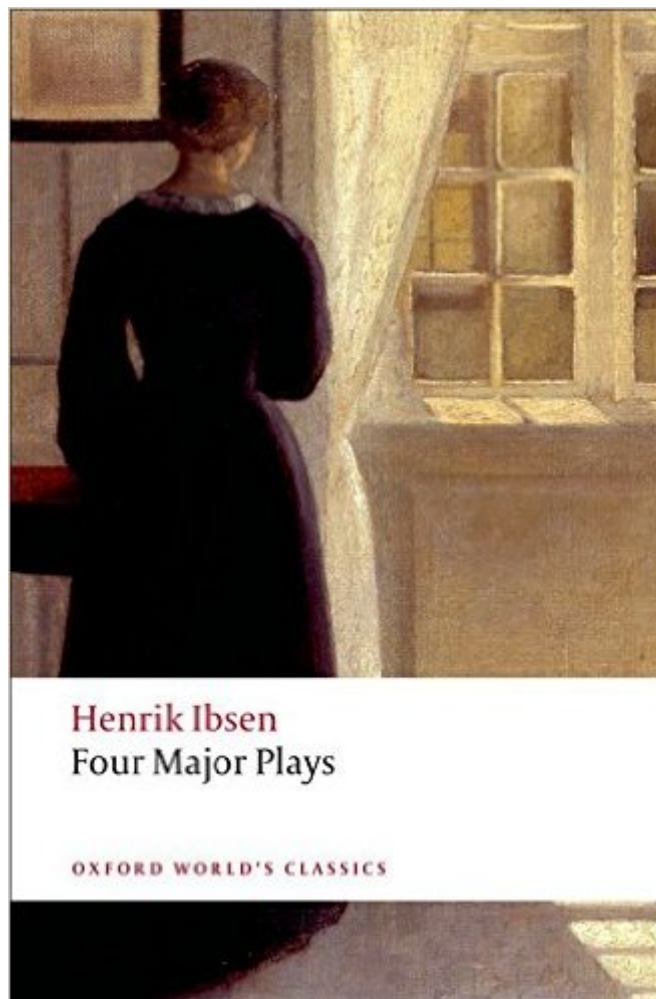


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Four Major Plays: Doll's House; Ghosts; Hedda Gabler; And The Master Builder (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

Taken from the highly acclaimed Oxford Ibsen, this collection of Ibsen's plays includes *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *The Master Builder*. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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Customer Reviews

It is not very likely that George Bernard Shaw knew he was writing the play that would become one of the seminal romantic comedies of the 20th when he penned 'Pygmalion'. The play is delightful, with borrowed elements from many genres. There is comedy and romance, above all, but there is also a very clear social critic -- and even a Marxist idea of class struggle. What only enhances the reading of this masterpiece. Professor Henry Higgins is a linguistic expert who is much more interested in how people say the words rather than what they say. He ends up taking a bet that he is able to transform a simple cockney flower seller, Eliza, into a sophisticated and refined young lady, who would be able to fool the Queen herself. To succeed in such a move he claims he will change only the way she speaks. To work on Eliza he puts her up in his house and starts polishing her speech. This is not an easy job, because what the girl speaks is not English, but a language she has developed herself. After some time, the Professor decides to introduce her to a group of friends,

without mentioning her backgrounds. At first the meeting is blast. Although Eliza can use a fine language it is clear she has not backgrounds to develop and keep up a conversation. And her behavior ends up being the laughing stock. But one of the guests notices how beautiful the girl is. Higgins feels sort of jealous and this could lead their relationship to another level. Shaw's prose is funny and touching at the same time. He uses devices, like everybody speaking at the same time, which only enhances the fun of the play and brings more truth to the action. His characters are lively and well developed. His social critic is evident.

At the core of Henrik Ibsen's art lay a bottomless talent for investigating the way people hurt one another. But reading his "Four Major Plays" is not painful at all; rather, they are thrilling and even delightful for the different ways the playwright captures and sustains our interest. "A Doll's House" (1879) the first play here, presents the story of Nora Helmer, a seemingly childlike housewife with a weakness for macaroons whose actual level of devotion to her husband and family is kept hidden until the threat of scandal exposes her to a surprisingly judgmental spouse. Shocking in its day for questioning then-traditional domestic roles, "A Doll's House" makes its best points in its handling of Nora's character and an abrupt conclusion that still startles. If there are touches of excessive melodrama, and I think there are, they are more than compensated for by Ibsen's deft touch in drawing out the suffocating hypocrisy of social norms. Even more of an attack on society, "Ghosts" (1881) is that much more melodramatic, too much so for my tastes. Incest, social disease, people living together out of wedlock - it's like Ibsen wanted to cram every shocking thing he could think of into one play, and finish it off with something more shocking still. Convuluted but never boring, "Ghosts" makes its points, dares you to judge, and leaves a mark. What makes this book indispensable for lovers of good drama are the last two plays, each brilliant in a totally different way. "Hedda Gabler" (1890) is the tale of a woman's moral and mental meltdown told in four gripping acts. Title character Hedda is newly married, but full of spite for the settled life, seeking to cause misery wherever she can. "Oh, you know how it is..."

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