

- **Some statements and questions for your consideration and exploration in points 1 and 2. Come to class next time with written notes, ready to discuss these.**
- **Point 3 is an essay question, which you should answer.**

1. Do you think this is a play about:

- Class
- Society
- Gender
- Self and identity
- Ambition
- Norway in the nineteenth century

You do not have to choose just one, but you should be able to rank them into order of significance within the play and you must be able to justify your choices. Look at the notes below to help you.

**Class:** Hedda certainly seems to have married beneath her, in that we get the impression she comes from an upper class, wealthy background. Why then has she married George Tesman, who she seems so miserable with? What clues are there in the play that she has married into the middle classes (or Bourgeoisie)?

What does it mean to be a member of the Bourgeoisie? Education, employment and wealth. How is this different from the Aristocracy that Hedda seems to originate from? What clues are there that she is from the upper classes?

Which characters do you think are supposed to be middle class and which upper class? What about Berta, the maid?

**Society:** Is this important? Is this separate from class? Is this to do with what is acceptable and what isn't? What is the society that George and Hedda Tesman inhabit? Where do Eilert Lovborg and Judge Brack fit into this picture? What about Mrs Elvsted? Does it matter that Eilert Lovborg gets drunk at the stag party or that he visits the prostitutes afterwards?

**Gender:** How important are the gender roles in the play? Does Hedda Gabler have any power? How does she gain this? Why do you think she does it? What do you think her opportunities are in the play (and in the future)? What contrasts can we draw between Hedda, Aunt Julie and Mrs Elvsted? What opportunities do the women in the play have? What roles do the men in the play have? Compare and contrast George Tesman, Eilert Lovberg and Judge Brack. What similarities and differences are there?

**Self and Identity:** Who is Hedda Gabler? Why is she still known by her maiden name? What sort of role does her father play? What ambitions does Hedda have? What motivates her? Does she appear to have any aspirations? What sort of person is she? How does Hedda Gabler have any 'fun'?

**Ambition:** Who has ambition in the play and how is it gained? Do you think George Tesman does? What are his interests? Do they seem a worthwhile pursuit? What is noticeable about his work? How might you summarise his ambitions? What about Aunt Julie – does she have ambitions? What are they? Does Hedda have any ambition? What might this suggest about her? Does Eilert Lovborg have ambitions?

**Norway in the nineteenth century:** time for some research! Find out what you can about the way society operated; how the country was governed; who was in charge; what the main industry was; what fears and hopes the country had.

2. There are a number of props which can be viewed as very important. Look back through Act One and decide what significance can be attributed to:
  - The drawing room in which all the action of the play takes place
  - The portrait of General Gabler
  - George's slippers
  - Hedda's piano
  - General Gabler's pistols
  - The glass door
  
3. Is Hedda Gabler a manipulative, powerful protagonist or a troubled, powerless character? Discuss.