

Norwegian Socio-Economic Class Structure in 1879

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What does socio-economic status mean?

“Socioeconomic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control” (American Psychological Association).

Socio-Economics of 1879

- Class Structure
 - Upper Class
 - Mostly received money from inheritance, aristocracy, most did not have to work
 - Middle Class
 - Bankers, shopkeepers, merchants, ect.
 - Lower Class
 - Physical work, dirty jobs, lack of education



Socio-Economics of 1879 Continued

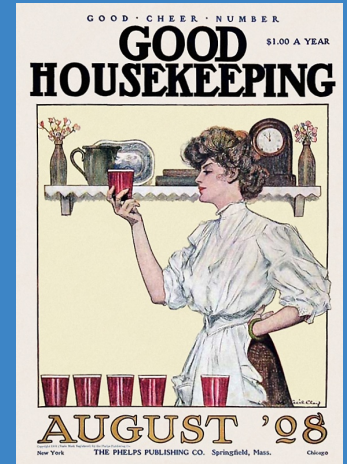
- A great economic boom occurred in 1843 and lasted until 1875
 - Norway became an independent nation in 1814
 - The country became more industrialized
 - Overreaching success in foreign trade, mining and growth in agricultural productivity
 - The middle class was positively affected, for it got larger and prospered
 - “A comfortable room, tastefully but not expensively furnished” (2186).

Socio-Economics of 1879 Continued...

- With the economic boom came an obsession with money
 - “Does your husband’s love for you run so thin? He knows everything I can expose you to, and all the same he dares to” (2214).
- Expectations also formed within households as the middle class was developed
 - Commonly referred to as “bourgeois respectability”
 - These expectations include male and female gender roles
 - The middle class was also to have maids and servants
 - “...and through it a delivery boy is seen, holding a Christmas tree and a basket, which he gives to the maid who let him in” (2186).

Women's Roles

- Expected to be housewives, not much bigger role
 - Helmer: "Is it my little squirrel bustling about?" (I. 2186).
- No social, political, or house power. Expected to be under control the husband at all times under all circumstances.
 - Helmer: "That is like a woman! [...] you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing" (I. 2187).



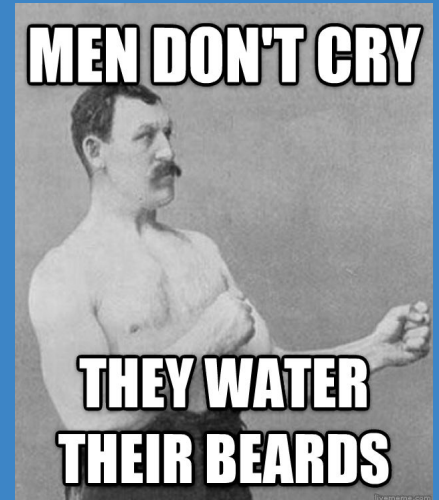
Women's Roles Continued

- They're main responsibilities were to make the house aesthetically pleasing, and to raise the children, however if they were wealthy, they often hired help to do this for them.
 - Helmer: "Come, Mrs. Linde-- this place is unbearable now for anyone but mothers" (I. 2198).
- Overall, Women were meant to please their husband.
 - Mrs. Linde: "I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for anymore" (I. 2192).



Men's Roles

- Men were expected to provide needs for the entire household
 - NORA: "How painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything!" (I. 2194)
 - HELMER: "You're joking, my little Nora! You won't—you won't? Am I not your husband—?" (III. 2224)



Women's Suffrage in Norway

- In 1885, The Women Suffrage Association was found under the leadership of Ms. Gina Krog
- In 1901, women were allowed to vote only if them or their husband paid taxes exceeding a certain amount.
- In 1913, women were finally allowed to vote without any requirements.
 - Norway is the first independent country that introduces universal suffrage



Ibsen's Response

- “A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society, it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men, and with counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from the male point of view” (Ibsen/McFarlane 90).
 - Written in *A Doll's House* Notes in 1878
- Ibsen allowed Nora's character to defy these social norms in her actions
 - “You certainly won't tell my husband that I owe you money?” (2200).

Gender Stereotypes Activity

Discussion Questions

Where do we find traditional female stereotyping between characters dialogue in Dolls House? Use textual evidence?

Discussion Questions

How and who breaks the female stereotype in Doll House? It is more than one person? If so, who is bolder in breaking tradition? Use textual evidence.

Discussion Questions

Where do we find traditional male stereotyping between characters dialogue in Dolls House? Use textual evidence.

Discussion Questions

Does any character break the male stereotype in Dolls House? If so, who and how? If not, how do they assert their masculinity?

Hint: Dr Rank's conversation with Nora

Works Cited

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