

Lies and deceit

Ibsen

- For Nora, deception is power, evident in her introduction as a 'little spendthrift' behind Torvald's back. Nora is able to exert power by deceiving him, despite his best efforts to control her.
- The outward trappings of Nora and Torvald's lifestyle are deceptive, a shallow disguise of endemic problems; this notion is encapsulated by the symbolic deterioration of the Christmas tree.
- The luxurious 'doll's house' itself is a deceptive image, resembling more of a 'gilded cage' than a home.
- Deception is shown to ultimately lead to downfall, as in the cases of Krogstad, Nora and finally Torvald. Mrs Linde forewarns of the corrosiveness of deception, stating that 'all this secrecy and deception, it can't go on.' Yet, for those enshrouded in deception, the revelation of truth appears to be 'black, icy-cold water.'
- Deception is the foundational basis of 'A Doll's House'; Nora's insistence that she 'would never do anything' contradicting Torvald's will is shown to be a lie by the very fact that their very existence relies on her forgery. Nora's lies progress throughout the play, at first they seem innocuous and irrelevant, such as the simple lying 'I ate at a macaroon or two.' Yet this mild undercurrent of deceit hints to the endemic weakness in the Helmer's marriage, showing lies to be an ultimately malignant force.
- Torvald uses corrosive imagery in his insistence that living a life of lies 'spreads disease and infection.' There is an irony in both this and the consideration that criminality is hereditary, considering his marriage is based on lies.
- Ibsen portrays characters in 'A Doll's House' as obsessed with their appearances, which are maintained to avoid ugly realisms. Torvald's sole attention is on that of forming a respectable appearance; as the play progresses, Torvald's control over the well-formed deception of outward contentment is stripped away by Nora, who denies her role as a 'little songbird' and gains a sense of independence.
- A parallel occurs between Nora and Krogstad, in their mutual acts of forgery. Their shared criminal deceit sparks the unravelling of both their lives; Krogstad's reputation is ruined, and Nora is forced to reevaluate the society within which she exists.
- Ibsen's 'Concern with the state of the human soul cuts across class and gender lines.' – Gail Finney

Coleridge

- C – Coleridge first introduces Christabel through the superficiality of her 'exceedingly beautiful' appearance. There is an assumption that beauty and innate goodness intrinsically correlate, yet Geraldine's beauty is utilised as a manipulative source of power over Sir Leoline.
- C – The repeated description of Geraldine's voice being 'faint as sweet' gives the impression of this deceptive attribute being associated with femininity – women are deceptive
- C – Geraldine's wickedness is emphasised through the parallel between her evil deceit and Christabel's pure goodness. Christabel's portrayal as the tragic victim of Geraldine's manipulation is furthered by her willingness to 'comfort fair Geraldine' to whom 'Christabel stretched forth her hand' in naïve kindness. Christabel's unselfish affection is returned by deceitful trickery.
- AM – Coleridge presents external appearances to be deceptive in his presentation of the Albatross, whose death appears not first beneficial to the sailors in its welcoming of a 'fair breeze.' This rejection exposes the fickleness of the sailors, who repeatedly praise the Mariner, a moral lesson that the trappings of this world are not indicative of reality. The Mariner eventually realised that there is 'water water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.'
- AH – The Harp can only be played through the use of the wind, this is Coleridge's caution of our dependence on human intelligence; in reality, we are reliant on the power of nature.
- KK – Coleridge presents the illusion of control as deceptive; Kubla believes that he can impose himself upon the vast natural landscape by surrounding it with 'walls and towers', creating pruned gardens. These man-made creations contrast with 'caverns measureless to man' and 'forests ancient as the hills'; the man-made cannot withstand the test of time and will cease to exist the 'ancient voices prophesying war.'
- The political turmoil surrounding the French Revolution had set in motion intense and urgent discussing concerning the nature of society.
- "We can only regret the publication of them, as affording a proof that the Author over-rates the importance of his name." – Josiah Conder, 1816
- Coleridge's poetry "produces an aura which defies definition" – Virginia Radley