

## Author

- wrote it in 1890
- well-established but highly controversial dramatist
- road to success had been paved with deprivation and hardship

## Themed questions:

- scandal and reputation
- courage and cowardice
- duty and responsibility
- Appearances
- good and evil
- gender roles
- child
- victimization

## Scandal quotes:

- “But what do you think people will say about you, Thea?” “Oh, they’ll just have to say what they please.”
- It is very unusual for women back in the era to leave her marriage, she is comparably more courageous than Hedda.
- doesn’t let Lovborg call her by her old last name

## Courage quotes:

- Hedda: I suppose you mean he’s got more courage than the rest?
- Tesman: No, good Lord ... he just can’t keep himself under control at all, you know.
- Tesman sees Lovborg’s drinking as lack of self-control, however, Hedda sees it as a way to be wild and free, with “vine leaves in his hair”. This further illustrates Tesman’s character as constrained by certain morals, and much less of a risk-taker than Lovborg.
- (Courageous because she has done something no one else would do it voluntarily at the time given her circumstances, cowardice because in the time she is alive, she is scared of scandal. thea is more courageous, she leaves her husband and inspires others) Her intention of committing suicide can be explained as a way to transcend her previous beliefs. In reality, people keep up appearances and avoid scandals. People say extreme things but they do not do them. As Brack concludes in the play, “People don’t do such things!” Hedda challenges social norms in a way to prove to people around her and society that this is not the life she deserves.

## Character-based questions:

- Hedda
- Tesman
- Thea
- Judge Brack
- Lovborg

## Judge Brack

- the triangle
- full of smart, witty remarks
- picks on information that is not explicit (unlike the oblivious Tesman), very calculating
- only character that has control over Hedda momentarily
- “But, good God Almighty! People don’t do such things!”

#### Tesman

- precious, irreplaceable manuscript
- implies his admiration for Lovborg and feels sorry for him as he lost such an important thing

#### Hedda

- yearns to break free from a life dictated by others
- “But what do you think people will say about you, Thea?” “Oh, they’ll just have to say what they please.”
- Hedda is amazed by Mrs. Elvsted’s open break with social conformity in abandoning her husband.
- doesn’t consider cheating as an option (she only jokes around with Brack but also said she will “never jump out” of the “train”, which metaphorically represents her life journey, people coming and going but she will never leave, meaning she will stay with Tesman to be looked after.)
- formal, cold and rejects feelings and emotions
  - [offers her hand] when Miss Tesman greets her with passion
  - [Her eyes are steel grey, and cold, clear, and dispassionate.]
  - when Brack mentions love, she said “Ugh...don’t use that glutinous word!”
  - “Good gracious no ... I wouldn’t dream of it. But I asked if you’d had a good time.” when Tesman wants her to be worried about him after the party
- doesn’t give in to affairs with Brack or Lovborg due to fear of scandal
- rejects motherhood (various times she avoids the topic of her pregnancy)
  - [curtly interrupting]. I’m exactly the same as I was when we left.
  - Don’t shout like that. The maid can hear you. (again, distant, refers to Berte as “the maid” and her own husband as “Tesman”)
  - [clenches her hands as though in desperation]. Oh, it’ll kill me ... it’ll kill me, all this! (she can’t stand that Tesman said it’s love and complains about how she has to state everything explicitly to make him understand)
  - “Brack: But then when you’re faced with ... what I may ... perhaps a little pompously ... refer to as a sacred and ... and exacting responsibility?” in which hedda responded “no responsibilities for me, thank you!”
- So that silly little fool has had her fingers in a man’s destiny
- For once in my life I want to feel that I control a human destiny (a.k.a Lovborg)
- vine leaves (she has a romantic and unconventional view of Lovborg, demonstrates her longing for wild, unpredictable men rather than Tesman who is domesticated and conservative)

#### Character comparison:

- Tesman and Lovborg

- Hedda and Thea

#### Tesman and Lovborg

- George is conventional. Lovborg is a risk-taker. He writes about the future - the unknown - which shocks George, who **goes about life carefully not breaking any boundaries**. Hedda was involved with Lovborg, because he is exciting, and she seeks excitement. She married George because she was getting old, couldn't continue to live as "General Gabler's little girl", and was expected to marry someone 'stable' like George.
- historical cultural civilization versus the future

#### Hedda and Thea

- Thea runs away from husband; more courageous
- jealous of her creation with Lovborg and later on Tesman
- Mrs. Elvsted's inspiration of George and her plans to move in with Miss Tesman complete a new triangle excluding Hedda

#### Key plots:

- Judge Brack flirting with Hedda in Act II, we got to know about her reason to marry Tesman and Brack's intention to start an affair
- Hedda burns the manuscript
- Hedda convinces Lovborg to commit suicide and do it beautifully by giving him a pistol
- Lovborg shot himself in the abdomen accidentally
- Brack knows about her involvement in Lovborg's tragedy and threatens her with that piece of information
- in order to break away from her entrapment, she kills herself

#### Synonyms:

##### trapped in society

- social confinement
- society's standard/expectation
- aware of life's absurdity
- yearns to break free from a life dictated by others
- subjection to social forces
- "Life for Hedda is a farce which isn't worth seeing through to the end" -Ibsen
- flinch at Tesman's every touch
- snigger conspiratorially with Brack at her husband's "academic" pretensions
- views herself with the same sardonic detachment
- toys with others because she can find no solace or entertainment in life

##### foil

- contrast
- comparison
- mirror

words to describe Hedda

aristocratic	hard to please	higher-class
brusque	rude	ill-mannered
cold	distant	formal
calculating	scheming	devious
unpredictable	cynical	complex
envious	begrudge (verb)	resentful

Suicide:

- done out of despair, cowardly
- transcended her previous beliefs
  - she used to be in fear of scandal like brack said
- transcended her trapped situation
  - beautiful death, achieved her own aesthetic values
  - no longer a woman carrying a baby
  - no longer a prisoner in her own house (“compartment”)
  - no longer a woman who marries someone she doesn’t love
  - no longer have someone like Brack overpowering her
- far-reaching power that her own self-destruction leads almost inevitably to the destruction of the other characters’ lives

Character	Quote	Analysis
Hedda and Brack	“Fortunately, the nuptial journey is at an end ...” “The jouney’ll be a long one ... a long one yet. I’ve just come to a stopping-place in line.”	Hedda seizes on Brack’s mention of a literal journey - their honeymoon trip that she and Tesman just returned - and transforms it into a metaphor to express her dissatisfaction with how her life has become. She views her flirting with Brack as only a temporary state of affair. <b>Ironically</b> , the only “stopping-place” Hedda will arrive to end her suffer is her death.
Hedda, Thea, Lovborg	Hedda: Oh courage... oh yes! If only one had that... Then life might be livable, in spite of everything.	Hedda expresses her desire to see courage within others and herself, a <b>recurring motif</b> in the drama.

	—Act Two	<b>Ironically</b> , of course, her suicide at the play's end shows the ultimate failure to live and act courageously
Hedda, Mrs. Elvsted	<p>Mrs. Elvsted: You've got some reason for all this, Hedda!</p> <p>Hedda: Yes, I have. For once in my life I want to feel that I control a human destiny.</p> <p>Mrs. Elvsted: But surely you do already?</p> <p>Hedda: I don't, and I never have done.</p> <p>—Act Two (p. 226)</p>	Associated with Hedda's professed desire for courage is her stated desire for control, not only of her own fate but also the fates of those around her. Ibsen suggests that the desire to grasp and wield such control is actually a mask for failure to recognize one's own vulnerability and subjection to social forces.
Lovborg, Mrs. Elvsted	<p>Lövborg: I've torn my own life to pieces. So I might as well tear up my life's work as well.</p> <p>Mrs. Elvsted: And you did that last night!</p> <p>Lövborg: Yes, I tell you. Into a thousand pieces. And scattered them out in the fjord. A long way out. At least the water's clean and salt out there. They'll drift with the current and the wind. And after a while they'll sink. Deeper and deeper. Like I will, Thea.</p> <p>Mrs. Elvsted: I want you to know, Lövborg, what you've done to the book... For the rest of my life it'll be for me as though you'd killed a little child.</p> <p>—Act Three (p. 243)</p>	This exchange establishes Lövborg's manuscript as a concrete symbol of the future, a future that, through Hedda's rash action, Mrs. Elvsted and Lövborg will now never realize. It adds further moral weight to Hedda's actions, for what she has done is now, in the play's logic, equivalent to murder.
Hedda	<p>It's a liberation [for me] to know that an act of spontaneous courage is yet possible in this world. An act that has something of unconditional beauty.</p> <p>—Hedda, Act Four (p. 258)</p>	This statement is Hedda's evaluation of Lövborg's actions when Hedda is led to believe that Lövborg has shot himself. It shows the audience Hedda's fundamental misidentification of

		impulsive destructiveness (as in her own suicide, shortly to transpire) with courage and control.
Hedda	Everything I touch seems destined to turn into something mean and farcical. —Hedda, Act Four (p. 259)	These words form one of Hedda's truer statements in the course of the play. Hedda, however, never explores the reasons that this dynamic should be so in her life. The context of the play as a whole suggests that it is due to her refusal to grapple with the consequences of her actions, her refusal to grow and become more than General Gabler's daughter.
Hedda, Brack	Hedda [with determination]: "I'd sooner die!" Brack [smiles]: People say such things. But they don't do them."	This exchange emerges as an ironic foreshadowing of the play's falling action; Hedda does, of course, kill herself in the end. Hedda's action is also a way to prove herself to Brack and the people in society that she is brave enough to do the things that are considered untypical in society. (her way of rebelling against social expectations)
Hedda and Brack	Hedda: And so I am in your power, Mr. Brack. From now on I am at your mercy. Brack: Dearest Hedda... believe me... I shall not abuse the position. Hedda: In your power, all the same. Subject to your will and demands! No longer free! —Act Four (p. 262)	Hedda here expresses her revulsion at being under anyone's control but her own. While self-autonomy is surely a worthy goal, Ibsen's play suggests that we must all come to some sort of peace with the extent to which we all live dependent on forces beyond our control and interdependent with other people.