



Pearson
Edexcel

GCSE (9–1) Drama

Prescribed Text Guide

A Doll's House, Henrik Ibsen
(adapted by Tanika Gupta)

Issue 1





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Recommended edition for Component 3

A Doll's House, Henrik Ibsen, adapted by Tanika Gupta – ISBN 9781350261075 (Oberon Books Ltd).

Summary:

Calcutta 1879. The British Empire is at its height, ruling a quarter of the globe, including India. The play follows the story of Niru, a young Bengali woman who is married to Tom Helmer, an English lawyer in his early 40's. Tom is keen to advance his career and appears to completely adore Niru, who he treats as a naïve and 'very pretty but expensive pet!'.

The entire play takes place in various rooms in the Helmer household between Christmas Eve and Boxing Day. While the story begins with excitement for the forthcoming festivities, it soon becomes clear that Niru has a dark secret – one that will have implications for all of the characters that visit the house, and which will expose Tom's true personality.

The play explores not only gender equality, but also that of racial equality, conquest and the ethics of colonisation, adding fascinating questions to Ibsen's original text.

Act 1

Scene 1.

The Helmers' living room.

Niru returns from the market with presents to give out at Christmas. She shares jelibis with Uma, her servant before she calls Tom to show him what she has bought. He playfully scolds her for spending money. Niru dismisses his concerns, saying they could borrow money until Tom's pay rise comes through. However, Tom is adamant that they will never borrow money, sending Niru into a sulk.


To cheer her up, Tom gives her fifty rupees, showing his attitude towards money and also towards his wife. When he inquires what Niru would like for Christmas, she persuades him to give her money. As he agrees, he accuses her of looking guilty and going to the sweet shop while at the market. Niru lies, denying the accusation and claiming she 'wouldn't dream of going behind your back'. The scene ends with Uma announcing the arrival of two visitors – Mrs Lahiri for Niru and Dr Rank for Tom.

Scene 2.

The Courtyard.

Niru fails to immediately recognise her old friend Mrs Krishna Lahiri who she has not seen for approximately ten years. Mrs Lahiri is now a bitter widow and in a desperate financial and social situation. While Niru excitedly tells Mrs Lahiri about her life, she also explains how she is viewed by some of Tom's English friends and colleagues, clearly indicating a racial divide where she is ignored and treated as uneducated.

The conversation moves to talking about Niru's late father (Baba) and, how at the time of his death, Tom was also dangerously ill. On the advice of Doctors, Tom and Niru moved to



the fresh air of Darjeeling, spending a year at the hill station and leaving Calcutta just a few days after the death of Niru's father. While Tom recuperated, Niru experienced 'the saddest time of my marriage'. Mrs Lahiri tells Niru how her mother had been ill, and she needed to care for her and her younger brothers. To do so, she married a wealthy man in a marriage of convenience. However, her husband died, and creditors took all of his money and assets, leaving Mrs Lahiri with nothing and forcing her to work. Now her mother has died, her brothers grown up and many in society look down on a woman who has to work. She is exhausted and asks Niru if Tom might find her some work. Niru promises to ask Tom and invites Mrs Lahiri inside for some food.

Scene 3.

Tom Helmer's study.

Dr Rank is reading a local newspaper which is calling for Hindus and Muslims to join for political action against the British. Tom responds by claiming Britain is spreading 'culture, knowledge, trade, communication between the states' and introducing English as a common language.

Dr Rank counters with claims from the newspaper that the British have brought 'slavery, famine, prison, battle and an undermining of the Indian psyche'. As Dr Rank continues to point out how many of the British establishment regard themselves as superior to the indigenous population, Tom recalls how he successfully defended Captain Elliot, who kicked his Indian servant to death but who was found not guilty and a verdict of 'accidental death' was recorded. While Tom felt tortured about his role in the event, he goes on to state his anger at the way some of his English colleagues refer to Niru. Dr Rank continues to express increasingly anti-British views while highlighting his admiration for the extraordinary culture, language and history of India.

Scene 4.

Helmets' Living room.

As Mrs Lahiri eats, Niru begins to tell her of a big secret she has been keeping. She reveals that the money needed to pay for Tom's treatment and recovery from his illness did not come from her father but from a loan. Mrs Lahiri is shocked as it is illegal for a woman to borrow money without her husband's consent and Niru again indicates how 'unbending' Tom is regarding money matters – that he would feel humiliated to know that he owed anything to his wife. Admitting how anxious she has felt, Niru explains how she has worked and saved to repay the debt, fantasising that she will suddenly come into money. She is relieved that Tom will be earning more money – meaning she can repay the debt and Tom will never know.

Their conversation is interrupted by a visitor – Kaushik Das from the Tax Office who claims to have routine business with Tom. Niru appears uncomfortable seeing him. As Das is taken through, he and Mrs Lahiri are visibly shocked to see each other. Mrs Lahiri tells Niru that Das was a former neighbour and they briefly discuss rumours of his unsavoury business dealings.



Scene 5.

Balcony.

Niru and Mrs Lahiri are watching the busy street below, talking about how their lives have changed since they were in school together when Dr Rank enters. Niru introduces him to Mrs Lahiri who explains that she is in town looking for work. When she exclaims that 'One has to live', Dr Rank comments that both the physically and morally wretched all seem to want to prolong their agony – which turns the conversation back to Das, whom Dr Rank believes to be a 'pretty nasty specimen'.

Niru produces the bag of jelebhis, claiming that Mrs Lahiri brought them and insists they each have one. When Tom emerges from his meeting with Das, Niru introduces Mrs Lahiri and forces her to ask Tom for a job at the Tax Office. Tom agrees before leaving, with Dr Rank, to go to his office. Mrs Lahiri also leaves, but not before Niru invites her to join them for supper.

Scene 6.

Helmets' Living room.

Niru is playing hide and seek with her children only to discover Das has entered the house. He reveals he has been sacked by Tom and he wants her help to get his position back. If she refuses, Das will reveal that it was he who lent her the money and that he suspects she has forged her father's signature.

Niru confesses to the forgery but claims she has not influence over Tom's decision. Das threatens to expose the fraud in court unless she persuades her husband to let him keep his job and leaves just before Tom arrives back home. Niru asks him not to dismiss Das, but Tom, again reinforcing his belief in being fair, will hear none of it. He tells Niru how Das forged a signature, deceived his family and is 'morally unfit'. He exits, leaving Niru alone and terrified.

Act 2

Scene 1.

Niru's bedroom.

Niru and Uma are unpacking a torn dance sari that Niru will wear at a party the following evening. Uma is upset that Niru has asked Mrs Lahiri to repair the dress. Mrs Lahiri enquires about Niru's relationship with Dr Rank, believing him to be the rich old man of Niru's fantasies and who lent her the money to pay for Tom's recovery. Niru assures her that he is not but refuses to reveal who it really is.

Mrs Lahiri leaves, promising to discuss it later. Tom enters and Niru tries to use her affection to get him to change his mind about dismissing Das. Frustrated that his wife won't drop the issue, he calls Uma to deliver a letter. After Uma has left with the letter, he reveals that it was Das's dismissal letter. He exits, leaving Niru terrified.



Scene 2.

Courtyard.

Dr Rank startles Niru as she waters plants in the garden. He admits he is terminally ill and is waiting for confirmation from a final test he needs to administer. Rank tells Niru that he will send her his card with a black cross if the prognosis is not good. Niru refuses to believe that he will die but Dr Rank claims his place is already being taken by Mrs Lahiri.

As the conversation progresses, Dr Rank again expresses anti-British ideas and his admiration for India. Niru begins to ask him for advice and help, but before she can go into detail, Dr Rank admits his love for her. Niru is shocked and refuses to share her secret. The awkward conversation is interrupted by Uma announcing the Niru has a visitor.

Dr Rank exits to visit Tom as Das enters to speak with Niru. Das threatens to further blackmail Niru, demanding not just the debt but also that he will not return her IOU. He has a letter for Tom which explains everything. His hatred of the English is clear as he demands that Tom creates a new, higher position for him at the Tax Office, or Das will ruin his reputation by exposing Niru's fraud.

As Das leaves Niru terrified, he places the letter in the locked letterbox for which only Tom has the key. Mrs Lahiri returns with Niru's mended sari and, in a panic, Niru confesses everything. Mrs Lahiri offers to speak to Das, revealing that once, Das would have done anything for her. She tells Niru to stop Tom opening the letter and that she will return with Das, making him demand his letter back before Tom has read it.

As she leaves, Tom enters and Niru prevents him from opening the letterbox by claiming she wants him to help her practice her dance. She succeeds, just as Mrs Lahiri returns, revealing that Das has left town for the evening. However, she will speak to him tomorrow. As the men wait in the dining room, Niru rushes upstairs, followed by Mrs Lahiri.

Scene 3.

Helmets' Living room.

Niru practices her dance in front of Tom, Dr Rank and Mrs Lahiri. As she dances, she becomes increasingly wild, with Tom calling out instructions for her to calm down. As she finishes, she tells Tom that she needs his instructions and, despite her fatigue, she begins to practice wildly again.

Act 3.

Scene 1.

In the house, in the servants' quarters.

Uma and Mrs Lahiri pray at Uma's shrine. Uma asks if there is something wrong with Niru because she has been avoiding spending time with her children. Mrs Lahiri reassures her that Niru is fine, and Uma exits.

Das then enters, summoned by Mrs Lahiri's note. It becomes clear they were once lovers and that Das is bitter because Mrs Lahiri left him for a man with money. Mrs Lahiri explains the desperate situation she was in but suggests they may try again. Das is filled with hope, promising the relationship will make him a different man. They agree to marry and Das



says that he will ask Tom for his letter back. However, Mrs Lahiri stops him, believing that Niru and Tom 'need some honesty'. They part, both full of happiness.

Scene 2.

Helmers' Living room.

Niru and Tom return from the party. Niru wanted to stay but Tom is keen to get home. They find Mrs Lahiri who claims she wanted to see Niru in her dress. However, as soon as Tom is out of the room, Mrs Lahiri tells Niru she has nothing to fear from Das but to confess everything to Tom. Niru refuses but says she does now know what she has to do, knowing that Tom will soon read the letter.

Mrs Lahiri leaves as Tom returns. He is grateful she has gone. He attempts to seduce Niru who moves away from him.

They are interrupted by Dr Rank, who has also been at the party and is now drunk on champagne. His exuberant mood prompts Niru to ask if he has carried out the test and he replies that he has – with a 'good result for doctor and patient – that is certainty'. After complimenting Niru, Dr Rank takes a cigar from Tom and leaves.

Tom then empties the letter box and discovers two calling cards from Dr Rank – one with a black cross on it. Niru reveals that this indicates that Dr Rank has very little time to live, shocking Tom, who holds Niru tightly. She tells him to read the rest of his letters as she goes to bed. He agrees, leaving while reading his letters. Suddenly he returns having read the letter from Das. His fury is directed at Niru as he focuses on how it will ruin his reputation. He insults and shouts at Niru, including some of the negative racial language used by other British colonialists. His trust of her has vanished and, when Uma brings in a letter for Niru, Tom takes it and opens it. When he discovers Das has returned Niru's IOU, his mood immediately changes, claiming that they have both been saved. He immediately burns the document and again begins to speak to Niru as though she were a child, telling her he forgives her. She thanks Tom for his forgiveness, leaving the room to take off her costume.

Scene 3.

Courtyard.

Later that evening, Niru is watering plants in the courtyard. Tom joins her, confused as to why she is not in bed. Niru asks Tom to sit so they can have a proper, 'serious' conversation. She tells Tom that she has been wronged by both him and her father. She admits that she is no longer in love with him and that she will be leaving. He begs her to stay – reminding her of the children.

However, she uses his own words against him, saying that the children will be in much better hands with Uma looking after them. Niru states that she will return to Darjeeling, educate herself and work to become independent. When he asks when this change happened, she tells him it was this evening – when he submitted to Das's demands rather than offering to shield her. She realised then that he was not the man she thought he was. When he claims that no man would give up his honour for the ones he loves, Niru reminds him that countless women have done so. She absolves him of any responsibility, removes her wedding ring and asks Tom to do the same.



As she prepares to leave, she refuses any offers of help and requests that Tom does not even write to her. As Tom remains distraught, Niru leaves.

Scene 4.

Exterior – streets of Calcutta.

Niru removes the veil from her head and walks away, not looking back.



Characters

Niru

Niru initially appears immature and childlike – an image which is reinforced by the way she is treated by her husband and previously by her father. However, small acts of rebellion and hints of manipulation of other characters hint that she may not be quite as innocent as she first seems. As a young Indian woman married to a white British man, she converted to Christianity and faces mistrust and prejudice from all sides. Within the caste system in India at the time, Niru is considered high caste though her status is still lower than that of her husband. As her situation changes, Niru quickly matures and discovers a sense of independence from within.

Tom

As part of the British establishment in India, Tom revels in his comfortable position. While he claims to have high standards of morals, his priorities clearly lie with supporting the Empire. He treats Niru as toy or a child rather than an equal partner and his priority is his own reputation and image. His reaction to reading Das's letter shows Niru his true colours, irrevocably changing their relationship.

Dr Rank

An English doctor who has a fascination and admiration for the Indian culture, Dr Rank has developed a strong dislike of the way the British conduct their affairs in the Empire. As a constant visitor to the Helmer household, he is secretly in love with Niru. He is very aware that his failing health means he does not have long to live and, possibly as a result of this, he does not appear to care how other people view him.

Mrs Lahiri

Mrs Lahiri is an old school friend of Niru's. To support her younger brothers and ill mother, she felt compelled to marry a wealthy man to provide security. However, when he died, his assets were taken by creditors, leaving her with nothing. With her mother passed on and her brothers grown up, Mrs Lahiri was forced to work to survive, being looked down upon by many others in society. Rekindling her relationship with her former lover, Das, she persuades him to cease his blackmail of Niru.

Das

Considered to be morally corrupt, Das has loaned Niru money, only to discover she forged her father's signature – ironically a crime that mirrors his own actions. When he loses his job at the tax office after being sacked by Tom, he uses Niru's fraudulent actions to blackmail her in an attempt to pressure her to influence her husband. When Niru cannot help him, he outlines her actions in a letter to Tom and threatens to reveal the deception in public. Within the caste system in India at the time, Das is considered low caste and Niru is high caste which adds to the tension between the characters. His reconciliation with Mrs Lahiri makes him a changed man and he offers to ask for his unopened letter back. However, the letter acts as the catalyst for Tom and Niru's relationship to unravel.



Uma

The Helmer's maid has looked after Niru since she was a very young child. Highly protective of Niru, she is distrustful of Mrs Lahiri. It is possible she regards Niru as a substitute for the daughter she was forced to abandon due to her being born 'in disgrace'.



Context to *A Doll's House*

The original performance took place at the Theatre Royal Copenhagen, Denmark in December 1879. Tanika Gupta's adaptation was first performed on stage at the Lyric Hammersmith in September 2019. An earlier version of the script was produced as a radio play in 2012.

Students are required to refer to the context **in which the text was created and first performed** as part of their response to sub-question (b)(i). This could be the social, political, context and/or the context to the **first performance**, which for this text **took place in Denmark, in December 1879**. Contextual information relating to the setting of this adaptation in 19th-century Calcutta may be covered in sub-question (b)(ii) and (c). The following contextual information may be of support to students when preparing for this question.

Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House* at a time when western European society was on the verge of a great change. While he claimed the play had not been written to consciously support women's rights, there is no doubt its popularity and controversy opened up a great deal of discussion and debate. It was also inspirational and brought the issue into both the media and politics of the time. Ibsen was seen as champion of feminism and even made a famous speech to the Norwegian Association of Women's Rights in 1898 – nearly 20 years after the play had premiered. Not all countries were so keen to accept the play and Ibsen was furious at being pressured into re-writing the ending for the German production in 1880.

By the time the play was premiered, playwrights had been experimenting and developing with naturalism for several years and Ibsen was at the forefront of this work. The theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski developed his 'System' as a response to the demands of Ibsen's requirements for realism. The play was originally performed on a proscenium arch stage with Ibsen's stage directions listing detailed items of set, stage furniture and props used to create a 'slice of life' on stage, as though audience members were looking through the fourth wall into the Helmers' nineteenth century home.

Tanika Gupta's adaptation is set in the English ruled Calcutta of 1879 and was first performed on stage at the Lyric Hammersmith, London in 2019 using an updated 'slice of life' approach to design. Just as Ibsen's original text questioned the role of women in terms of marriage, motherhood and their place in society, so Gupta's adaptation forced audiences to re-examine the impact of the British Empire on the people of India and has promoted discussions regarding culture, society, perceived superiority and ownership. Directors and designers of this play may use these ideas to encourage audience to acknowledge historical truth as well as to celebrate the diversity of cultures present in today's United Kingdom.



Themes in *A Doll's House*

As with the original production, there are strong feminist themes within *A Doll's House*. Niru is patronised and treated as a child. Her intelligence and maturity is constantly questioned, and she is only given limited opportunity to be independent. Tom indicates his clear expectations of her as a wife and as a mother, sharply defining the boundaries in which Niru is expected to operate. At the start of the play, it appears that Niru is happy with her life, and in comparison, to many other Indians at that time, she certainly lives in relative comfort and security. Her excitement regarding the Christmas festivities shows her behaving as a child rather than an adult, and this behaviour is compounded by Tom's apparently affectionate nicknames for her. Interestingly, Dr Rank reminds Tom he has indicated in the past that 'women should be educated and allowed to earn a living', yet he still requires a little persuasion to employ Mrs Lahiri at the Tax Office. His opinion regarding Niru is less liberal and, while possibly believing he is being protective and loving, he actually demonstrates how he regards women as subordinate and inferior to men. His expectations appear to reinforce stereotypical gender roles and do not consider that women can be more than home makers, mothers and wives. While Niru initially appears to be happy with this arrangement, as her perspective widens, her growing restlessness leads to her question both her own treatment and the truth behind her husband's beliefs.

Moving the action to Calcutta, India, yet keeping the same time period as the original text, has added a very strong new angle to the original narrative. This adaptation asks questions about gender and women's rights, as well as race, equality, colonisation and ownership. At a time when British influence was at an all-time high and the Raj was at its strongest, the relationship between the Helmers represents the relationship between the two countries – unequal and possessive with a large dose of misunderstanding. The class system of the British (personified by Tom and Rank) is mirrored by the caste system of India (shown through the characters of Niru and Das). Niru, having married a white British man is mistrusted by many Indians who were being oppressed by the imperial regime Tom represents, despite or perhaps because of her high caste. Das makes sarcastic reference to his 'fellow Indian' as he threatens to bring Niru down, perhaps partially motivated by his resentful attitude towards his own low caste. However, Niru also indicates to Mrs Lahiri how many of the British wives either ignore her, treat her as an 'imbecile' and talk about Indians as 'heathens'. This adds another dimension to the isolation Niru experiences and indicates how ingrained prejudice can be in all areas of society.

One source of mistrust prevalent in the play comes from the treatment of the Indian people at the hands of the British colonists. Both Das and Dr Rank – men from opposite sides of the regime with contrasting fortunes, highlight their dislike of the methods of governance and control. Das is a clear victim of oppression and the lack of control he feels at the hands of a conquering foreign power has led to bitterness and anger. While powerless to take on the whole regime, these emotions erupt in his blackmailing of Niru, symbolising isolated acts of disobedience carried out by an oppressed people. Dr Rank, with the vantage point of experience and privilege, also holds strong anti-British feelings, recognising that the relationship between the two countries is unbalanced and repressive. His regret at being surrounded by Indian culture and yet not being able to immerse himself within it is palpable and is indicative of the restrictions placed on individuals.



In many ways, all of the characters are victims of societal oppression. Most notably is Niru, trapped physically in her home but metaphorically in her marriage. Tom is bound by his perceptions of how society expect him to behave, whereas Mrs Lahiri is forced to work in a culture which looks down on working women. Das also has to fight against a system which continues to punish him for a crimes committed long in his past.

Finally, questions of morality in terms of colonisation. Dr Rank asks questions regarding the morality of empire and colonialism, with he and Tom discuss both sides of the perspective. Tom lists the positive elements of British rule in India, highlighting how India has benefited from industrialised infrastructure, trade links, education and the introduction of English as a unifying language, whereas Dr Rank counters how many Indians are starving, oppressed and considered inferior to their British rulers, raising the question, can these methods ever be justified?



Resources for *A Doll's House*

There are a wealth of resources available on the Pearson Edexcel website and these are being added to and updated regularly. These resources, including the [Sample Assessment Materials](#), and [specimen paper and mark scheme](#), are free to download.

There is also an informative preface written by Tanika Gupta in the prescribed edition to the text.

Online resources

Original production history and text

[Britannia.com website](#) information

[Original text](#)

[Original production](#) information

Tanika Gupta website links: [Link one](#) and [Link two](#).

[Lyric theatre info and resources](#) – education pack from this adaptation available from the Lyric Hammersmith. Includes synopsis, context and practical activities to explore the text.

Reviews of 2019 Lyric production

[The Arts Desk](#)

[London Theatre Direct](#)

YouTube is an excellent place to find a range of Kathak music and examples of the style of dance Niru practices in Act 2. Traditional Indian ragas can be used to underscore or punctuate the action, build tension or support transitions between scenes.



Practical activities to help prepare for Component 3

The following suggested exercises may help students practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *A Doll's House*, and to have some practical experience of bringing the text to life.

Students must respond to the text as performers, directors and designers, so practical experience of all of these roles will be useful. However, the questions are grouped into two areas:

- activities for performers and for directors of performers
- activities for designers and for directors of production elements.

1. Performers and Directors of Performers: Questions (a)(i), (a)(ii) and (b)(ii)

There are a number of performance elements which will come up across these three questions:

- vocal skills/voice
- physical skills/movement
- non-verbal communication
- stage space and stage directions.

Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each performance element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance, as well as a grasp of how to use these elements as a performer and as a director.

Off-text improvisation is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. For example, a useful exercise would be to create a news report where some of the characters are interviewed for the local paper (depending on the chosen performance context) after reporters are 'tipped off' about events surrounding Niru's leaving at the end of the play. Each character will have a different viewpoint on the revelation that she has left her husband and children. This could be particularly useful for examining the role each of the other characters play in adding to the situation Niru finds herself in. This could also include considering Uma and how her relationship with the other characters is affected. For example, does she blame anyone for Niru leaving?

Past 10 seconds – in this activity, take the characters back in time in stages: 10 seconds before the start of the events of the play, then 10 minutes, then 10 hours. Then take them forward again to show how the established events of the play unfold when the truth regarding Niru's fraudulent deception is revealed.

This kind of activity might be particularly useful as students are first exploring the play.

Hot-seating is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation and to explore motive/objective. It would also help students to consider the journey of the character in the context of the complete text. This would work well to develop understanding of improvisation work early on in the process but would also be an excellent practical revision technique for students.



A more theatrical way of exploring hot-seating might be to combine this exercise with an off-text improvisation. For example, take some of the events as described by Niru – for example, growing up in Calcutta or having to deal with the simultaneous serious illnesses of her father and husband – and devise work around her version of these events in order to develop an understanding of the extent of her desperation.

Exploring voice and vocal skills such as volume, pitch, tone, pace, pause, emphasis, accent and dialect can also help performers and directors of performers to consider character choices. How might vocal choices help the audience understand where characters come from? How might they show an understanding of the character at that moment within the play? Does it make a difference if the British characters speak with a regional UK or RP accent? Does it help to explore a sequence of lines by placing pauses in different places? What impact might delivering the same line in a whisper or raised volume have on the meaning?

Still image and mime are often highly effective in exploring the use of physical skills, non-verbal communication and the use of space. Students could be given the opportunity to look at relationships and emotions within a given moment from the text by creating either a short sequence of mime or a series of still images. Using facial expression, movement, gesture, posture and their proxemics (or position within the performance space) will enhance their understanding of how these characters might be feeling at this moment, or what they might want to achieve.

There are numerous opportunities within the text to explore physical reactions to the interaction between Niru and Tom. For example, their apparent loving relationship at the beginning of the play contrasts significantly with the climactic final scene, where Tom's true colours become clear. Non-verbal communication may communicate subtext and detail about how Niru really feels when being patronised by Tom or in the company of Dr Rank.

Following practical activities, evaluating the ways in which performance skills have been used and asking students to offer reasons for their performance choices verbally after sharing work, will also help students become more confident with the relevant vocabulary.

Rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus is also a helpful activity for students. This focus might be the kind of statement to be found in question (b)(ii) for example, 'Uma appears to dislike Mrs Lahiri'. Assigning the role of director to one student within each group and asking the director to verbally justify or give reasons for the choices made when producing the scene, will help all students to grasp the role of the director and to feel more confident about responding on paper to question (b)(ii).

Once students are more confident in working as a director, or with a student director, further explorative activities might be useful. For example, exploring the use of stage space with the director. The director assigns roles and gives each character a double who feeds lines to the performer, allowing the performers to move around the space without needing to hold a script. The director gives clear suggestions for the use of space and movement to the performers. This could also be applied to vocal and/or physical skills.



2. Designers and Directors of Production Elements: Questions (b)(i) and (c)

There are six production/design elements which will come up across these two questions:

- staging
- set
- props and stage furniture
- costume
- lighting
- sound.

Three of these will be possible options on each question with all six appearing on the paper each year. Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each production/design element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance. A grasp of how the differences in approaching these elements as a director and as a director will also be valuable.

It might be useful to set up a production meeting and pitch for your students. In this model, for example, a small group of five could consist of a director, set, costume, sound and lighting designers. The director then asks important questions to each member of the production team in order to develop a creative concept for a production of the play and then sells a potential 'theatrical' pitch to the teacher (producer or 'dragon' in order to secure funding).

The teacher should support students by ensuring that the students all have a good understanding of the text and of appropriate performance styles for this text. Each member of each production team must justify their ideas by referring to key moments from the play. This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the written examination.

The original play was first performed in 1879 with this adaptation being first performed in 2019 but set at the time of that original performance in colonial India rather than Norway. Students may struggle to successfully adapt the setting, and time period, as this is specified within and integral to the text. Students who wish to update the play are most likely to succeed if adapting their approach, based on ideas about the first performance, rather than the setting. Designers/directors will also need to think about how their chosen performance style will be supported through design and about how design elements will be used to time passing and the increase in tension throughout the play. Designers/directors will also need to think about how their chosen performance style will be supported through design and about how design elements will be used to symbolise key themes and build tension throughout the play.

Creating a model box or stage plan of a potential set design is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene or episode will be played in a potential space, and to choose a specific stage. By creating this visually they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas when writing about set, stage furniture or staging in particular. *A Doll's House* was originally staged end on/in



a proscenium arch with a naturalistic (for the time) set, but students may choose to change the staging and approach to set, for example, using symbolic set and stage furniture items to emphasise cultural references, and the changes in location.

Exploring different music and sound effects for key moments is another effective way of considering how sound design can play an important role in the development of a key idea of theme. There are a number of sound cues within the text already and these could be created live or using recorded sound. Similarly, there are opportunities for music and sound to be used to create atmosphere and/or location, for example, consider the sounds from the street or Uma's shrine. How might these punctuate the narrative and support moments of tension or revelation? What theatrical impact is created when you explore the use of different sound effects at different volumes? Does music or sound effects underscore key speeches, for example – Dr Rank revealing his illness or the moment Das and Mrs Lahiri reconnect, offering both characters an opportunity for a better life?

If students have access to different lighting effects, it might be useful to explore key moments in different lighting states. There are a number of lighting changes and effects within the play text, and these could be created using colour, intensity and specific lighting effects such as gobos and spotlights. Although the play is set primarily in one house, the lighting state in your interpretation does not have to remain the same, considering more abstract lighting at moments during the play. Different kinds of lantern could be used to create shadows/suspense and to emphasise key themes.

If students do not have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches. There is software available online that will help you to create a virtual set and lighting grid for a production of the play. Students could also have a look at images from the 2019 productions as well as previous adaptations and lighting designs to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact.

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is designing potential costumes and props. Research is key and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. Students do not have to be great artists to create great designs. Students could be asked to link their intentions verbally with the initial production, as they will need to do in question (b)(i), either because they are adopting a similar approach or because they are developing different ideas. Costume designers will need to think about how both the chosen time period, the performance style, cultural considerations and characterisation/status will be supported through the style of the costume for each character.

While the majority of these activities will result in informal sharing within the class, using the set text as the basis for more formal performance work is also worth considering. All adaptations and translations of *A Doll's House* are prohibited texts for Component 2. However, students might complete a mock performance from text in year 10 using extracts from their prescribed text. This will not only support performance and design skills; it will also help students to become confident with staging extracts from the play for an audience.