's response
  - denied speculations that the play was about feminism
  - intent was to focus on humanism
  - metaphor for individual freedom



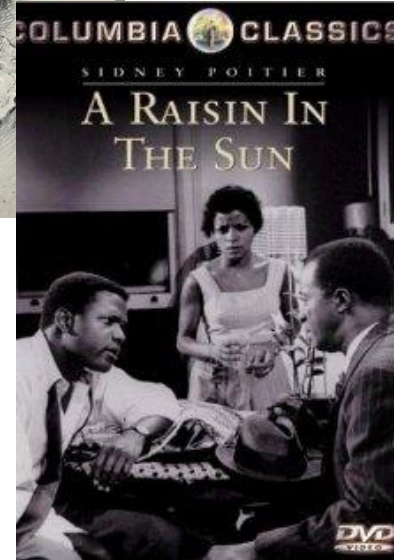
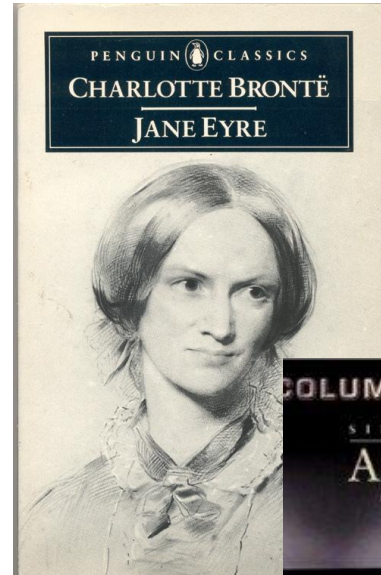
# Connections

## Jane Eyre

- One of the first feminist novels
- She fights against patriarchal domination

## A Raisin in the Sun

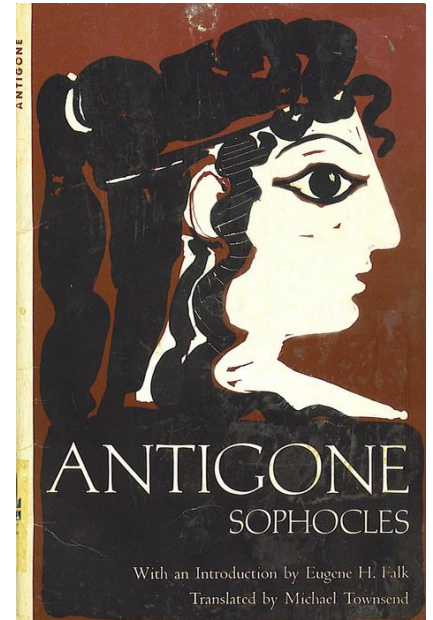
- Beneatha



# Connections

## Antigone

- Antigone breaks mold of stereotypical gender role





**LOOK FOR THIS BUZZER**



# Question 1

What year did Norway grant universal suffrage to all?



# Discussion Question 1

How are historical settings and beliefs portrayed in the play?



# Question 2

Name one characteristic of “Bourgeois respectability”



# Discussion Question 2

To what extent do you think Ibsen intentionally or unintentionally advance the feminist movement?



# Question 3

List and relate two stories to this play

# Question 4

Describe the traditional attitude towards women during this time period.



# Discussion Question 3

How does the development of characters in the play portray the norm in Norwegian society in the 1880s?

